

Inga Often Flø

A conscious tactic or a happy coincidence?

The Soviet Show Trials between 1927-1933 and their impact on the Anglo-Soviet relationship in the late 1920s and early 30s.

Master's thesis in History
Supervisor: Tore Tingvold Petersen
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Abstract

This thesis discusses the development of Soviet show trials in the time period 1927-1933 and how they influenced the Anglo-Soviet relationship. The discussion centres around five main trials set within this timeframe: the Leningrad Trial (1927), the Shakhty Trial (1928), the Trial of the Three Chiefs (1929), the Industrial Party Trial (1930) and the Metro-Vickers Trial (1933). The Soviet Government arrested and sentenced hundreds of people on accusations of anti-Soviet and wrecking activities during this time, successfully removing oppositional forces and gaining substantial control of the nation. This thesis analyses the historical importance of these trials, within the framework of Anglo-Soviet diplomatic relations. With a particular focus on the communiqués of the Norwegian Chargé d'affaires, Andreas Urbye, as well as the British Cabinet and Foreign Office, it explores the intricacies of Anglo-Soviet political intrigue and propaganda in the inter-war period.

Sammendrag

Denne oppgaven drøfter utviklingen av de "falske rettsakene" i Sovjetunionen gjennom perioden 1927-1933, og hvordan de påvirket det Anglo-Sovjetiske forholdet. Drøftelsen er sentrert om fem hovedrettsaker innenfor denne perioden; Leningrad-saken (1927), Shakhty-saken (1928), Saken om de tre sjefene (1929), Industriparti-saken (1930) og Metro-Vickers saken (1933). De sovjetiske styresmaktene arresterte og dømte hundrevis under påskuddet om at de drev antisovjet- og sabotasjeaktiviteter i den gitte tidsperioden. Gjennom denne prosessen lyktes styresmaktene i å fjerne den politiske opposisjonen til Stalins regime, og å sikre seg vesentlig kontroll over nasjonen i sin helhet. Oppgaven analyserer den historiske betydningen av rettsakene, innenfor rammene av det Anglo-Sovjetiske diplomatiske forholdet. Et særlig fokus vies til forviklingene innen Anglo-Sovjetiske politiske intriger og propaganda i mellomkrigstiden, og hvordan denne kan tolkes i lys av korrespondansen til den norske Chargé d'affaires, Andreas Urbye, og fra den britiske regjering og utenriksdepartement i perioden.

Acknowledgements

Well, here it is. After two years of research, excitement, backtracking and frustration, it is finally done. It is a bittersweet feeling finalizing my master's thesis. After two years of late nights, frustrating research, and good discussions, I am finally ready to hand it over. But before I do, some people need to be thanked.

I have been lucky enough to have a tremendous amount of loving and helping people around me during this work who deserve a thanks. My friends who have dragged me out of the house to socialise regularly, even though I have kicked and screamed to leave me alone with my dear boy Stalin and his friends. My family, who have all listened carefully hour after hour about the frustrations and stupidity of inter-war politics. And my colleagues who have patiently watched me try to explain to the kids I coach how to do their gymnastics elements, when all I have in my head are trial transcripts and visa applications.

Within this group of amazing people, some deserve a special shout-out. My patient and loving family members who have proofread version after version, and still said yes when I've asked for one more: my mother Oda, Martin O., Kolbjørn, and Even. Thank you all!

Finally, the person who has guided me through this adventure, my fantastic supervisor: Tore Tingvold Petersen. Thank you for understanding my confusing ramblings and ideas. Thank you for assuring me that what I have written makes sense and is worth exploring. Thank you for believing I could do it all, even when the topic and thesis seemed impossible. Thank you!

I am very proud of what I have produced, and I hope others will enjoy it as much as I have.

Thank you.

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Notable Players

Great Britain

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| Baldwin, Stanley | British Prime Minister (1924-1929), Conservative Party |
| Chamberlain, Austen | Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (1924-29) |
| Chamberlain, Neville | Minister of Health (1923, 1924-29, 1931), Chancellor of the Exchequer (1923-24, 1931-37) |
| Churchill, Winston | Chancellor of the Exchequer (1924-29) |
| Gregory, J.D. | Head of the Russian Section of the British Foreign Office |
| Henderson, Arthur | Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (1929-31) |
| Hodgson, Robert | British Charge d'affaires in Moscow, 1924-27 |
| MacDonald, Ramsay | British Prime Minister (1924, 1929-1935), Labour Party |
| Ovey, Esmond | First British Ambassador to the U.S.S.R. (1929-1933) |
| Shaw, Thomas | Secretary of State for War (1929-1931) |
| Simon, John | Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (1931-1935) |
| Vansittart, Robert | Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (1930-1938) |

Soviet Union

| | |
|-----------------------|--|
| Bukharin, Nikolai | Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Comintern (1926-28), Editor of <i>Pravda</i> (1918-29), Editor of <i>Izvestia</i> (1934-37) |
| Chicherine, Georgy | People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs (1918-1930) |
| Dovgalevsky, Valerian | Plenipotentiary Representative of the Soviet Union in France (1927-34) |
| Krylenko, Nikolai V. | Prosecutor General of the RSFSR (1929-31) |
| Litvinov, Maxim | First deputy to Chicherine (1921- 1930), People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs (1930-1939) |
| Sokolnikov, Grigori | First Soviet Ambassador to the United Kingdom (1929-32) |
| Stalin, Joseph | General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (1922-1952) |
| Ulrikh, Vasilii V. | Chairman of the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court of the Soviet Union (1926-48) |
| Vishinsky, Andrei Y. | Prosecutor of the U.S.S.R. (1931-33), Chairman of the Supreme Court (specific trials) |

Various

| | |
|----------------|--|
| Urbye, Andreas | Norwegian Charge d'affaires in Moscow, (1924-39) |
|----------------|--|

List of Abbreviations

GREAT BRITAIN

| | |
|-------|--|
| Cab | Cabinet |
| CPGB | Communist Party of Great Britain |
| FO | Foreign Office |
| MVEEC | Metropolitan Vickers Electrical Export Company |
| NMM | National Minority Movement |
| TNA | The National Archive in London |
| TUC | Trades Union Congress |
| WO | War Office |

SOVIET UNION

| | |
|--------------|--|
| Agitprop | Department for Agitation and Propaganda |
| Comintern | Communist International |
| C.P.S.U.(B). | Communist Party of the Soviet Union (of Bolsheviks) |
| OGPU | Joint State Political Directorate under the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR |
| PSR | Party of Socialist Revolutionaries |
| RSFSR | Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic |
| Torgprom | Trade and Industrial Committee of the Engineering Centre |
| TPP | Toiling Peasants' Party |
| USSR | Union of Soviet Socialist Republics |

1. Introduction

"The facts show, lastly, that this group of bourgeois experts operated and wrought destruction to our industry on orders from capitalist organisations in the West."

– J. Stalin, Report Delivered at a Meeting of the Active of the Moscow Organisation of the C.P.S.U.(B.) April 13, 1928 ¹

On the 12th of May, 1927, British authorities raided the All-Russian Co-Operative Society (ARCOS) offices in search of damning evidence towards Soviet anti-British propaganda. Later that same day, both the British and Soviet governments broke off their diplomatic relationship, calling any official stationed in the other nation home in a rush. The British had sought a reason to end the relationship for a long time, and the raid and collected documents from various other sources was all they needed.

Six years later, on the 19th of April, 1933 six British engineers stood in a Soviet court ready to receive their sentences for anti-Soviet actions, including espionage, destruction of soviet property, and organisation of a counter-revolutionary nature. Over 2500 km away, the British government waited patiently, with three possible courses of action based on the possible results. What decision the Soviet Court made here could have an impact on the European political balance due to the potential severity of the British response.

The Soviet Government arrested and sentenced hundreds of people throughout the 1920s and 1930s, on accusations of anti-Soviet activities. Most of them were charged with various connotations of the same accusation: sabotage and wrecking² of Soviet industrial and/or technical departments, backed by counter-revolutionary forces and Western capitalist nations. The Soviet government began in 1922 with someone easy to target due to their previous activities and opinions: The Social Revolutionaries. The process continued with individuals that opposed Stalin's new plans and ideas, until 1927, when they began a thorough purge of British-connected personnel following the break in Anglo-Soviet relations. In 1928, the Soviets altered their focus yet again, by including actual foreign nationals, e.g. German engineers. They still only targeted British-connected Soviet personnel at this time. During the following three years they initiated a mass purge, simultaneously with the First Five-Year Plan, of the higher echelons of the technical intelligentsia. Then, in 1933, all of these tactics and gradual developments in judicial strategies accumulated in the Metro-Vickers trial where both Russian and British engineers were arrested and tried for massive anti-Soviet sabotage and espionage on the alleged behest of Great Britain.

The objective of this thesis is to show how all of these different Soviet show trials influenced the Anglo-Soviet relationship at the time. The domestic problems of both

¹ Stalin, *Works* Vol. 11 (1954): 57. The Work of the April Joint Plenum of the Central Committee and Central Control Commission.

² The Soviets created a new term during the 1920s for use in their judicial work: "wrecking". This term was used as a blanket accusation for any who were thought to be in league with anti-Soviet forces or for keeping other ideologies than what the Communist Party were trying to push forth at the time. The term, in its most general way, meant sabotage, but it was also used in some cases indicating "harming" or "inflicting damage", or "diversionist acts". It was introduced through the first Soviet Criminal Code on February 25th, 1927, specifically through Article 58 of the RSFSR Penal Code, where the meaning of the term is closer to "undermining". The term was used in various ways throughout the period being discussed in this thesis, but it generally referred to any action by individuals or groups that would negatively affect the economy and development of the Soviet Union.

countries were intertwined in a web of economic, political and military dilemmas, further challenged by new players and their ideas introducing themselves in the wake of World War I. The British government were riddled with opposing views on how best to reach their pre-war economic and industrial numbers, and the Soviets³ were trying to consolidate their new nation and the building of the first Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Combine these factors with the increasing scale and severity of the show trials happening in the Soviet Union, you get a political situation quite unbalanced and unsure. The show trials also began including foreign political profiles in their accusations on a much larger scale, leading to a heightened international interest and possible ramifications. By looking at each trial in connection to both the Anglo-Soviet relations and the evolution of the show trials themselves, the thesis provides a new perspective on the historical grouping of the Soviet show trials of the inter-war period, and the existence of a rich Anglo-Soviet relationship.

1.1. Historiography

Academic research into the early years of the Soviet Union is extensive and varied, but it has its limitations. Soviet historic literature during the 1920s and 1930s was heavily influenced by the Marxist doctrine pushed by the new Bolshevik regime.⁴ Most non-Marxist 'old' historians and researchers had emigrated during or closely following the civil war, making the few who remained too few to exact noticeable influence on the current situation.⁵ During the first few years of the 1920s, the new Soviet government and the 'old' academics were able to work together somewhat, but towards the end of the decade, this changed. The new regime began a 'cultural revolution', where experts and academics (i.e. 'the intelligentsia') were arrested, exiled and even executed because of their differing political views and/or critique towards the regime.⁶ Because of such a harsh and extreme 'purge' of academia, it has been difficult to find Russian-based literature from the time period not riddled with Communist propaganda.⁷ As early as the mid-1920s, the Soviet government severely restricted access to archives, and to the documents available for those few allowed in. Thus, the research surrounding anything Soviet-connected not corresponding with the approved narrative has been extremely limited.⁸ This continued in

³ The terms 'Soviet' or 'Russian' are often used seemingly intermittently, but they do have a specific definition and use. The term 'Soviet', in the most basic translation, means 'council' in Russian. In discussions of the history of the U.S.S.R., this term is often used referring to the officials and organisations that represent the leadership and authority of the U.S.S.R. Sometimes one might find the term 'Russian' used in situations one would expect 'Soviet' to be used. To answer why this is, one needs to understand what the U.S.S.R. represent. The U.S.S.R. stands for the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, and it represents a magnitude of different nations all under the direct control of the Soviet Government. This means that the U.S.S.R. refer to administrative groups all ranging from Ukraine to Uzbekistan, including Russia (or the Russian Federation). Therefore, when historians or other refer to someone as 'Russian' in a U.S.S.R. context, it refers to someone of Russian nationality and origin. So, in the context of this thesis, 'Soviet' will be used when discussing governmental organs and representatives, whilst 'Russian' will be used when referring to people of Russian nationality. In some instances, when discussing the defendants of the trials, the nationality of all might not be known, and the term 'Russian' will therefore be used.

⁴ Banerji, Arup. *Writing History in the Soviet Union: Making the past work*, Social Science Press, New Delhi, 2008 :24-27. Can also check out Robert W. Winks & R.J.Q. Adams', *Europe 1890-1945. Crisis and Conflict*. Oxford University Press, New York & Oxford, 2003, specifically pages 160-74.

⁵ 'old' refers to those who finished their education and had practiced their field of research before 1917. 'new' will refer to those who finished or began theirs after 1917. Later on these terms will also be used together with the word 'guard', but the meaning is the same. Banerji, 2008: 25

⁶ For research on these purges and the general repression during the late 1920s and 1930s, see Paul Hagenloh's *Stalin's Police. Public Order and Mass Repression in the USSR, 1926-1941*. Washington, D.C., Woodrow Wilson Centre Press, 2009.

⁷ One example of propaganda-heavy literature is Fischer, Luis. *The Soviets in World Affairs: A History of Relations Between the Soviet Union and the Rest of the World*. (vol. 2). London, Jonathan Cape, 1930.

⁸ In the early days of the Bolshevik regime, all archives and libraries were put under state control, making it extremely difficult later on for people in opposition to the regime accessing these sources. For more on this, see Banerji, 2008: introduction and chapter 1. Loren R. Graham also discusses this in the introduction to his book

some capacity all the way from the mid-1920s and throughout the Cold War, before the opening of various previously restricted archives and libraries in the early 1990s.

The domestic situation in the Soviet Union was rapidly changing during the late 1920s-early 1930s. By 1928, Stalin had quite successfully established a political position of unquestionable leadership in both the Communist party and the Soviet government.⁹ He began introducing and then implementing his new plans for industrial, economic and political development, the First Five-Year Plan being the main avenue by which he sought to accomplish these. Research into Stalin's new plans are numerous, with works focusing on various perspectives connected to the general theme of industrialisation.¹⁰ Discussions on how the industrialisation affected the living and working conditions of the peasants, has naturally dominated the research seeing as they were the largest group of the Soviet population.¹¹

Show trials are a phenomenon that has been in use for a very long time and in various nations around the world. The medium combines the entertainment value of theatre, with the political intricacies of trials and judicial questions, to showcase the preferred behaviour of the population. In connection to the Soviet Union, the best known event is the Moscow Trials, which occurred between 1936-38 and targeted the highest political and economic positions in the government. An abundance of research has gone into the details and political ramifications of the Moscow Trials, which has led many historians to either totally ignore the preceding trials, or only discuss them in direct connection to the Moscow Trials. The most common research perspective applied to the other Soviet show trials is to look at them from a case-to-case basis, with each trial considered important only in as much as it can be connected to larger international events.¹² A small group of historians have researched the topic of these other show trials, and in the context of the Soviet Union, Sheila Fitzpatrick is one of the best known.¹³

about Peter Palchinsky, one of the arrested technical chiefs in 1928-29. Graham, Loren R., *The Ghost of the Executed Engineer. Technology and the Fall of the Soviet Union*. Cambridge & London, Harvard University Press, 1993. He discusses how he had to send a copy home of the documents he had been allowed to view in an archive in Russia as, most likely, a mistake, before they came and demanded the documents back.

⁹ The position of Premier of the RSFSR was still in someone else's hands, namely Rykov, but the actual authority at this time came from the position of General Secretary, which was the office Stalin had occupied since 1922. For more on Stalin's speeches, orders and political plans, see Lars T Lih, Oleg V Naumov and Oleg V Khlevniuk. *Stalin's Letters to Molotov 1925-1936*. New Haven & London, Yale University Press, 1995; and Stalin, *Works, Vol. 10-13*. Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1954.

¹⁰ For a wide understanding of the First Five-Year Plan in its entirety, Hiroaki Kuromiya's *Stalin's Industrial Revolution*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1988, is quite detailed and informative. Also, Kendall Bailes', *Technology and Society Under Lenin and Stalin: Origin of the Soviet Technical Intelligentsia, 1917-1941*. Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2015. His research is a detailed work on the evolution of the role and position of the Soviet technical intelligentsia in the inter-war years. For more detailed domestic literature, see T.H. Rigby, *Communist Party Membership in the U.S.S.R. 1917-1967*, Princeton, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1968.

¹¹ Viola, Lynne, V.P. Danilov, N.A. Ivnitskii, and Denis Kozlov. *The War Against the Peasantry 1927-1930. The tragedy of the soviet countryside*. New Haven & London, Yale University Press, 2005, focuses on how the policies affected the most vulnerable group of society: peasants

¹² Robert Conquest, *The Great Terror. Stalin's purge of the thirties*. London & Melbourne: MacMillan and Co. Ltd. 1968, is a great example of this perspective, but he has included a discussion on the preceding trials in his Appendix F. In addition to Conquest, Getty, J. Arch and Oleg V. Naumov, provides research on the mid-late 1930s show trials and terror in their work, *The Road to Terror. Stalin and the Self-Destruction of the Bolsheviks, 1932-1939*. New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1999. For more in-depth research on the preceding trials see, Gordon Morrell. *Britain Confronts the Stalin Revolution: Anglo-Soviet Relations and the Metro-Vicks Crisis*. Waterloo, Canada, Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1995; Rosenbaum, Kurt. "The German Involvement in the Shakhty Trial". *The Russian Review (Stanford)*, vol. 21, no. 3, 1962, pp. 238-260. Rothstein, Andrew, ed. *Wreckers on Trial. A record of the Trial of the Industrial Party held in Moscow, Nov.-Dec., 1930*. New York, Workers' Library Publishers, 1931; and Lyons, Eugene. *Assignment in Utopia*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1938.

¹³ See Sheila Fitzpatrick's works for more on the show trials of 1920s Soviet Union: "Cultural Revolution in Russia 1928-32." *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 9, no. 1, 1974, pp. 33-52. *JSTOR*; "The Emergence of Glaviskusstvo.

Fitzpatrick has written numerous articles on the topic of Soviet show trials, as well as discussing them in a wider theme of cultural revolution. She, together with other historians such as Elizabeth Wood and Molly Flynn, has explored both the connection between show trials and theatre, and the overarching theme of political intrigue and removal of enemies of the state.¹⁴

Closely connected to the Soviet domestic situation and their show trials, is their foreign policies. The inter-war period experienced both the repair after a world war and the build-up to another, and, not surprising, existing research is heavily centred on these two topics. In a Soviet foreign policy discussion, research into the various conflicting ideologies of the emerging Communist Soviet Union, and the western capitalist states dominates.¹⁵ The few remaining influential events and topics falls outside of the sphere of interest for most, the Anglo-Soviet relationship being one of these.

Academic research into Anglo-Soviet relations in general is quite extensive. However, it focuses mainly on the post-1945 relationship, while the period 1919-1940 is treated rather sparsely, with only a few detailed works done at this point.¹⁶ It seems as if research into Anglo-Soviet relations in the inter-war period has been more cursory than other aspects of the same period. Detailed studies do exist, but they are few and far between as well as being scattered chronologically¹⁷. The areas most covered in research are the periods of intervention, e.g. The Russian civil war (1918-1922), and the period following Hitler's rise to power and subsequent build-up to World War II (1933-1940).¹⁸ According to Keith Nielson, the main problem with looking at the Anglo-Soviet relationship in the 1920s and early 1930s is that they did not really have an overt relationship. He argues that:

An analysis dealing with Anglo-Soviet relations [in the inter-war period] narrowly defined would largely be a study in silence, punctuated by the raucous outbursts surrounding such incidents as the Zinoviev letter, the Arcos raid, the Metro-Vickers affair, Munich and the Anglo-Soviet negotiations of 1939.¹⁹

Based on the lack of research found, it is clear many other historians also view this particular period of Anglo-Soviet relations as uneventful, 'a study in silence' as described by Nielson above. Most literature focuses on topics and events outside of the period of interest or they mention every other diplomatic relationship with Great Britain or the Soviet Union, but seldom the two together. Why this is the case is an interesting discussion in

Class War on the Cultural front, 1928-29." *Soviet Studies*, vol. 23, no. 2, 1971, pp. 236-253. JSTOR; "Stalin and the Making of a New Elite, 1928-39." *Slavic Review*, vol. 38, no. 3, 1979, pp. 377-402. JSTOR.

¹⁴ Elizabeth Wood, *Performing Justice: Agitation Trials in Early Soviet Russia*. London, Cornell University Press, 2005; and Molly Flynn, *The Trial that Never Was: Russian Documentary Theatre and the Pursuit of Justice*, Cambridge University Press, 2014

¹⁵ For research into Soviet foreign policies and situation in the late 1920s and early 1930s, see Adam Ulam, "Soviet Ideology and Soviet Foreign Policy". *World Politics*, vol. 11, no. 2, January 1959, pp. 153-172; Max Beloff, *The Foreign Policy of Soviet Russia, 1929-1941*, 2 vols. London, 1949; and Kennan, George. *Russia and the West Under Lenin and Stalin* (1961).

¹⁶ For examples of general European inter-war research, with some connections/ mentions of Anglo-Soviet relations, see, Robert W. Winks & R.J.Q. Adams', *Europe 1890-1945. Crisis and Conflict*. Oxford University Press, New York & Oxford, 2003; Robert Gerwarth, *Twisted Paths. Europe 1914-1945*. Oxford University Press, Oxford & New York, 2007; and Nicholas Doumanis, *The Oxford Handbook of European History, 1914-1945*. Oxford University press, Oxford, 2016.

¹⁷ For works specifically discussing the Anglo-Soviet relationship, see Neilson, Keith, *Britain, Soviet Russia and the Collapse of the Versailles Order, 1919-1939*. New York, Cambridge University Press, 2006; Christopher Andrew's, *Defend the Realm: The Authorized History of MI5*. Alfred A. Knof, New York, 2009; Michael Jabara Carley, *Silent Conflict: A Hidden History of Early Soviet-Western Relations*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2014.

¹⁸ Ullman, Richard H., *Anglo-Soviet Relations, 1917-1921* (3 vols). Princeton. 1961, 1968, 1972;

¹⁹ Neilson, 2006: 1

and of itself. The Anglo-Soviet relationship should perhaps be of interest to any who research political, military and diplomatic questions in the inter-war period, seeing as they were both important actors at the time. Their choices and policies often affected more than their own people. At this point, Great Britain still had a plethora of colonies and dependencies, and as such could interfere in numerous incidents and conflicts around the world. The Soviet Union, on the other hand, were in the early stages of rebuilding their country after both a world war and a civil war ravaged it, and they eventually wanted to spread their communist ideology globally. Both countries had interests outside their own official borders, and collided a number of times when interfering in other events, e.g. the Afghan civil war and the Chinese civil war.²⁰ Events such as these are where most research has focused, bringing discussions on the varying political and military interference of each nation in a plethora of other countries.

Some historians have researched the relationship within the relevant period, but on a more case-to-case basis, focusing on individual incidents. The two most commonly discussed are the Arcos-raid and subsequent break in relations in 1927, and the Metro-Vickers Trial in 1933.²¹ The events happening in the timeframe between these two incidents are almost non-existent in an Anglo-Soviet relations research perspective, and as such is where this thesis will focus.

Within the framework of these two incidents, this thesis will also discuss the political influence and effect the Soviet show trials had on the Anglo-Soviet relationship and the Soviet domestic situation in general. It will provide a new in-depth analysis of the events in question, how they came about, what they led to, and how they affected the unstable inter-war diplomatic balance.

1.2. Research objectives and relevance

The objective of this thesis, first and foremost, is to address how the Soviet show trials between 1927-33 should be viewed as their own period of historical importance and influence in the larger setting of inter-war show trials. In addition to this, the objective is also to investigate how the trials might have been a conscious tactic used by the Soviet government in order to negatively affect their western neighbours and further their domestic and international goals of socialism for everyone. These show trials experienced a massive growth in both reach, size and international importance during the time period discussed. They have not, to my knowledge, been analysed grouped together as I have done here, placing them in their own basket of historical importance and development. Most commonly, The Metro-Vickers trial is connected to the later Moscow Trials (1936-38). The others have either been seen only in connection to the larger domestic events happening at the same time (e.g. the Industrial Party Trial in connection to the

²⁰ For more on the foreign policies of each nation in regards to other events, see P.A. Reynolds, *British foreign policy in the inter-war years*, Longmans, London, 1954; Michael Jabara Carley, *Silent Conflict: A Hidden History of Early Soviet-Western Relations*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2014. Chapter 6 deals specifically with the revolution in China; Antony Best, 'We are virtually at war with Russia': Britain and the Cold War in East Asia, 1923-40, *Cold War History*, 2012, 12:2, 205-225, DOI: [10.1080/14682745.2011.569436](https://doi.org/10.1080/14682745.2011.569436).

²¹ Some historians discussing these events: Gabriel Gorodetsky, *The Precarious Truce: Anglo-Soviet Relations, 1924-1927*. Cambridge, 1977; Christopher Andrew, "British Intelligence and the Breach with Russia in 1927". *The Historical Journal*, 25(4), 957-964. doi:10.1017/S0018246X00021348, 1982; Gordon W. Morrell, *Britain Confronts the Stalin Revolution: Anglo-Soviet Relations and the Metro-Vicks Crisis* (Waterloo, Ont., 1995); Henrietta Flory. "The Arcos Raid and the Rupture of Anglo-Soviet Relations, 1927." *Journal of Contemporary History* 12.4 (1977): Bridges, Brian. "Red or Expert? The Anglo-Soviet Exchange of Ambassadors in 1929." *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 27.3 (2016), and Bridges, Brian (1979) *Anglo-Soviet relations, 1927-1932*. thesis, Swansea University.

industrialization happening), or to an international conflict (e.g. the Shakhty Trial and a possible renewed German-Soviet conflict).

Through an in-depth analysis of these trials, looking at the domestic policies and the international factors involved, the thesis also addresses the lacunas of academic research into the Anglo-Soviet inter-war relationship. As seen in the previous section, research into their relation in the inter-war years has been far from extensive, and research into the period 1927-33 is almost unheard of. Through a discussion of the various show trials and their importance as propaganda and tools for political control, the hope is to shed some light on the dynamics and incidents of the Anglo-Soviet relationship of the time.

A few words on periodisation. The chosen period of focus is 1927 to 1933. In the spring of 1927, the Anglo-Soviet relationship broke down due to an event incited by Great Britain that strained their already unstable alliance to the point of no return. This was followed by a clear change in Soviet domestic policies, Soviet judicial activities, and the international political balance. Shortly following the break, the Soviet government began a massive purging of anyone with connections to Great Britain and to many other main European powers (e.g. France and Germany) that continued for over a decade. In 1933, the relationship once again experienced an incident that could result in its dismantling: The Metro-Vickers Affair. This trial included British citizens, which forced the British government to seriously consider harsh reactions in case of unfavourable outcomes. The Arcos raid and the Metro-Vickers affair placed the relationship in similar positions, but the results were different. In 1927 it ended in an abandoned affiliation, whilst in 1933 it resulted in harsh economic consequences for the Soviet Union through a trade embargo and ending of a trade agreement. These two events mark the outer points of the period of interest in this thesis.

1.3. Findings

Research into the Anglo-Soviet diplomatic relationship in the inter-war years, specifically between 1927-33, is not a study in silence as many would have it be. Contrary to what the majority of research done on this topic states, their contact did not only exist within other grander international events, or as a footnote in more locally focused incidents. As this thesis will show, their relationship experienced numerous high-profiled incidents that would mar it, even leading to a disruption of it in full. Most of these incidents took place in connection to the national purges of opposing forces done by the Soviet government through their show trials.

The specific period 1927-1933 in a Soviet judicial setting is under-researched and often overlooked. From the inception of the Soviet Union, the government, with the O.G.P.U. (Joint State Political Directorate under the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR) as their henchmen, performed numerous show trials of various sizes. These trials experienced a steady increase in intensity, scope and importance over the next decade, until 1927 when the dismantling of Anglo-Soviet relations led the Soviet government to instigate a rapid-style arrest and trial system over the following months. These trials and arrests dealt mostly with any soviet citizen found having some sort of connection to western capitalist nations, especially with Great Britain, and they continued for over a decade. The soviet government purposely used the propaganda tool that was the show trials to shape and control both their population and their reputation and image towards the international scene.

In my opinion it is natural to split the decade of purges into two groups: the 1927-33 group, and then the 1934-1939 group. I do not include the period before 1927 in this grouping due to the lack of systematisation and conscious use on a larger scale of the tool

that was the trials in the early years of the 1920s. I view the 1927-33 group, let's call it Group A, as the trial period where they worked out the kinks and problems of show trials and how to perform one without considerable interference from foreign nations. It was during this time they fully turned the previous entertainment tool of the show trials into the judicial and political tool it became. In Group A, the Soviet government began experimenting with different ways to involve western capitalist states in their own domestic agendas through show trials. They began lightly by arresting people who had been or were connected to Great Britain, but accused them only based on their personal actions, claiming it had nothing to do with Great Britain. That evolved into a more direct accusation of foreign officials or foreign businesses of supporting anti-Soviet activities on Soviet soil. After that they shifted focus slightly and began a phase of extensive purges of the technical intelligentsia, but here too it was most often through alleged connections to western capitalist interference and espionage. This phase lasted for a few years, until 1933, when all of these tactics accumulated in the Metro-Vickers trial that involved both Russian and British defendants, accused of British-organised anti-Soviet activities and espionage.

This is where the split occurs, introducing us to Group B (i.e. 1934-39). Following the Metro-Vickers trial in 1933, the Soviet government began a new wave of purges, but this time it targeted a larger portion of the government, including many of the highest offices. The political importance of the accused is what separates group B from group A: in group A, the targets slowly rose in rank, but only reaching the higher echelons of the technical intelligentsia and general academics. In group B, however, the targets were mainly the highest offices of the government, many of whom had been on the prosecutor side of the show trials of group A.²²

These trials had a direct impact on the Anglo-Soviet relationship. In every trial mentioned in this thesis, the British government or British officers were named as supporters and/or organisers of the wrecking activities of the accused. In 1927, the first four months after the break in relations, Soviet authorities connected over 30 people directly to the past British legation, and specifically to the British Chargé d'affaires, Robert Hodgson. They charged these people with espionage on behalf of Mr. Hodgson and the British government. This direct attack only lasted a few months. In 1928 the connections to Great Britain were found through Soviet citizens employed by British companies or organisations, not direct attacks on British officials. The Soviet government's official accusations seldom dealt with the defendant's work, but rather focused more on their personal life, thus keeping British officials from being able to demand information on the proceedings. From 1929-1932, the accusations once again began to include direct connections between defendants and specific British officials or a British government department. The magnitude and scope of the trials, and political placement of the accused were higher than in 1927, however, making these accusations substantially more influential. This continued for several years, until 1933, when the Soviet government arrested and accused their first British citizens in the Metro-Vickers Affair. The idea was that the British engineers working for the Metropolitan-Vickers Electrical Export Company (MVEEC) had come to the Soviet Union on direct orders of the British government to spy and sabotage their industrial output. They became perfect scapegoats for the Soviet government to use in order to remove the blame for the nation's troubles from themselves. They used the show trials to negatively impact Great Britain in any way, and to shape the Anglo-Soviet relationship into something that benefited themselves. The trials became a

²² e.g. Nicolai V. Krylenko. Robert Conquest, *The Great Terror. Stalin's purge of the thirties*. London & Melbourne: MacMillan and Co. Ltd. 1968: 265

conscious tactic, a propaganda and political tool, extended and developed by the Soviet government over the course of the period discussed in this thesis: 1927-1933.

1.4. Theory and methodological approach

This thesis is an empirical study based primarily on sources from the National Archive (TNA) in London, Great Britain, and the National Archive (Riksarkivet) in Oslo, Norway. From TNA, most of the archival material comes from the Cabinet Papers (C.P.) series, both the Cabinet Memorandums (C.M.) and the Cabinet Conclusions (C.C.). In addition to these, documents from the Foreign Office (FO) have also been used. From Riksarkivet, most of the material comes from the Foreign Office archive (Utenriksdepartementsarkivet, UD), specifically the small category of 'Norwegian preservation of British interests in the U.S.S.R.'. Some material has also been found in the private archive of Andreas Urbye, the Norwegian Charge d'affaires to Moscow between 1924-39, and in a box containing records of foreign judicial questions in connection to Norwegian ambassadorial organisations or Norwegian citizens abroad.

In the British sources, the various material consists of correspondence, both internally in the relevant British governmental departments and internationally between British ministers and the Norwegian Legation in Moscow. Memorandums distributed to the British Cabinet has also been used.

As a direct result of the Covid-19 pandemic that struck in March of 2020, the original plan of travelling to London and the National Archive in Kew fell away as the world closed down. Subsequently, every possibly relevant source not already digitised in the archive, was now unavailable. Material from the British Foreign Office is mostly not yet digitised, and as such could not be utilized for this thesis. This led to an exploration of other departments and catalogues that might contain other relevant material, which brought me to the digitised and clearly catalogued Cabinet Papers.

Finding the Norwegian connection was not easy. After I had explored what source material was available to me online, I began searching for avenues outside the various British archives. After a long time, I found a connection that allowed me to examine an actual archive despite the impediment of the pandemic. In a text by Brian Bridges I found this one sentence that put me on a road down through Anglo-Norwegian inter-war relations. It said:

On 9 November 1929, the Foreign Office received a telegram from Alvary Gascoigne, the acting chargé d'affaires in Oslo – Norway had been representing British interests in the Soviet Union since 1927.²³

The information that Norway was the go-between during the 'separation' between Great Britain and the Soviet Union from 1927-1929 had not come up in any text previously, so this was very helpful. The relevant archive turned out to be the Norwegian Foreign Office Archive (UD). This archive is not digitised earlier than 1960, so Riksarkivet had to be contacted directly to see if there might be any relevant sources available. They provided three boxes containing relevant sources, under the main title 'H62 Norges ivaretagelse av britiske interesser i Sovjetunionen 1927-1929'.²⁴ When I finished the three boxes covering

²³ Bridges, Brian. *Red or Expert? The Anglo-Soviet Exchange of Ambassadors in 1929*, 2016:442 (7)

²⁴ For more in-depth information on the intricacies of the Norwegian foreign office archive, see the official page of the archive: <https://www.arkivverket.no/utforsk-arkivene/departementene/utenriksdepartementet>.

the Norwegian preservation of British interests, I tried to evaluate what other angles I could potentially explore. This led me to also look at the private collections of Andreas Urbye (Norwegian Charge d'affaires in Moscow between 1924-1939) and Benjamin Vogt (Norwegian Charge d'affaires in London between 1910-1934). I also investigated the private collections of Vidkun Quisling, since he operated as secretary for the Norwegian legion to Moscow during the period in question. There was no relevant information in the collections of Quisling and Vogt, but Urbye's archive provided some. Finally, I found one box that concerned, among other topics, judicial questions and incidents in the Soviet Union between 1924 and 1937 – "R25 Nasjonalrett og rettsordning ikke annensteds oppført, sak 3/24 Russlands: Rettspleie". These documents were mainly correspondence between Urbye and UD, as well as some between Vogt and UD. This box provided me with most of the detailed information concerning the earlier show trials, and the more obscure trials happening in between the larger ones (e.g. the case of the three technical chiefs). A more in-depth description of the archival structure can be found in the bibliography.

The pandemic obstructed the natural avenues of which to find source material for this thesis, but this caused it to take on a new shape and forced me to explore other roads not originally thought of. Without the pandemic and its limitations, it is not certain I would have fully explored the Anglo-Norwegian connection, if I had realised it existed. It is such a small connection, and even in many of the British primary sources found, it is clear not everyone knew of the role the Norwegian legation in Moscow had taken on in 1927. Some ministers seemed to believe it was the Swedish legation that had become their contact.²⁵ Also, not much of the secondary sources seem to bother themselves with this connection, making it a not extensively researched collection of source material. Therefore, I believe I contribute new and important source material to the discussion on Anglo-Soviet inter-war relations, and on the details of the inter-war Soviet show trials.

1.5. Thesis outline

The thesis is split into three main chapters with a background chapter in the beginning and a conclusion at the end. Chapter 2 provides a background of the years leading up to the Arcos raid, with a focus on various early show trials, and the political developments in Great Britain. The three main chapters (Ch. 3-5) discuss three different time groupings based on the Anglo-Soviet political and diplomatic situation. Chapter 3 deals with the two years of no official diplomatic relationship, 1927-1928. Chapter 4 deals with the renewal of this relationship and the following few years of negotiations and troubles connected to this, 1929-1932. Finally, chapter 5 provides an in-depth discussion of an event in 1933, that had the potential to break off their relations once again, but luckily did not.

²⁵ 7371, H62 – D – 5/27: Memorandum concerning the location of a Peter Verigin. Unknown sender and unknown recipient, but it seems to either come from the British legation in Canada to the Norwegian legation in Moscow, or from the Canadian government to the British Government. 30 July 1927.

2. Historical Background

"To make the newspapers collective organisers on behalf of the Party and the Soviet regime, a means of establishing connection with the masses of the working people in our country and of rallying them around the Party and the Soviet regime—such is now the immediate task of the press."

– J. Stalin's answer to Sergei Ingulov's article "To the Roots", discussing the significance of the press for the state and the Party.²⁶

Anglo-Soviet relations were seldom peaceful and without trouble. Since the inception of the Soviet Union following the Bolshevik revolution in 1917, their contact and alliances has, at best, been riddled with uncertainty and covert operations. Going straight from the Great War and into a scramble for normalcy in the 1920s did not naturally create a desire between Great Britain or the Soviet Union to pursue positive and supporting political alliances. During the tsarist regime, Great Britain and Russia had strong monarchical connections through marriage, which created natural avenues of communications. These connections disappeared with the February/March revolution in 1917, when Tsar Nicholas II was removed through a massive protest, turned violent armed clashes. This change affected more nations than Great Britain, but the strength of the connection lost was almost unique.

As with any relationship, one between two nations also need to be based on mutual respect for each other, in order to be able to cooperate. Throughout the 1920s, when the Bolshevik regime continued to ascertain its policies, ideology, and structure, their outward show of respect for nations such as Great Britain worsened daily. At the same time, the British government began to see the necessity of cooperating with them. Therefore, in March 1921, the Anglo-Soviet Trade Treaty was signed, making Britain the first Western country to accept Lenin's offer of a trade agreement.²⁷ This was also Prime Minister David Lloyd George's *de facto* recognition of the Moscow Regime. Lloyd George did not increase his political popularity through this action, as the choice seemed rushed by many, both his own countrymen and politicians from other allied nations. The world community's perspective of this new nation, the Soviet Union, was not the most favourable. As a means to shape and control the international perspective of the Soviet Union, its leaders began implementing new tools in their cultural and political propaganda. One of these tools were the Soviet mock trials (also called 'show trials', 'demonstration trials', 'trial dramas', 'agitation trials' and other terms) that became known both in the Soviet Union and the world at large during the 1920s.²⁸ Show trials came to the forefront of Bolshevik political activism straight off the October Revolution in 1917. Molly Flynn states that the early Soviet mock trials were theatre with no actual participation of real convicts, and they were

²⁶ Stalin, Works Vol. 5. (1955): p. 288. (ha med dato for når han sa det) THE PRESS AS A COLLECTIVE ORGANISER. Sergei Ingulov was the chief of the Agitprop Department's Newspaper Subsection (Matthew Lenoe, NEP Newspapers and the Origins of Soviet Information Rationing, *The Russian Review*, vol. 62, No. 4, pp. 614-636, Oct., 2003:628.)

²⁷ Flory, Henrietta. "The Arcos Raid and the Rupture of Anglo-Soviet Relations, 1927." *Journal of Contemporary History* 12.4 (1977): 708

²⁸ Woods, Elizabeth A., *Performing Justice: Agitation Trials in Early Soviet Russia*. London: Cornell University Press, 2005: 1

believed to “have a genuine impact on the beliefs and behaviours of their societies”.²⁹ According to both Flynn and Elizabeth Wood the early Soviet use of mock trials in the 1920s can be viewed as a way of constructing the society the new government aspired to be. Flynn elaborates on this, stating that:

The narrative structure of confession, conversion, and repentance as portrayed in theatrical courtrooms throughout the 1920s became so familiar to early Soviet audiences that it was soon seamlessly transposed on to the very real prosecution of citizens throughout the country in the 1930s.³⁰

The early versions of these trials were a treasured form of entertainment for the general population, and amateur mock trials were staged illustrating almost every aspect of society. The trials discussed various actions that were viewed as anti-Communist, or just not suitable for the proper Soviet public.³¹ Some depicted farmers who were charged with resisting various policies implemented by the government (e.g. collectivization), and some discussed peasants and their inappropriate sanitary habits.³²

In order to fully understand the happenings of the main period of interest being discussed in this thesis, it is necessary to achieve a basic knowledge of the trials leading up to it. Ever since the ending of the Russian civil war in 1921, numerous trials were conducted throughout the Soviet Union. This chapter will address four of them, each providing a new focus or tactic used by the Soviet government that added to their anti-western capitalism propaganda, and which especially targeted Great Britain.

2.1. The 1922 Trial of the Social Revolutionaries

Between June 8th and August 7th 1922, a trial was conducted, involving twelve prominent members of the Party of Socialist Revolutionaries (PSR). It was referred to as the Trial of the Socialist Revolutionaries. The twelve were accused and tried for past actions against the Bolshevik regime, going as far back as 1918.

The accused (ten men and two women) had been lifelong opponents of the Tsarist regime, and all of them were imprisoned and made to serve out sentences in Siberia or other labour camps before WW1. Then came the 1917 March Revolution and most of the imprisoned dissidents were freed on the grounds that as imperial opponents, they were friends of the new, free government.³³ On the 25th of November later that year, in the All-Russian Constituent Assembly Election, the Socialist Revolutionary Party won a clear majority over the Bolshevik Party.³⁴ They refused to surrender their authority to the Bolshevik regime, and on January 18th, 1918, met for the Constituent Assembly. The Bolshevik Party did not approve of this and dispersed the Assembly through armed struggle, instigating the civil war that were to ravage the country for about four years.³⁵ The PSR's were fighting against the Bolshevik regime for approximately a year, until 'white

²⁹ Flynn, Molly, *The Trial that Never Was: Russian Documentary Theatre and the Pursuit of Justice*, Cambridge University Press, 2014: 312

³⁰ Flynn, 2014: 314

³¹ Julie A. Cassiday, *The Enemy on Trial: Early Soviet Courts on Stage and Screen* (Northern Illinois University Press, 2000); Wood, 2005, and Flynn, 2014

³² Flynn, 2014: 312

³³ Shub, David, *The Trial of the SRs*, *The Russian Review*, oct., 1964, vol 23, no. 4 (oct., 1964), pp. 362-369. Pbls. By Wiley on behalf of The Editors and Board of Trustees of the Russian Review.

³⁴ The Bolshevik Party rioted in October 1917 against the Bourgeois provisional government that had taken over following the March revolution. They allowed the election promised by the Provisional government to go forth, which resulted in a clear majority for the Social Revolutionaries.

³⁵ Shub, 1964: 362 (2)

armies of Kolchak, Denikin and Yudenich threatened to overthrow the Soviets and restore the old regime, [and] the Socialist Revolutionary Party abandoned its armed struggle against Lenin'.³⁶ On February 25th, 1919, Lenin followed this concession by granting members of the PSR amnesty for their opposition. This is where the troubles and uncertainties of the 1922 Trial comes into play: the accusation laid on the Socialist Revolutionary members in April 1922, were for their actions in 1918 – the actions that Lenin himself granted amnesty for in 1919.

The timing of the trial was awkward, as it happened right in the middle of negotiations of a united front agreement between the Communist International (Comintern) and the Socialist Internationals, representing all socialist and labour parties in Europe. The prosecution of twelve prominent Socialist Revolutionary leaders threatened to terminate these talks, which led the Comintern delegates (Bukharin, Radek and others) to ensure 'the European Socialists that the Moscow Tribunal would not impose the death penalty on the leaders [...], and that the accused would be free to choose their own counsel'.³⁷

The trial itself did not run smoothly: the court rejected four Russian attorneys chosen by the accused; the Tribunal refused to hear witnesses for the defence and to admit their documents into evidence; after the withdrawal of the lawyers from the case, the chief defence attorney, N.K. Muraviev, requested that the trial be transferred to another court due to interruptions and the influence of civilians on the court in the past days – this was rejected; on June 23, the accused faced the court without counsel.³⁸

Four western lawyers were allowed to go to Moscow, but their reception was nothing short of hostile. The lawyers were: Emile Vandervelde, Arthur Waters, Kurt Rosenfield, and Theodore Liebknecht.³⁹ Throughout the first week of the trial, their actions were meticulously hindered and opposed, which finally led them to withdraw from the case. One of the issues the Bolshevik regime had with this trial, was the consequence its verdict would have on the support from foreign socialist revolutionaries and communist groups of the Soviet regime. So, with the withdrawal of the four western lawyers, the Soviet government met the dilemma of how to continue the outward portrayal of democratic and fair treatment of their opposition.

On July 3, Maxim Gorky wrote to Anatole France: 'The trial of the Socialist Revolutionaries has taken on the cynical character of a public preparation for the murder of men who sincerely served the cause of liberation for the Russian people. I earnestly request you to appeal once more to the Soviet regime ... Perhaps your weighty word will preserve the precious lives of these Socialists.'⁴⁰

On their departure, the lawyers strengthened the notion that the trial was more for show than an actual fair and just trial, by declaring "that their continued presence merely produced the illusion abroad that the accused were getting a fair trial".⁴¹ The treatment of the lawyers, their statements to the press, and the subject of collaboration between the Comintern and the Socialist International depicts a situation where the trial held a greater

³⁶ Shub, 1964: 363 (3)

³⁷ Shub, 1964: 363 (3)

³⁸ Shub, 1964: 366-368 (6-8)

³⁹ Shub, 1964: 363-364 (3-4): Emile Vandervelde was one of the leaders of the Socialist International, member of the Belgian Labour Party, and a Belgian statesman. Arthur Waters was a member of the Belgian Labour Party. Kurt Rosenfield was a member of the German Independent Socialist Party. Theodore Liebknecht was a member of the German Independent Socialist Party, and brother of Karl Liebknecht, the German Communist leader slain during the Spartacist uprising of 1919.

⁴⁰ Shub, 1964: 367 (7)

⁴¹ Shub, 1964: 366 (6)

importance than just its treatment of the accused. The trial is a prime example of how the Soviets used the trials to influence the Soviet public's views of their government. It was also a display to the western world of how 'democratic' the Soviet justice system could be. The state controlled newspaper *Pravda*, in the hands of Nikolai Bukharin, was heavily employed to provide this narrative to the public, both domestic and foreign. Much of the hostility mentioned above can be traced back to how *Pravda* described and discussed the lawyers and their job of defending the accused. *Pravda* labelled them "traitorous lackeys of the bourgeoisie" and promised that "these gentlemen must be so treated as to protect our country against the espionage and incendiary tactics of such rascals"⁴², successfully painting foreign interference as another sign of bourgeoisie counter-revolutionary actions.

2.2. The 1924 Trial of Boris Savinkov

The year 1924 brought with it many individual incidents that impacted the stability of both the Anglo-Soviet relationship and the domestic situation of Great Britain. The Labour Government of Ramsay MacDonald (jan-nov 1924), granted the Soviet Union *de jure* recognition in 1924, the first western country to do so.⁴³ However, his government did not last long. In July 1924, MacDonald's suspension of the prosecution of the Campbell Case, where a British Communist newspaper editor by name of J.R. Campbell was arrested on charges of 'incitement of mutiny' in an open letter to members of the military, proved instrumental in the downfall of the Labour Government. Just four days before the General Election, on the 25th of October, another incident further incited the end of the Labour Government. It came down to a fraudulent letter published in the Daily Mail, purporting to be a directive from the head of the Comintern in Moscow, Grigory Zinoviev, to the Communist Party in Great Britain (CPGB).⁴⁴ The Zinoviev letter seemed at the time to be authentic, but has later been established by various historians and political figures as a probable forgery. Due to its content, e.g. the ordering of the CPGB engaging in seditious activities, the British working class turned on the Labour Party. The Conservative Party held more strongly to an anti-Soviet policy than Labour did, which now meant that the public leaned more in their favour. This resulted in the Conservative Party winning the General Election on the 29th of October, 1924.⁴⁵

In combination with the two events mentioned earlier that happened in Great Britain, i.e. Campbell Case and Zinoviev Letter, in the Soviet Union a new trial began that was used to ignite new waves of animosity towards the capitalist states' politics and methods. The case of Boris V. Savinkov (born 19. January 1879, died 7. May 1925) concerned his armed resistance against the ruling Bolsheviks, after their revolution in 1917.⁴⁶ His case, in and of itself, might not be the most exciting in the grand scheme of things. It warrants a mention here, however, due to how the Soviet government utilized it in their domestic and international policies. In the accusations against him, there was mention of several conferences between him and various foreign dignitaries. Some of the dignitaries named were Lloyd George and Winston Churchill.

Details concerning this case have been discovered in the correspondence between Andreas Urbye, the Norwegian Charge d'Affaires to Moscow, and the Norwegian Foreign Office. It seems as if the entire case was a detailed plan from the Soviet authorities to both arrest Savinkov himself, and agitate doubt and animosity of foreign entities, especially of

⁴² Shub, 1964: 364 (4)

⁴³ Flory, 1977: 708 (can also look in Gerwarth, *Twisted Paths*).

⁴⁴ Andrew, *Defend the Realm: The Authorized History of MI5*, 2009: 148-149

⁴⁵ Andrew, 2009: 149

⁴⁶ Riksarkivet: 8400, R25 - G - 3/24: Savinkovs domfældelse. Andreas Urbye to the Norwegian Foreign Office. 30. September 1924.

capitalist western states such as Great Britain. Urbye also mentions the possibility of some sort of foreign interference in either the case or on a general basis, but evidence of this has not been found in other sources concerning the incident.

Especially interesting with this case is how it demonstrates the existence of Soviet antagonism towards Great Britain several years before the official break in relations in 1927. The trial came about right after a commercial treaty had been reached between the Labour government and Soviet authorities, which resulted in the U.S.S.R. receiving a 30-million-pound loan from Britain and for Britain to be compensated for assets seized during the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917.⁴⁷ So, on one side the Anglo-Soviet trade relationship was blooming with new agreements and correspondence, but on the other side, the Soviet authorities were actively working to paint the western capitalist nations as sources of treason and anti-Soviet activities amongst Soviet citizens.

The combination of the Savinkov case, with all its anti-Capitalist and anti-British statements, and both the Zinoviev Letter and Campbell Case, negatively affected the public opinion of Labour greatly. It additionally created an increase in anti-Soviet sentiment in Great Britain, making the Conservative Party more popular. The fact that the Zinoviev Letter most likely was a forgery, suggests that even some aspects of the British government used the known Soviet animosity towards Britain in their domestic power struggle. The connections between Soviet and British domestic policies and events did not end here, however, and we shall look at how the Conservative Government dealt with this in the next section.

2.3. The 1925 Trial of tsarist supporters that went missing

The Conservative Government of Stanley Baldwin lasted from 1924-1929. During this time, it opted for a much more anti-Soviet policy than the previous government. In July 1925, an ad hoc cabinet sub-committee reviewed their policy toward the Soviet Union. This resulted in an agreement of continued relations between the two nations, but also the beginning of a close watch of the activities of communist agents in Britain. This did not sit well with the Soviet government, and they gave a response through Khristian Rakovsky, the Soviet ambassador to Britain between 1923 and 1925⁴⁸, in a memorandum from 1925. Here, Rakovsky states that "a certain section of the British people, very influential in the press, the government and public opinion" were apparently hostile in principle to "the very existence of the [Soviet Union]".⁴⁹ He continues by stating that the trouble with this public opinion to exist within such a group is that "every incident is utilised by the above mentioned section with a definite aim of bringing about a rupture in diplomatic relations". This was not a problem in the Soviet Union, according to Rakovsky, because there was "not a single individual who would express himself against normal relations with Great Britain". This incident led to the British government increasing their surveillance of possible anti-British soviet groups and individuals, which resulted in the arrest of twelve CPGB leaders by the Attorney-General Douglas Hogg only three months later, after an inspection of their speeches and articles.⁵⁰

At the same time, similar activities took place in the Soviet Union. *Pravda*, along with other national newspapers, were well-used tools in the Soviet government's belt during their fight against foreign influence and bourgeoisie counter-revolutionary actions.

⁴⁷ Pearce, 1992: 49

⁴⁸ not an official ambassador, only a *chargé d'affaires*. See Bridges, Brian. "Red or Expert? The Anglo-Soviet Exchange of Ambassadors in 1929." *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 27.3, 2016: 439

⁴⁹ Rakovsky, Khristian, "The Crisis in Anglo-Soviet relations: memorandum", 2005: 1

⁵⁰ Flory, 1977: 710

This tool was used heavily during the early years of Soviet rule, and especially during the period 1927 to 1933, i.e. during the implementation of the First Five-Year Plan. The newspapers, however, were not always used by printing damning information on the accused or their supporters. Sometimes their most important use was to withhold press coverage on different events in order to hide their existence from both national and international audiences.

One such example is from 1925, where we find another case from the Soviet judicial system. In a Riksarkiv source dated 17th of August, Andreas Urbye discusses a case of around 50-60 people shot for alleged counter-revolutionary operations. It is stated that they were part of a demonstration in favour of the old Tsar Nicholas II and that they were economically supported by the widowed empress, Dagmar (Tsar Alexander III's wife). Nothing has been found of this incident in the secondary literature (per. 28. Januar 2021), and based on what Urbye writes there will most likely not exist details on the incident in newspaper archives. Urbye states that it seems as if the government knows this incident would spark resentment and oppositional sentiment amongst the public, both national and international. He is basing this on the fact that it has not been discussed in the press up until that point (8th of August, 1925), which is odd compared to how much press coverage previous similar events had received.⁵¹

The lack of press coverage on an event of such magnitude demonstrates the control the Soviet Government had on its public media, such as its newspapers. They were a propaganda tool under the directive of Nikolai Bukharin, the chairman of the Comintern from 1926-28, and editor of *Pravda* (1918-29) and *Izvestia* (1934-37).⁵² Even though articles and stories printed in a newspaper might not always be the absolute truth, the scope of its reach and the power it has to shape the perception of public opinion, is unmatched. The Soviet government clearly understood this, deciding to keep information on this mass execution out of the papers in order to keep the majority of the public from hearing about it. As seen in the quote in the beginning of this chapter, Stalin viewed the press as a tool for the Soviet government and Communist Party to use for contact with, and control of, the masses. The history and power of the press under the Soviet regime is an interesting topic by itself, but it would be too massive of an undertaking to thoroughly discuss here.

2.4. The 1926 Trial of the Norwegian "Spies"

In the Soviet Union in April and May of 1926, various Russian citizens who worked for the Norwegian Legation at the time, were arrested on accusations of espionage for the Norwegians and interrogated for any possible connections to Great Britain.⁵³

Coinciding with these arrests and interrogations, there began a General strike in Great Britain. The 1926 General Coal Strike in Great Britain is described as the "largest industrial dispute in Britain's history".⁵⁴ It took place between the 4th and 12th of May, and was instigated by the Trades Union Congress (TUC) in order to prevent wage reductions and worsening working conditions. Particularly interesting in an Anglo-Soviet discussion,

⁵¹ Riksarkivet: 8400, R25 – G – 3/24: Massehenrettelse i Leningrad. Andreas Urbye to the Norwegian Foreign Office. 17. August 1927; "Imidlertid synes man ikke denne gang å ha god samvittighet, idet såvitt jeg har kunnet erfare, begivenheten ikke har vært omtalt i pressen."

⁵² Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Nikolay Bukharin". *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 10 Mar. 2021, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Nikolay-Ivanovich-Bukharin>. Accessed 12 July 2021.

⁵³ Riksarkivet: 8400, R25 – G – 3/24: "Legasjonens og G.P.U.". Andreas Urbye to the Norwegian Foreign Office. 1. June 1927

⁵⁴ The British General Strike, 1926. <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/cabinetpapers/alevelstudies/the-general-strike.htm>, accessed 16. April, 2021

is that Russians were found to support the Miners' Federation by way of their leader, A.J. Cook. He was a member of the National Minority Movement (NMM), an establishment that received its primary purpose from the CPGB leadership in Moscow, which was 'to infiltrate the Trades Union Congress, to convert fractions into a Marxist majority'.⁵⁵ The strike ended due to the British government making this kind of protest illegal and unconstitutional, and as a result participation could end in arrest and imprisonment. This led many groups and individuals to withdraw from the strike, making it impossible for the ones left to continue.

The combination of CPGB support of the strike, together with how the Soviet government were investigating Russian citizens for possible British connections, reveal a widespread tactic of anti-British sentiment from the Soviet Union. They appear to be working towards undermining the general British production capacity through their support of the strike. As well as seeking to besmirch the British image through accusations of anti-Soviet activities and the corruption of their own Soviet citizens.

The rest of 1926 was marked by numerous discussions and cabinet sessions focused on whether or not to continue Anglo-Soviet relations. At a cabinet session on the 16th of June, Foreign Secretary Austen Chamberlain's view of there not being any advantage gained and that the subversive activities of the Comintern would not cease with a break with the Soviet, prevailed.⁵⁶ This opinion held throughout 1926, but by December most members of the government only waited on adequate documentation in order to sever relations with the USSR. Such an opportunity came less than a year later, through the Arcos raid in 1927, which is the jumping off point of this thesis.

⁵⁵ Flory, 1977: 711

⁵⁶ TNA: Cabinet 40 (1926), *Letter from Russian Charge d'affaires to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs*, [CAB 23/53/10]: 24-25

3. The Period of No Diplomatic Relations, 1927-1929

It would be foolish to believe that international capital will leave us in peace. No, comrades, that is not true. Classes exist, international capital exists, and it cannot look on calmly at the development of the country that is building socialism. [...]

– Joseph Stalin, Report Delivered at a Meeting of the Active of the Moscow Organisation of the C.P.S.U.(B.) April 13, 1928 ⁵⁷

Between 1927 and 1929 there was no official diplomatic relationship between Great Britain and the Soviet Union. Relations were broken in May 1927, following a raid on the offices of a Russian organisation in London, and lasted for just over two years, until October 1929. A distinct escalation in arrests of Soviet citizens by the Soviet political police began shortly after the break. The use of show trials as a distinct tool of propaganda, governmental control and policing had, as we have seen, been ongoing throughout the 1920s. Around 1927, however, something changed. With the break in Anglo-Soviet relations earlier in the year, the Soviet government embarked on a large scale purge of any person who had (no matter how tenuous) any connection to Great Britain and to other capitalist organisations of the West.⁵⁸ Previously, only small groups of people, or even individuals, were subjected to arrests and public trials. What changed in 1927 was that the Soviet government began a purge on such a scale that the international scene also noticed and took great interest in the outcomes. The accusations from this point on often dealt with foreign espionage, foreign support of Soviet industrial sabotage, and more. Those charged were sent through a rapid-type trial structure that saw most of the accused judged, sentenced, and the sentence carried out in less than a day or at least in under a week. The trials affected more than just the social and political situation in the Soviet Union due to their involvement of foreign nations and foreign citizens and their outcomes would have much to say on the Anglo-Soviet relationship itself, and on the general international political balance.

3.1. The 1927 Arcos Raid and the break in Anglo-Soviet relations

In February 1927, Baldwin's cabinet undertook a 'full-scale review of the question of Anglo-Soviet relations' following an apparent increase in Soviet anti-British propaganda.⁵⁹ Some in the Cabinet argued for breaking off relations right away, but a group of ministers, Austen Chamberlain among them, opposed a split. Chamberlain saw a break in relations as no hinder for the Soviet government to continue transferring money and communications to the CPGB for their operations in Britain.⁶⁰ He also "hypothesized that a diplomatic break (...) would have serious domestic repercussions, beyond the damage it would do to British trade interests". Chamberlain and the head of the Russian Section of the Foreign Office, J.D. Gregory, warned the Cabinet of ending the relationship. Gregory also warned against sending a note of protest as he could only see it ending in controversy. The cabinet did not listen to Gregory on the latter, but did decide against ending relations, and thus on the

⁵⁷ Stalin, *Works* Vol. 11 (1954): 58. THE WORK OF THE APRIL JOINT PLENUM OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE AND CENTRAL CONTROL COMMISSION

⁵⁸ Riksarkivet: 7372, H62 – D – 7/27: Arrest av personer som har hat forbinnelse med den britiske mission. Andreas Urbye to the Norwegian Foreign Office. 18. July1927. (8 documents)

⁵⁹ Flory, 1977: 712

⁶⁰ This is the same line of argument he used the year before, when discussing a possible breach of relations following the Soviet interference in the British General Strike.

18th of February 1927 they agreed to send a strong note of warning, demanding a change in Soviet policy.

In addition to the strong opposition from Chamberlain and Gregory, the British Ambassador to Moscow, Robert Hodgson, also advised against sending such a note. He too was ignored, and on the 23rd of February, after agreeing on a revised draft, they sent a note to the Soviet Government, consisting of a list of several Russian breaches of the no-propaganda article in the 1921 Trade Agreement⁶¹. The Soviet Government, through Maxim Litvinov, the Commissar for Foreign Affairs, answered with a list of counter-accusations, and warned that the British would have to take full responsibility for the consequences if a break in relations should occur at this point in time.⁶²

The British public's negative perception of the Soviet Union that had emerged a few years earlier continued to grow steadily during said period. This pushed the British government to search for reasons to break off or at least leverage for changing their position towards the Soviet Union. Thus began a search for any incriminating evidence of Soviet interference in British domestic and foreign affairs. The search went on for a few months, until in the evening of the 11th of May, Secretary of State for War, Sir Laming Worthington-Evans, informed the Home Secretary, William Joynson-Hicks, of a missing War Office (WO) document. It was thought to be in the possession of a Russian due to a Russian-made photographic copy that had found its way to the WO. This led Chamberlain and Prime Minister Baldwin to approve a raid of the offices of a Russian organisation where the document was believed to be held, the following day.⁶³

On the 12th of May, 1927, at 4.30 p.m., British authorities by way of London Metropolitan police and agents of the Special Branch of Scotland Yard, raided the All-Russian Co-Operative Society (ARCOS) offices, which was shared with the Russian trade delegation, at Soviet House at 49 Moorgate.⁶⁴ This became known as the ARCOS-Raid and has been referred to as the cause for the break in the Anglo-Soviet relationship. Even though they did not locate the document that had instigated the raid in the first place, they found other documents and weaponry that pointed to Soviet anti-British operations and propaganda. These documents were not, however, enough by themselves to sever relations, and the British government saw the need to include other documentation they had collected by 'less reputable means', in their accusations of Soviet interference.⁶⁵

On the 24th of May, Baldwin announced to the House that his government's recommendation was for relations with the Soviet Union to be terminated.⁶⁶ Closely following this, Sir Robert Hodgson and the rest of the British Legation was called home in a hurry, on the grounds that the Conservative Party had finally decided to end Anglo-Soviet relations. Some of the legation had to leave in such a hurry that they were unable to return to their homes in Moscow to retrieve their belongings.⁶⁷ No new British representative stepped foot on Soviet soil until 1929 when Sir Esmond Ovey was chosen as British Ambassador to the Soviet Union. However, as with any relationship that has been going on for many years, covering numerous events and affecting more people than the two

⁶¹ TNA: The 1921 Trade Agreement. CAB 24/121: Cabinet Paper (C.P.) 2724. "Trading Relations with Russia." File no. 18/E/201. 16. March 1921. The introduction deals with the question of propaganda. The propaganda part of the agreement can be found in appendix B.

⁶² Flory, 1977: 712-714

⁶³ Flory, 1977: 716

⁶⁴ Flory, 1977: 707

⁶⁵ Andrew, 1982: 963-964

⁶⁶ Flory, 1977: 719

⁶⁷ Riksarkivet: 7371, H62 – D – 5/27 I: Varetagelse av britiske interesser i SSSR. Bagage for Imperial War Graves Commissioner Creed. Three documents of various correspondence between the British and Norwegian governments and Norwegian Legation in Moscow. 8. July 1927.

main relations, some channels of communication had to be retained. Therefore, over the two years in question, the Norwegian government, with their Chargé d'affaires in Moscow Andreas Urbye, functioned as temporary go-between for the two nations. This position and the close Anglo-Norwegian relationship growing out of it, came to be of immense importance over the next few decades, with collaborations during WWII and onwards as some examples. Urbye became highly regarded amongst British government officials, nurturing close contacts with people such as Sir Ronald Lindsay and Mr. Palairet, even travelling to London for in-person meetings in August 1928.⁶⁸

3.2. The "Illustrious Twenty" & an increase in arrests of state enemies

The months following the split in Anglo-Soviet relations were riddled with arrests, sentences with and without trials, and executions, of various persons who were deemed anti-Soviet, counter-revolutionary or capitalist agents by Soviet authorities. In his speech at the Joint Plenum of the Central Committee and Central Control Commission of the C.P.S.U.(B), *July 29 – August 9, 1927*, Stalin discusses issues concerning how to handle counter-revolutionaries. He refers to an arrest on June 9th, and the subsequent execution, of about 20 people accused of terrorism and sabotage at the behest of foreign powers.

There can be no doubt that hostility against the USSR is growing among certain strata of the pacifist and reactionary liberal bourgeoisie, especially owing to the shooting of the twenty 'illustrious' terrorists and incendiaries.⁶⁹

The description in the following footnote provides additional details on the ordeal:

This refers to the shooting, in accordance with the sentence pronounced on June 9 1927, by the Collegium of the OGPU of the USSR, of twenty monarchist whiteguards for conducting terrorist, sabotage and espionage activities. These whiteguards had been sent to the USSR by the intelligence services of foreign countries; among them were former Russian princes and members of the nobility, big landlords, industrialists, merchants and guards officers of the tsarist army.⁷⁰

Stalin claims the arrested twenty were operating under foreign influence and thus shifts the blame of their actions, as well as perhaps the blame of other domestic hardships, into the hands of capitalist foreign countries. The twenty is described as 'monarchist whiteguards', thus successfully connecting them to their old enemies during the Russian Civil War, before furthering this alienation by dragging in the class discussion, describing them as 'former Russian princes and members of the nobility'. Stalin is quite successfully removing blame from himself and his government, placing it amongst western capitalist states. As shown in chapter two, this is not a strictly new tactic, nor will this be the last time he uses it in order to remove his enemies and slandering his capitalist western neighbours. What is special with this specific example, however, is the directness of these connections. They are clearly stated, not to be misunderstood, and the lines between Soviet enemies of the state and foreign nations are drawn quite explicitly. As far as I can tell, similar instances earlier in the 1920s did not see accusations of foreign entities as

⁶⁸ Riksarkivet: 0235, Urbye, Embetspapirer 1927-1939. "Minister Urbyes besøk". 11. August 1928.

⁶⁹ Stalin, *Works Vol. 10*, Foreign Press, Moscow (1954): 48

⁷⁰ Stalin, *Works Vol. 10*, Foreign Press, Moscow (1954): 392

clearly as this one, which further adds to the changing nature and magnitude of Soviet judicial acts.⁷¹

Without having definite proof, these “illustrious twenty” were also connected to Great Britain, and the past British Chargé d’affaires to Moscow, Sir Robert Hodgson, specifically. In sources found at Riksarkivet in Oslo, in letters dated June 1927 from Urbye to London, there is referenced a Mr. and Mrs. Evreinov in connection to the arrest of about twenty others. Urbye describes the people arrested and executed as being accused of ‘financial and military espionage for Mr. Hodgson’. The arrests and executions are connected to the departure of the British Legation in May by Urbye when he states that “Her husband was shot by the Bolsheviks immediately after the departure of the British Mission from Moscow”.⁷² The letters also ask how Mrs Evreinov might be able to travel back to England, seeing as she was a British citizen before marrying her husband, but later on it seems she has been exiled. In another document from Riksarkivet, it is stated that “it had been proved, that Mrs. E [Evreinov] had taken an active part in her husband’s work as a British spy”. Urbye is sceptical of this information, seeing as he has had private contact with Sir. Hodgson, in which any such connections was deemed false by the diplomat. Urbye notes:

I had got a private letter from Sir Robert Hodgson, in which he affirms the innocence of Mr. Evreinov, who never had been a spy from him. I knew Sir Robert and when he said that E. was innocent, there could be no doubt of his innocence. Mr. Evreinov was shot, so for him nothing could be done, but if he was innocent, then Mrs. E. was also innocent.⁷³

This private correspondence provides a plethora of colourful descriptions by Hodgson concerning the actions of the Soviet government towards contacts and friends of the British legation.⁷⁴ The reasons for Mr. and Mrs. Evreinov’s arrests, the former’s execution and the latter’s subsequent exile, seems rather vague, and Urbye points this out later on as well. He met with Georgy Chicherine⁷⁵ on July 24th, to discuss the various arrests and other political problems that occurred at the time. In the report from this meeting, Chicherine is unable to explicitly define the terms of Mr Evreinov’s arrest and execution. He also seems to attempt to instil doubt concerning the honesty of the actions of the past British legation. Urbye continues to support the words of Sir Hodgson throughout the report. He is claiming that since the entirety of the charges against the Evreinovs are based on them being spies for Sir Hodgson, a declaration from Sir Hodgson stating his innocence and their lack of connection should be enough for the G.P.U., seeing as it was quite sufficient for him.

Even though he claims they have convincing proof of the Evreinovs’ guilt, Chicherine did not provide this information to Mr. Urbye. This type of vagueness and unwillingness to divulge information of arrested people connected to foreign entities was a common tactic of the Soviet Government, as we will see in connection to later trials e.g. in the case of the

⁷¹ The Savinkov case do mention foreign political personnel, but in a more musing capacity, not a direct connection being used as the main parts of the criminal accusation, as is the case here.

⁷² Riksarkivet: 7371, H62 – D – 4/27: Ettersørsel om statsborgerskap eller visum for Mrs. Evreinov. Andreas Urbye to the Norwegian Foreign Office. 11. June 1927.

⁷³ Riksarkivet: 7372, H62 – D – 7/27: Arrestasjon av personer i forbindelse med den britiske legasjon. Andreas Urbye to the Norwegian Foreign Office. 12. June 1927 The quote is from “Conference with Chicherine, Sunday July 24th, 6 o. cl. P.m.” by Anders Urbye.

⁷⁴ Riksarkivet: 0235, Urbye, Embetspapirer 1927-1939. A six-page letter from Robert M. Hodgson to Urbye concerning the arrests and executions of British-connected Soviet citizens after the break in Anglo-Soviet relations. 31. July 1928.

⁷⁵ Georgy Chicherine (24 November 1872 – 7 July 1936) was the first People’s Commissar for Foreign Affairs in the Soviet Government, from March 1918 to July 1930.

Shakhty Trial and the Industrial Party Trial. The Soviet authorities uses the fact that the case concerns Soviet citizens as a way to exclude any foreign state and their enquiry for information, no matter if the accused were working for a foreign company or a foreign government at the time of their arrest. As long as they arrested and sentenced Soviet citizens, they could argue that they had no reason for informing or involving whatever foreign entity that might have an interest in the event. By being considered a purely domestic matter, the process was not treated to the same level of scrutiny as similar events involving international actors. This seems to imply an understanding that if they chose their citizens cleverly, they could still negatively impact the foreign powers of their choice, without out-right risking their diplomatic relations with said entity, but they had to be careful. Chicherine hints at this precarious situation towards the end of the report from Mr. Urbye:

As to the question of expelling her from Russia, Mr. Ch. remarked that in times as dangerous as those in which we now lived, it would be a very insufficient measure to expulse persons guilty of espionage.

At the end of their discussion, Urbye is seen trying to drive the point home of how this entire situation is actually a delicate Anglo-Soviet dilemma, by referring to Mrs. Evreinov as the 'poor Englishwoman'. By describing her as an Englishwoman, Urbye changes the narrative of the incident from being a purely domestic Soviet issue, to it being a possible international affair. He indicates with this that the British government might consider it a Anglo-Soviet matter, rather than a simple Soviet problem of domestic anti-soviets, which in turn would lead them to be more directly involved. Based on the answers, or rather a lack thereof, Urbye's tactic seems not to have been as successful as he might have wanted. The Soviet government did not change their stance on this specific case, nor did they act more careful in similar cases after this, continuing throughout 1927 arresting individuals and groups accused of anti-Soviet activities.

The months closely following the rupture in Anglo-Soviet relations experienced several instances similar to that of the "illustrious Twenty". The Soviet government quickly implemented a policy targeting people connected to Great Britain, and this time they did not seem to care whether anyone knew about it. Over the course of the summer, they arrested and tried over 50 people, with varying results.⁷⁶ Seeing as the British government had recently accused the Soviets of anti-British activities and raided a Russian organisation (ARCOS) and the Russian trade delegation, before breaking off relations altogether, one can see why the Soviets might feel justified in retaliating.

Based on the sources found, the Soviet government did not increase their arrests and accusations until after the break in relations. This is indicative of the break itself being a catalyst for the change in Soviet judicial acts, though it is not altogether clear how much of a catalyst it truly was. As seen in the previous chapter, the Soviet government used trials heavily following the Civil War in order to control the masses and remove people in opposition. In addition to the actual trials that dealt with actual people, there were theatrical performance trials provided as entertainment for the public. The combination of these two facets of show trials, the ones dealing with real cases and the ones that did not, provided an extensive outlet for propaganda to be used by the government to grow and form their new nation. With a rupture in a rather important diplomatic relation, the Soviet government received another tool for their propaganda work: someone to blame. Due to this break, they did not have to take care to follow any previous treaties regulating rhetoric

⁷⁶ 20 (the 'illustrious twenty'), 26 in the Leningrad trial, and many more in smaller groups or just individuals in between.

and actions that could negatively impact their relationship with Great Britain. Therefore, they used any connections to Great Britain that could be found among their own citizens as a way to arrest and remove people that might oppose their ideology and politics. They had not done this to such an extent before, and it only grew from here on out.

Just a few months after the break, in the middle of all these arrests and vague accusations, comes the first public trial, in the time period in focus here, that dealt directly with possible foreign-initiated and/or controlled espionage and sabotage in the Soviet Union.

3.3. The 1927 Leningrad Trial and its consequences

From sources from the Norwegian National Archives, a large trial seems to have been conducted in September 1927, referred to as the Leningrad Trial, of people accused of being connected to a 'British spy ring'.⁷⁷ Not much is found concerning the details or consequences of the Leningrad Trial, and when doing a preliminary search online, nothing definitive is found even concerning its actual existence.

According to newspaper extracts from the *Daily Chronicle* it seems to have involved around 26 people of various nationalities, all being accused of belonging to a British spy ring operating in the Soviet Union.⁷⁸ According to the newspaper, the Soviet government and their prosecutors claimed that "one of the accused confessed to fantastic relations with British spy officials". The accused in question was an Albert Goyer, and based on his 'confession' many of the others were also arrested. However, Goyer "denies that he made any such confession". The accused were supposed to have been intelligence officers working "under a 'Captain Boyce', formerly attached to the British Mission at Helsingfors, and later at Reval".⁷⁹ The British government denies all accusations of having a spy ring in the Soviet Union, as well as denying the citizenship of a 'Captain Boyce'. In the newspaper article it is said that "in British official circles, (...) there is not and never has been a passport officer named 'Captain Boyce' or 'Captain Boys'".

Several of the accused were connected to both the British and the Finnish governments due to their work taking place in both countries at various points in time. It is stated in an article from *Times*, a British newspaper, that both the Norwegian Mission, on behalf of the British Government, and the Finnish Government made protests of there ever existing such a spy ring, in any form, and that none of the accused were British or Finnish citizens. This is not unsurprising seeing as no country would openly admit to having spies in other countries. Due to the lack of details and evidence connecting these people to either British or Finnish officials, it seems plausible that at least these specific people were not spies. This is, however, difficult to establish based on the sources available to me, as they are few and far between.

Their sentences were broadcasted to both Soviet and foreign nations the day of their release. Nine of the accused were sentenced to "supreme measure of social defence – death" (8 men and 1 woman), whilst the rest were sentenced to 'long terms of penal servitude'. The newspaper also states that two more women "deserved death", but one was too young and the other too old, so they were imprisoned instead.

The sentences sparked outrage among the British public, even though there were no evidence of the accused actually being British citizens. The lack of sources not only

⁷⁷ Riksarkivet: 7372, H62 – D – 7/27: *The Daily Chronicle* newspaper articles concerning the Leningrad 'spies'. 14. September 1927.

⁷⁸ Ibid. 7372, H62 – D – 7/27. 14. September 1927.

⁷⁹ Riksarkivet: 8400, R25 – G – 3/24: *Times* newspaper article and correspondence regarding the execution of British 'spies' in the Soviet Union. Benjamin Vogt to the Norwegian Foreign Office. 17. September 1927.

detailing the trial but also discussing its actual existence, leads me to wonder if the trial not only were used by the Soviet authorities to attack foreign entities, but also by the British government in their anti-Soviet propaganda. Its actors were apparently made-up British officers and spies, being charged with blatant sabotage and espionage. They were said to be a well-funded and well-organised professional British spy-ring, but for some reason they were discovered right after the Anglo-Soviet breach in relations, further strengthening the anti-British sentiment pushed by the Soviet government.

Despite its uncertain existence, The Leningrad Trial is important to discuss because it was one of the first and most direct attacks up until this point, by the Soviet Government, on foreign capitalist nations and their alleged support of anti-Soviet activities in the Soviet Union. Where before the trials and troubles concerning domestic anti-Soviet activities dealt mostly with Soviet citizens and Soviet organisations (e.g. Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries), this time they directly connected the accused saboteurs to foreign nations: Britain and Finland. According to the newspaper, this case was also used in Stalin's 'War Scare' tactic:

The Soviet authorities are exploiting the trial for their war-scare campaign throughout the length and breadth of the land. The Soviet Press publishes a warning by the Deputy Commissar for War, Unschlicht, in the course of which he urges the Soviet peasants to gather in their crops, but to keep their rifles ready for the defence of the harvest against foreign plunderers.⁸⁰

The focus on foreign connections and the use of the incident in the national war scare tactic resulted in more international interest of the trial, since the accusations and connections made during the session could potentially have political ramifications. None of the great European powers were ready for a new global conflict so shortly after WWI, so the trial and general situation in the Soviet Union were closely monitored by several nations. The international interest in the trial and its consequences, might at first seem odd due to the seemingly unimportant defendants and participants. The trial had, however, the potential of shifting the present balance in European politics, depending on the course of action chosen by the Soviet Union in regards to the assumed British and Finish citizens. Luckily, the Soviet government did not seem to directly accuse the British and Finish government of acts and orders so severe that they felt the need to defend themselves and retaliate harshly. Similar tactics were used a year later, but this time the Soviet Government went one step further by including actual foreign citizens and sentencing them in a very public trial: The Shakhty Trial.

3.4. The 1928 Shakhty Affair

The Shakhty Affair provided Stalin and his government with ample opportunities to purge the Communist Party and the educational sphere, changing the organisation of both. It was a trial of 53 engineers charged with sabotage, wrecking and colluding with foreign powers in order to undermine and destroy Soviet progress in industry. The arrests happened on March 7th 1928 and it consisted of five German technicians working for A.E.G and 48 Russian specialists.⁸¹

⁸⁰ Ibid. 8400, R25 - G - 3/24: 17. September 1927.

⁸¹ Kuromiya: 15. A.E.G. was a German company that produced electrical equipment. It stands for *Allgemeine Elektrizitäts-Gesellschaft AG* (AEG; German for 'General electricity company') and was founded in Berlin as the *Deutsche Edison-Gesellschaft für angewandte Elektrizität* in 1883 by Emil Rathenau.

The trial began May 18th, at 10:00 A.M, in the House of Columns in Moscow, and it concluded with oral verdicts handed down at 1:30 A.M on July 7th.⁸² Andrei Y. Vishinsky, the chairman of the Supreme Court of the USSR, presided over the trial, with Nikolai V. Krylenko as prosecutor. Of the five Germans, two were released before the trial. The verdicts of the remaining defendants were as follows: two of the Germans were acquitted and their immediate release was ordered; one of the Germans received a suspended sentence of one year for bribery.⁸³ Eleven of the Russians were condemned to death (but only five were actually executed, whilst the remaining six seems to have received life imprisonments instead). About 38 of the Russians were sentenced to 1-10 years' imprisonment, three were sentenced to suspended sentences, and two were acquitted. The five Russians who were executed were: N.N. Gorletskii, N.K. Krzhizhanovskii, V.Ia. Lusevich, S.Z. Budnyi, and N.A. Boiarinov.⁸⁴

Under a meeting of the active members of the Moscow Organization of the C.P.S.U.(B)., on the 13th of April, 1928, Stalin delivered a report on the work of the April Joint Plenum of the Central Committee and Central Control Commission.⁸⁵ He used this opportunity to discuss the reasons for the Shakhty Affair and how it affected the way in which the Party had to re-organise the departments of education and technical industry, and the general oversight of them both. He stated that the affair itself was an "economic counter-revolution, plotted by a section of the bourgeois experts, former coal-owners".⁸⁶ He then connects the accused saboteurs to the "counter-revolutionary anti-Soviet capitalist organisations in the West", by naming them backers of the accused, in that way successfully furthering the hate and distrust of the capitalist western powers he had promoted throughout the 1920s.⁸⁷

These tactics had been in use by the Soviet Government since 1922, so what makes the Shakhty case different? Well, the trial concerned the highest number of people arrested and accused at one time up to this point, as well as impacting a foreign nation, namely Germany, in a more direct way than before. As we saw earlier in the case of the Leningrad trial, the Soviet government focused mainly on Russian citizens with connections to Great Britain, no matter how tenuous these were. They also focused on how foreign nations supported and backed these anti-Soviet groups in order to threaten the industrial growth of the Soviet Union. The Soviet government wanted to negatively affect a foreign nation, but due to the precarious European diplomatic climate of the 1920s, they could not outright attack a foreign power. They had to look at how such an event would affect the diplomatic relationship they had with said nation, and if it was worth it or not. In the Shakhty Affair, this resulted in the inclusion of foreign nationals, seemingly due to the idea that the offended nation would not intervene in any noticeable way.

The difference between the two trials lies in the small detail of the nationality of the accused. In the Leningrad Trial, none of the defendants were confirmed to be of either British or Finnish citizenship according to the sources, whilst in the Shakhty Affair five of the accused were German citizens. The Leningrad Trial pushed the limits of what the Finnish-

⁸² Rosenbaum: 255 (18)

⁸³ Rosenbaum: 256 (19); Bailes ch. 3; Graham, 1993: 44-45

⁸⁴ There has been some confusion in the sources as to the exact sentences given the Russian defendants. The number executed varies among historians, as well as the length of the imprisonments of the others. For further research on this one needs to look at Russian-written sources, as those have not been looked at in this thesis due to a lack of knowledge in Russian. The English-written sources used here are Rosenbaum, Kurt, "The German Involvement in the Shakhty Trial", *The Russian Review* XIII, (July,1962); Bailes, Kendall: *Technology and Society Under Lenin and Stalin: Origin of the Soviet Technical Intelligentsia, 1917-1941*; Kuromiya, Hiroaki, *Stalin's Industrial Revolution-Politics and Workers 1928-1932*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1988.

⁸⁵ J.V. Stalin, *Works vol. 11: 1928 - March 1929* (Moscow, 1954)

⁸⁶ Stalin, *Works vol 11: 57*

⁸⁷ *ibid.* 57

Soviet relation could handle, but it persevered. Since the Anglo-Soviet relation was already broken at this point, they could push the limits of diplomatic relations when it came to Great Britain, but they still had to be careful not to push too hard in fear of prompting retaliation in other forms. I surmise that what kept the Soviet Government from inciting an international incident in 1927 is the simple fact that the defendants were not proven to be Finnish or British citizens. The Soviet Government did not run the risk of sentencing a British citizen to execution, which would most likely have led to the British government retaliating with more severe measures. This meant that the decision of the Soviet government to include the German engineers in the Shakhty Affair, turned an otherwise purely domestic dispute of sabotage and opposition, into an international affair with the potential to shatter German-Soviet relations or even instigate another continental conflict.

As Rosenbaum argues, it seems as if the Soviet government viewed the German-Soviet relationship as strong enough to withstand such an event, as well as Germany seeming too weak politically and militarily to offer any threat towards the Soviet Union.⁸⁸ This seems the most likely reason as to why only German engineers and a German firm were targeted. For almost a year, the Soviet government had targeted and arrested numerous people connected to Great Britain. Why, then, would not the first Soviet trial involving foreign defendants include British ones? Either the Soviet government viewed their position towards Great Britain as too precarious to try such a thing, or they did not have an opportunity such as the Shakhty case gave them with the Germans. Based on the source material, the first option seems the most likely, seeing as just before the Shakhty Affair, another trial was conducted under similar circumstances involving a British firm. In correspondence found between the Norwegian legation in Moscow and the British government, there is referenced an arrest on the 8th of February 1928, of a director of a British firm, the M.I.S. Limited, that operated in the Soviet Union.⁸⁹ The accused was a Mr. Telejinsky, a Russian whom the Soviet government arrested on charges of wrecking and anti-Soviet activities. These actions were to have taken place in his spare time, not during work hours and not through his work at the M.I.S. Limited, thus not warranting the British to be notified or informed of the arrest. When more of the directors and officers of the same firm were arrested as well, the British and Norwegian legations surmised that there must be some other reason for the arrests. They reasoned that a majority of the firm's hires cannot all have conducted themselves personally in a way that caused the Soviet government to have grounds for arresting them, and all at the same time at that. They made connections between these arrests and the beginning purges of anti-Soviet and counter-revolutionary forces they were witnessing across the Soviet Union, through foreign firms, by the Soviet Government.

Whether the M.I.S. Limited arrests have any connection to the arrests of the engineers in the Shakhty affair, has yet to be verified, but its details are very similar, so it might be seen as providing a broader perspective of the climate of the time. The engineers at Shakhty were arrested on March 7th; Mr. Telejinsky and his officers were arrested on or around the 8th of February,⁹⁰ only one month earlier. Was the Mr. Telejinsky-incident just a stepping stone towards an affair like Shakhty? If other foreign firms were affected around the same time by random arrests and harassment by the Soviet political police, this might provide evidence of the systematic use of show trials for their domestic political control. It

⁸⁸ *ibid.* Stalin, Works vol 11: 57

⁸⁹ Riksarkivet: 7370, H62 – D – 1/27: M.I.S.' direktør i Moskva. Nine documents of various correspondence between the Norwegian Legation in Moscow and the Norwegian Foreign Office and the British government. 28. February – 22. March 1928.

⁹⁰ Riksarkivet: 7370, H62 – D – 1/27: The arrest of Mr. Telejinsky. Correspondence between D.R. Trefusis and the Norwegian Legation in Moscow. Trefusis represented the British company Mr. Telejinsky worked for. 12. March 1928.

can also show us something about how the Soviet government viewed its own position in world politics. It seems as if they felt more comfortable accusing and sentencing German engineers and a German firm, than doing the same to British engineers and firms, seeing as they only accused Russian citizens connected to a British firm, not actual British citizens. Rosenbaum touch upon this idea in his text, but he only connects it directly to the Shakhty Affair itself, not including other trials and similar incidents such as the Leningrad Trial and the numerous arrests of the time.⁹¹

The existence of the M.I.S. Limited case, also indicate how the Soviet government perceived the strength and political position of the various European powers. By not accusing British citizens at this time (even though they most likely had the chance) and settling for Russians who worked for the British, it indicates that the Soviets saw the British position as stronger than the German. Maybe the soviet authorities wanted to check if the British could be a possible target for a trial like Shakhty, but they proved too aggressive in their response and were thus left alone for the time being. The M.I.S. Limited case might have worked as an early step in the use of show trials at the time, indicating the upward trend of the use and magnitude of the Soviet show trials to come.

In order to ascertain what role Shakhty and the other trials had in the grander scheme of the political landscape of the time, one has to look at who and how someone would benefit from a trial like Shakhty. In this case it seems rather clear that Stalin and his government benefited the most. The rhetoric used before, during and after the trial, both from the judges, prosecutor, accused, and Stalin himself, determined how the public would perceive the event. The rhetoric leans heavily towards Stalinist propaganda and typical phrasing found in the Communist party leaflets. As mentioned in chapter two, the Soviet show trials were used in such a way that the Soviet government could form and design how they would like the public to view certain topics, as well as construct behaviour amongst them that would positively affect their political plans. The Shakhty Affair successfully provided Stalin and his government with both of these, seeing as it marks a change in the position and role of the 'bourgeois specialist', who previously:

[H]ad been under party control, but also under party protection because his skills were needed at all levels of industry and industrial administration. Now he was officially under suspicion as a potential saboteur and agent of international capitalism; due for replacement by the young proletarian communist specialist trained in Soviet schools.⁹²

They had throughout the 1920s enjoyed some perks in income and political influence, but this was slowly changing during the latter half of the decade. This change in the position of specialists and experts in the industrial field is important to note, as it continued for many years. The Shakhty Affair seems to solidify this change, and it appear to worsen as Stalin gained stronger control of larger areas of the Soviet Government. This came to the forefront during the trials happening under the First Five-Year Plans between 1929-1932, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

⁹¹ Rosenbaum, 1962: 253-257.

⁹² Fitzpatrick, 1974: 39-40

4. The Period of Industrial and Economic struggles, 1929-1932

The first contingent of graduates of the Industrial Academy is its first arrow launched into the camp of our enemies, into the camp of production routine and technical backwardness. (...) Greetings to the first graduates of the Industrial Academy, which is providing the country with a new Bolshevik detachment of leaders of our socialist industry, leaders fortified with technical knowledge.

– J. Stalin, April 25th, 1930; A letter to the first graduates of the Industrial Academy.⁹³

In the spring of 1929, the Anglo-Soviet relationship began to change towards the better for the first time since it was disrupted. In Great Britain they were getting ready for the General Election in May, and the ruling Conservative Party was trying their best to keep their majority in the Parliament and keeping Labour and the Liberals out. On the 30th of May, the election results showed a hung parliament, meaning no party achieved the necessary number of seats to secure the majority and thus no party could take on the leadership on their own. Baldwin's popularity and support had decreased noticeably over the last couple of months, which led him to resign as Prime Minister. This resulted in a faltering Conservative Party that eventually removed themselves from the fight for parliamentary control. Because of this faltering, Labour saw a chance to secure leadership, despite their lack of seats. Shortly after, Labour initiated a minority government with support from the Liberals, leading to Ramsay MacDonald taking on as Prime Minister and a period of Labour control began.

The change in British leadership led directly to the possibility of renewed Anglo-Soviet relations, as the new Labour government continued their 1924 policies of acknowledgment and cooperation with the Soviet Union. The British wish for renewed contact was a stark contrast to the domestic happenings in the Soviet Union. Simultaneously with the British election, the Soviet government conducted numerous arrests and trials of wreckers accused of foreign-supported anti-Soviet activities. Western capitalist political personas were said to be behind all injustices and troubles befalling the Soviet population at the time, operating through White emigres who were in contact with Soviet political and industrial officials. Great Britain was the main villain in the story created by the Soviet government, with numerous highly placed British diplomats and politicians named in cases of sabotage and wrecking over the next four years.

Another characteristic that distinguishes this period from the previous, is the scale of these incidents. The general nature of the events in each period are not so different from each other, but rather the magnitude and scope of them are. Krylenko himself talked about this in his closing speech in the Industrial Party Affair on December 4th 1930:

It seems to me that the present case is a reproduction of the Shakhty case on a larger scale. (...) In the Shakhty case we tried certain traitors in the coal-mining industry. To-day we are trying men who have directed wrecking operations in every fundamental branch of industry. In the Shakhty case there were individual instances of contacts having been established between representatives of the managements of certain mines, of certain coal industries, with their former owners. (...) The foreign associates of these wreckers are represented by the Torgprom, a united organisation of all branches of industry, combing all the formations and groupings of the former

⁹³ Stalin, *Works vol 12*

owners of the nationalised industries. And the contact with them has now assumed an entirely different, a much more highly organised form.⁹⁴

This was the stage on which the renewal of Anglo-Soviet relations stood, beginning a four-year period of disagreements and negotiations on topics of diplomacy, trade, and propaganda. On one side, their relationship was experiencing a mending of past arguments, whilst on the other, they were using each other as scapegoats for nation-wide domestic issues. This resulted in a period characterised by a lack of trust between the two nations, uncertainty concerning how to react in high-profiled international events, and Soviet propaganda actions going well past earlier incidents.

4.1. The renewal of Anglo-Soviet relations

The new Labour government worked towards the renewal of Anglo-Soviet relations together with a representative from the Soviet government, Valerian Dvlgalevsky⁹⁵. He came from France to take on the task of re-negotiating their diplomatic relationship together with Arthur Henderson, the head of the British Foreign Office. They met on numerous occasions between June and November, eventually producing a Protocol on how to renew their relations that was satisfactory to both parties. This was implemented sometime in late November 1929. On the 13th of December, Esmond Ovey⁹⁶ reached Moscow as the first British Ambassador to the Soviet Union, and a few days later Grigory Sokolnikov⁹⁷, the new Soviet Ambassador to Great Britain, arrived in London, making their renewed relationship official. The road to reconciliation was not easy, however.

On the 29th of July, Dvlgalevsky met with Henderson in London to begin discussions. Unsurprising, there were some disagreements between the two representatives and their governments, but their overall discussion went smoothly. According to some historians, e.g. Brian Bridges, the Soviet government hoped for a quick statement from the new British government detailing their plans of reinstating Anglo-Soviet contact through the exchange of ambassadors.⁹⁸ When this did not come, they insisted on the creation of ambassadorial contact before discussing and agreeing on any other outstanding questions. The British, however, would prefer to deal with some of the outstanding dilemmas and questions before agreeing to full renewal and the exchange of ambassadors. This soured the already unstable relationship, but seems to have been somewhat expected on both fronts, and as such did not notably impact the discussion negatively. The outstanding questions up for debate were:

- (1.) "Definition of the attitude of both Governments towards the treaties of 1924.
- (2.) Commercial treaty and allied questions.

⁹⁴ Rothstein, 1931: 150

⁹⁵ Valerian S. Dvlgalevsky (23 September 1885 – 14 July 1934) was a member of the Bolshevik revolutionary movement, Soviet statesman, and diplomat. 1927-1934 he was the Plenipotentiary Representative of the Soviet Union in France.

⁹⁶ Sir Esmond Ovey (23 July 1879 – 30 May 1963) was a British diplomat who was ambassador to the Soviet Union, Belgium and Argentina. In November 1929 Ovey was appointed the first British Ambassador to the Soviet Union.

⁹⁷ Grigori Yakovlevich Sokolnikov (1888-1939) was a Russian Old Bolshevik revolutionary, economist, and Soviet politician. From 1929 to 1932, Sokolnikov was the Soviet ambassador to the United Kingdom. In 1932, Sokolnikov was recalled to Moscow and appointed Deputy People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs.

⁹⁸ Bridges, Brian, "Anglo-Soviet relations, 1927-1932". thesis, Swansea University, 1979, <http://cronfa.swan.ac.uk/Record/cronfa43078>: 209-254 "Renewed Relations"

- (3.) Claims and counter-claims, intergovernmental and private; debts, claims arising out of intervention and otherwise, and financial questions connected with such claims and counter-claims.
- (4.) Fisheries.
- (5.) Application of previous treaties and conventions.⁹⁹

Question 1 mainly referenced the topic of propaganda. The British government wished to advance negotiations concerning this question due to its delicacy, whilst the Soviets did not. They eventually landed on a compromise. In paragraph 7 of the Protocol, it is agreed that as soon as diplomatic relations are reinstated, marked either by the exchange of ambassadors or no later than when they show their credentials, each nation will confirm their pledge to reinstate article 16 of the 1924 Treaty between the two. This article states that:

The contracting parties solemnly affirm their desire and intention to live in peace and amity with each other, scrupulously to respect the undoubted right of a State to order its own life within its own jurisdiction in its own way, to refrain and to restrain all persons and organisations under their direct or indirect control, including organisations in receipt of any financial assistance from them, from any act overt or covert liable in any way whatsoever to endanger the tranquillity or prosperity of any part of the territory of the British Empire or the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, or intended to embitter the relations of the British Empire or the Union with their neighbours or any other countries.¹⁰⁰

At one point or another in the next few years, all of these questions would be up for discussion. The question of propaganda, however, became relevant right away. Seeing as their relationship ended in 1927 much due to breaches of the 1924 propaganda article, it is not surprising that the British government found it prudent to reach an agreement on this topic. Henderson seems to have pushed the topic rather excessively throughout their negotiations, but Dvlgalevsky continuously shifted focus or avoided any sort of direct answer to it. Based on the Soviet domestic issues coinciding with these negotiations, this is not as surprising as it might have been. The Soviet government during this time were putting their own citizens on trial accused of colluding with foreign states and acting out anti-Soviet activities with support from western capitalist states. The focus was on their higher echelons of industry and academia, and, beginning in around May 1929, the Soviet government implemented a massive and systematic purge of these groups. The accusations connected to these trials and arrests would trigger Article 16, and could potentially create a new diplomatic situation that might have ended the negotiations for renewal. This might be why Dvlgalevsky evaded the question as much as he did. It could also be the reason why the Soviet government seemed to drastically increase their purges, both the number targeted and the scope of them, right when the negotiation for renewed diplomatic relationship began: they wished to remove as many and damage as much as they could before they were bound by a new propaganda and defamation agreement.

4.2. The beginning purges and the 1929 Trial of the Three Chiefs

Towards the end of the 1920s, the Bolsheviks had achieved almost complete control of the government. By 1928, most of the 'old guard' in academia and industry had either quit on

⁹⁹ TNA: CAB 24/206/17: 13

¹⁰⁰ TNA: CAB 24/206/17

their own accord, been fired, arrested, or exiled. This created a severe lack in the professorial college and amongst experts in almost every field, which the Soviet government had to somehow fill. The "new guard" who had begun their education after the Bolshevik seizure of power were too few, and too inexperienced, to take charge of the magnitude of schools and universities throughout the Soviet Union. And as referenced by the quote in the beginning of this chapter, most of them would not finished their formal education until 1930.

To what extent did this purge of the 'old guard' in the academic and industrial spheres continue after 1928? According to Hiroaki Kuromiya, between 1928 and 1931, about "1,256,253 state employees had been investigated, and 138,293, or 11 percent, were purged. Of those purged, 23,000 were classified as category one (enemies of Soviet power)."¹⁰¹ These numbers indicate that the removals and disappearances of highly educated personnel in the Soviet Union were not special occurrences dealing with smaller groups or individuals. It was rather a systematic purging of any who might oppose, either now or in the future, economic, industrial and political plans. Plans that were on the cusp of implementation or in the early stages of development. This is a significant distinction, seeing as it places each trial, arrest and sentence in a larger context of mass purging, instead of as separate incidents. Meaning, in order to fully understand the motives, goals, and reach of each trial within this time frame, it is necessary to look at them in connection to each other, as well as the larger domestic and international settings.

In a speech on the 3rd of November 1929, on the occasion of the 12th anniversary of the October Revolution, Stalin discussed the successes reached by the Party in the last year and their future plans. Here he addressed, in addition to the building up and accumulation of heavy industry, what the problems of cadres were at the time:

(...) the problem: a) of *enlisting* tens of thousands of Soviet-minded technicians and experts for the work of socialist construction, and b) of *training* new Red technicians and Red experts from among the working class. While the problem of accumulation may in the main be regarded as solved, the problem of cadres still awaits solution. And the problem of cadres is now—when we are engaged in the technical reconstruction of industry—the key problem of socialist construction.¹⁰²

In the following, one example of the early stages of the Soviet solution to the problem of cadres will be explored. We will look at the arrest, trial, and sentencing of three technical chiefs accused of anti-Soviet activities. These three fall squarely among the 23,000 categorised as enemies of Soviet power, and thus provides us with a clear example of how the Soviet Government went about this issue. Urbye provides insight into judicial events concerning this political battle happening in the Soviet Union. On the 24th of May 1929, he provides a section from the newspaper *Isvestija*, dated the 23rd of May, 1929:

O.G.P.U har opdaget kontrarevolusjonære organisasjoner i Forbundets jernbanetransport og I gull- og platinaindustrien, som hadde satt sig som mål styrtelse av sovjetmakten, støtte av utenlandsk intervensjon og

¹⁰¹ Kuromiya, 1988: 34

¹⁰² Stalin, *Works vol 12*: 130-131

gjeninnførelse i landet av den kapitalistiske samfunnsordning. Sine mål vilde de nå ved å skade og desorganisere disse grener av statshusholdningen.¹⁰³

One of the holdouts in Soviet governmental control appear to have been some of the commanding offices of the economy and industry, where many of the heads were 'bourgeois' experts, former Mensheviks, or Socialist Revolutionaries.¹⁰⁴ The three chiefs mentioned above were Nikolai K. von Mekk, A.F. Velichko, and Peter A. Palchinsky.¹⁰⁵ The events leading to their arrest and trial shows one of the tactics the Soviet government used to deal with such a group. Based on the information in Urbye's letters, it seems the Soviet government piled accusations of counter-revolutionary activities on individuals, without having the evidence that would be required in a democratic state. They slowly removed the targeted experts from their positions through accusations of negligence and of outdated expertise, before they were arrested on charges of sabotage, wrecking and counter-revolutionary activities in league with foreign nations.

Det er ved dette som ved de tidligere tilfeller den eiendommelighet, at de dreptes skyld angis i svevende, ubestemte uttrykk. Hvad de har gjort, når det er gjort eller hvor det er gjort fremgår ikke av kunngjørelsen.¹⁰⁶

The vagueness of the information concerning their fates, is quite similar to that of the case of Mr. and Mrs. Evreinov in 1927, and Mr. Telejinsky in 1928, furthering the idea that this was a common tactic, and one that was in constant evolution.

The three men in question are interesting in and of themselves. They represent a group of the higher echelons existing under the Tsarist regime who did not fully support the Bolsheviks after the revolution. Von Mekk was a renowned engineer, and his expertise and reputation kept him out of jail on numerous occasions as the new Soviet government saw their need for him time and time again. Velichenko was close behind von Mekk in renown and position. Both of them were vocal about industrial programs and governmental practices, and they were politically uncertain. Which was not a good combination in industry leadership for a government that pursued full control of their industrial output and production. Palchinsky was, in addition to his industrial expertise, a strong political persona. He was an ex-social revolutionary. Clearly not a supporter of the new Stalinist government, he was a prime target for the Soviet government and would become increasingly important in the future trials of industrial personnel.

Just as with the Social Revolutionaries in 1922, Boris Savinkov in 1924, and the "illustrious twenty" in 1927, this connection to the previous regime and their political uncertainty, meant the new regime most likely saw them as a possible threat in need of controlling. They were first arrested in connection to the Shakhty Affair the year before, but were held in an unknown location until 1929 when they were finally tried for anti-Soviet activities and wrecking, and sentenced to execution. A reason for their exclusion in the Shakhty Affair has not been found at this point, neither concerning why the Soviet

¹⁰³ Riksarkivet: 8400, R25 - G - 3/24: G.P.U. kunngjør at det har latt skyte tre kontrarevolusjonære. Six documents of various correspondence, mainly between Andreas Urbye and the Norwegian Foreign Office. 28. May 1929.

¹⁰⁴ Kuromiya, 1988: 29

¹⁰⁵ 8400, R25 - G - 3/24: The men accused are from two different departments. Firstly, from the transportation department: Nikolai K. von Mekk, chief of the economic department of the People's Commissariat for Posts and Telegraphs; A.F. Velichko, the former chief of People's Commissariat for Transportation. He was also a member of the central administration of Communications of the People's Commissariat. Secondly, from the department of gold- and platinum industry; Peter A. Palchinsky, former assistant minister of trade and industry in the Kerensky government, and the former commander of the defence of the Winter Palace during the October days in 1917. Later he also worked as a professor at the mining institute (Bergvergsinstitutt) in Leningrad.

¹⁰⁶ Riksarkivet: 8400, R25 - G - 3/24. 28. May 1929.

government waited almost a year to try them. Palchinsky seems to have had, according to the Soviet government, somewhat of a leadership position in the anti-Soviet group claimed to be behind most of the sabotage and espionage affecting the Soviet development on several arenas. Their sentences, together with that of a larger group of lesser participants, is given by Urbye through a report from the assistant president of the G.P.U:

"I mote den 22. Mai 1929 besluttet O.G.P.U.'s kollegium efter å ha behandlet saken vedkommende ovennevnte organisasjoner, at: von mekk, N.K., Velitchenko, A.F. og Paltchinsky, P.A., som kontrarevolusjonære skadeanstifere og ufrosnlige fiender av sovjetmakten blir å skyte. Beslutningen er satt i verk. De övrige deltagere I de anförte kontrarevolusjonære organisasjoner er idömt innesperring I konsentrasjonslær I forskjellige tidsrum.

(u) G. Jagoda
Assisterende president i O.G.P.U.¹⁰⁷

The purging of the technical intelligentsia up until this point was quite severe throughout the country. The three chiefs were neither alone in their treatment, nor in their sentences. As stated by Kuromiya, the government removed over 130,000 people from the party over a short four-year period, seemingly leaving the party and governmental departments quite depleted. How did this level of purging affect the efficiency and ability of the Soviet Government to continue with their Five-Year Plan? According to T.H. Rigby, concurrently with these removals, there was implemented "mass recruitment to provide both overwhelming votes for the machine's nominees and resolutions and malleable cadres to replace the purged oppositionists."¹⁰⁸ This allowed the Soviet authorities to continue with their purges seeing as their recruitment was making up for most of the removals, even surpassing the numbers of previous years. Rigby states that between 1928 and 1932, the Communist Party membership increased from 1,305,854 members and candidates, to 3,117,250.¹⁰⁹ How they went about making room for new cadres varied from department to department, but the general tactic seems to be some variation of the treatment of the three chiefs. Many technical experts, high-placed officials, and generally well-off individuals found themselves on the wrong side of politics and ideologies, according to the Soviet government. They were either given the choice of stepping down, or, as was more common, forcibly removed by way of blanket accusations of wrecking and other forms of anti-Soviet activities. About a year and a half later, another Trial took place that used this same tactic, but on a much larger scale than earlier: The Industrial Party Affair.

4.3. The 1930 Industrial Party Affair

In 1930, the Soviet Government claimed to have found a conspiracy of counter-revolutionaries supported by foreign entities, amongst the higher echelons of industry and engineers in general. The defendants were a group of notable Soviet economists and engineers who were accused of having formed an anti-Soviet "Union of Engineers' Organisations" or "Prompartiya" ('Industrial Party'). This is what gave the incident its name: The Industrial Party Affair. Their goal was said to be the wrecking of Soviet industry and transportation departments, which would ultimately result in a forced change in government and the establishment of a new

¹⁰⁷ Riksarkivet: 8400, R25 - G - 3/24. 28. May 1929.

¹⁰⁸ Rigby, 1968: 176

¹⁰⁹ Rigby, 1968: 52

'bourgeoisie democratic dictatorship'. The organisation is alleged to have been created around 1926, and the accused were said to have taken part in these anti-Soviet sabotage actions between 1926-1930.¹¹⁰

The trial itself was conducted between November 25th and December 7th, 1930. Both Vyshinsky and Krylenko resumed their roles from the Shakhty Trial, as the President of the Court and the Public Prosecutor of the R.S.F.S.R. respectfully.¹¹¹ Only two of the accused decided to take the option of being represented by Council, the rest defended themselves. There were eight accused, all Soviet citizens of fairly high positions in industry:

1. Leonid K. Ramzin, 43, former Director of the Thermo-Technical Institute and Professor of the Moscow Technical High School.
2. Ivan A. Kalinnikov, 56, former Vice-Chairman of the Industrial Section of the State Planning Commission of the U.S.S.R, Professor of the Military Aviation Academy and of other Technical High Schools.
3. Victor A. Laritchev, 43, former member of the Presidium and chairman of the Fuel Section of the State Planning Commission of the U.S.S.R.
4. Nikolai F. Charnovsky, 62, former Vice-Chairman of the Engineering Advisory Committee of the Supreme Economic Council of the U.S.S.R. and Professor of various Technical High Schools.
5. Alexander A. Fydotov, 66, former Chairman of the Board of the Textile Scientific Research Institute and Professor of a number of Technical High Schools.
6. Sergei V. Kuprianov, 59, former technical director of the Textile Rationalisation Department of the Supreme Economic Council of the U.S.S.R.
7. Vladimir I. Ochkin, 39, former secretary of the Thermo-Technical Institute and a leading official of the Section of Scientific Research of the Supreme Economic Council of the U.S.S.R.
8. Xenofont V. Sitnin, 52, former engineer of the All-Union Textile Syndicate.¹¹²

The trial appears to have brought forth serious accusations of international support of anti-Soviet powers in the Soviet Union. Both the previous French Prime Minister Mr. Raymond Poincaré (stepped down in July 1929) and Lord Winston Churchill, ex-Chancellor of the Exchequer (in office until June 1929), are said to have been dragged into the trial as negative influences and supporters of the accused. A British newspaper, *The Scotsman*, even goes as far as describing how the accused seems to have succumbed to Western 'satanic temptings':

Mr. Shaw and Aristophanes between them have shown how the drama may caricature the men of the moment, and the Soviet show a laudable desire to keep abreast of the latest dramatic developments by bringing M. Poincaré and M. Briand, Colonel Lawrence and "Lord Churchill", and various other international notabilities into the play. These men personify the forces of evil against which Soviet Russia is fighting an unequal battle. The experts

¹¹⁰ Rothstein, Andrew ed., "Wreckers on Trial. A record of the Trial of the Industrial Party held in Moscow, Nov.-Dec., 1930", New York, Workers' Library Publishers, 1931.

¹¹¹ Rothstein, 1931: 5, with them were also Friedberg (assistant Public Prosecutor), V.P. Antonov-Saratovsky (Judge of the Supreme Court), V.L. Lvov (a Worker at the "AMO" Automobile Works), and P.A. Ivanov (a Worker at the "Putilov" Works), who was attending as Judge in reserve.

¹¹² Rothstein, 1931: 3

apparently succumbed to the Satanic temptings of this gallery of international "counter-revolutionaries".¹¹³

As the quote above shows, the international scene seems to have viewed the trial with less seriousness and more humour and entertainment than it should warrant. Several British newspaper articles reported on it as if it was a theatre performance, and not a judicial trial that would decide the fate of actual human beings. One newspaper, the *Leeds Mercury*, compared the trial to Hollywood, stating that "the court resembles a Hollywood studio, with film cameras constantly 'shooting' the prisoners (...) from all angles".¹¹⁴ This lack of decorum might indicate a general scepticism of the events themselves, or it could be a display of the general British public opinion of the Soviet Union and its policies. The feeling of it all being a grand theatre performance is maintained in British reporting, here by *The Scotsman*:

Elaborate preparations for the staging of this drama have been in progress since September. (...) One of the actors engaged for this production is described as having died during the process of interrogation.¹¹⁵

The 'preparations' refer to the fact that most of the defendants were arrested in September or late summer, on charges of counter-revolutionary activities and wrecking, but it seems as if there is some confusion amongst the British public media on the details of the trial. Between 40-70 people (the number varies between the sources) were reported arrested on these charges, but only eight were put to trial. The confusion with the numbers most likely stems from the fact that two other arrests/ trials occurred around the same time as the arrest of these eight. Over the summer of 1930 large groups of central economic ministers were arrested on accusations of wrecking activities. They were mostly connected to three groups: The Toiling Peasants' Party (TPP), the Union Bureau of Mensheviks (UBM), and the Union of Engineers' Organisations (or 'Prompartiya' - 'Industrial Party').¹¹⁶ Both the TPP and UBM activities were connected to Leonid Ramzin, the main defendant in the Industrial Party trial. Some sources place him in the middle of all of these groups, operating as a sort of coordinator and contact point for both Soviet and foreign wreckers.¹¹⁷ The theatre theme is continued when discussing the accused, and one newspaper describes the situation as follows:

Out of the forty or fifty professors and engineers who were given 'auditions' eight were selected by the Soviet authorities to fill the bill, and they have already shown their fitness for the parts they have to play by pleading guilty to the charges against them and by announcing that they are ready to confess to their crimes.¹¹⁸

These forty or fifty professors and engineers could be referring to about 48 "supply wreckers" found to have allegedly been a part of an organisation that was to "cause hunger in the country and provoke unrest among the broad masses of workers".¹¹⁹ They were executed on the 25th of September, followed by a massive propaganda campaign focusing

¹¹³ British newspaper: *The Scotsman*, Wednesday 26. November 1930. 'Mr Shaw' is referencing the British Secretary of State for War, Thomas Shaw. Aristophanes was a comic playwright of Ancient Athens.

¹¹⁴ British Newspaper: *The Leeds Mercury*, Friday 28. November 1930.

¹¹⁵ British newspaper: *The Scotsman*, Wednesday 26. November 1930

¹¹⁶ Lih, Lars T. et. al. *Stalin's Letters to Molotov*, 1995: 190-198

¹¹⁷ Lih, 1995: 190-98

¹¹⁸ British newspaper: *The Scotsman*, Wednesday 26. November 1930

¹¹⁹ Lih, 1995: 193-194

on placing the blame for the food shortages felt by the public on these wreckers, who had now been dealt with by the government. Whether or not the newspaper article referred to this unknown case or the later Industrial Party trial is uncertain. Both cases, together with the previous Leningrad and Shakhty trials, provides us with a great example of what Molly Flynn describes as the characteristics of Soviet show trials of the 1920s and 1930s. She says that "by playing the roles of upstanding Soviet citizens, or morally sound spectators, the participants of early Soviet mock trials were learning how to perform new modes of accepted behaviour"¹²⁰. The portrayal of each actor involved in the cases provided the soviet public with ample instruction on who to trust and who was behind their troubles: the defendants as lowly enemies of state, of the Soviet authorities as strong in their retaliation, and of the 'enemy' Western states behind it all. *The Scotsman*, again, provides us with a colourful description of this phenomenon:

The play belongs essentially to the drama of ideas, and its purpose is to implant in the mind of the Russian masses the idea that the breakdown of the food supplies and the scarcity of other commodities are due not to Stalin's peasant policy, but to the treachery of experts and the machinations of a gang of "counter-revolutionary wreckers."¹²¹

These newspaper articles are great gateways to achieve an understanding of both how the trials were viewed in Great Britain, and how the Soviet authorities wanted to portray themselves and their judicial system to their neighbours. Allies and enemies of the Soviet Union were led to internalize certain images provided by the Soviet authorities through the medium of the trials. In the case of the Industrial Party Affair, these images included evidence of anti-Soviet activities supported by foreign governments and how specific foreign political individuals were to blame for the hardships and troubles of the Soviet public. This strengthened the already heavy anti-western capitalist sentiment existing amongst the soviet public. When they allowed defamations of high-ranking international diplomats, they also provided us and their contemporaries with information on how they viewed the importance and political position of the nations mentioned.

In a text from 1931, detailed descriptions are given by the various defendants on how foreign actors were connected to their own anti-Soviet activities.¹²² The text itself is a report of the trial published by the American Workers' Library Publishers, edited by Andrew Rothstein, a known British Communist of Russian parents. Rothstein, through his comments and foreword, is pushing the narrative that the Western capitalist governments are twisting any statement to come out of the trial to describing Soviet torture, falsehoods, and government control of the accused and their statements. Even though the text might lean heavily towards being Soviet propaganda, it does provide insight into both the details concerning the trial and what details the Soviet authorities deemed appropriate for their communist agenda. For example, from the final statements, Kalinnikov is discussing the defendant's plans following the overthrow of the current Soviet Government, stating that:

The method of restoration, once a military dictatorship was established, was, of course, to be only one – white terror. There could have been no other. That admits of no doubt. Once we were relying upon intervention, if the foreign troops, the foreign bourgeoisie, foreign imperialism had won, they naturally would have tried first to stamp out in the severest possible way all

¹²⁰ Flynn, 2014: 312-314

¹²¹ British newspaper: *The Scotsman*, Wednesday 26. November 1930

¹²² Rothstein, 1931.

that which had helped create and support the development of the Soviet order.¹²³

The choice of the Soviet authorities of allowing statements like this, that mention foreign interference as well as foreign individuals to such a degree, seems like a counterproductive plan as the trial coincided with negotiations of the new Anglo-Soviet Trade Agreement. Whilst the Soviet government was rapidly removing any personnel who might stand in the way of Stalin's industrialisation plans, they were also vehemently working towards establishing a Commercial Agreement with Great Britain. This agreement, if reached, would hopefully reduce the cost on export and trade in Great Britain, without having to offer the same terms in return. Their inclusion of British politicians could not affect the negotiations positively, so why would they allow it to happen? To answer this, we must look at the full timeline of the negotiations.

4.4. Trade Agreement negotiations & the continued dilemma of propaganda, 1930-32

The discussions surrounding the renewal of diplomatic relations and other agreements being made in connection to these relations, continued throughout the first few years of the 1930s. On the 4th of March, 1930, the President of the Board of Trade, William Graham, circulated a memorandum on the Anglo-Russian Commercial Negotiations to the Cabinet outlining the various questions up for discussion.¹²⁴ From his memorandum, it seems as if the Soviets were trying to secure Anglo-Soviet trade by including statements that would force the British to trade, or at least forcing them to consider trade, with the Soviet Union. In the text, it is stated that the Soviet Government wanted privileges as a 'most-favoured-nation' in export credits in the new agreement, but the British did not want to agree to this. The reason for British hesitance came because it would lock them into trade with the Soviet Union, as well as give the Soviet Union unprecedented favourability over other allied nations, which could ignite troubles further on if other nations saw this as unfair or a sign of the British strongly allying with the Soviet Union.

One month later, on the 8th of April, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Arthur Henderson, circulated to the Cabinet a draft of a temporary Commercial Agreement that would serve as a modus vivendi pending the conclusion of such a treaty.¹²⁵ It consisted of seven Articles and a Protocol, and was reached through several meetings between William Graham, the Soviet Ambassador (G. Sokolnikov), and Arthur Henderson. The next month or so consisted of discussions around this agreement. On the 16th of May, 1930, Graham once again circulate a memorandum to the Cabinet. This time it mentions a draft of a permanent Anglo-Soviet Commercial Trade agreement, as well as discussions on Soviet interests and how the British negotiators might use this to their advantage.

When the Russian negotiations first began, it seemed to me that the Russians would be more anxious to conclude the Commercial Treaty than we were as the Treaty could of necessity be of very little direct value to our traders. I therefore suggested to the Foreign Secretary that the Commercial Treaty might be held back and used as an inducement to the Russians to come to a settlement on other questions in which we were more concerned.¹²⁶

¹²³ Rothstein, 1931: 79

¹²⁴ TNA: CAB 24/210/27

¹²⁵ TNA: CAB 24/211/22

¹²⁶ TNA: CAB 24/212/12

One question of particular concern to the British was the issue of Russian debt.¹²⁷ Since the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917, the new Soviet government had been adamant on not being responsible for the debts and agreements signed by the old tsarist government. Throughout the 1920s, nations had been trying to collect the debts they saw as owed by the Soviet Union, but the Soviet government continued to argue against taking on Tsarist debt and treaties. The British were no different from other western nations in this capacity, and had been bringing the topic up in many previous situations. This time, it seems as if they had found a way to demand the payback of some of the Russian debts by leveraging it together with the conclusion of the Trade Agreement negotiations.¹²⁸ It is uncertain how far the British went with this idea of leveraging the Temporary Commercial Treaty against the debt-question, but they did land on an agreement sometime in May 1930. Both the question of the commercial treaty and the question of debt was mentioned in the previous year's renewal of diplomatic relations negotiations, namely question 2 and 3.¹²⁹

In combination with discussions on the details of trade, the dilemma of propaganda came to the forefront once again during 1930. In a British report from the 20th October 1930 there is mentioned the possibility of once again breaking off diplomatic relations. The British Government seem to be contemplating this based on alleged propaganda activities of the Third International. They saw the Third International as an extension of the Soviet government, which would mean the actions of the Third International should be scrutinised under the same terms as the Soviet Union. This meant that their activities could potentially be in breach of the 1929 Agreement. The Soviet Government continued to claim that they had no control or authority over the Third International, but in the report it is stated the opposite:

The Government Departments concerned have, however, a considerable number of typewritten copies, made by agents, of instructions for propaganda issued by the Comintern or an affiliated body and transmitted *by Soviet officials* to their destination.¹³⁰

The British government clearly take these sources as an indication that the Soviet Government had some authority over the Third International. They state that even though they cannot be hundred percent certain of the authenticity of any typewritten source, this time they had reason for their certainty. If the actions ordered in a letter found in the hands of a governmental department, are actually carried out, it most likely makes the source authentic. This incident also happened to coincide with the Industrial Party Affair. Meaning that the British Government were considering a new break in diplomatic relations at the same time as the Soviet Government were allowing defamations of prominent British politicians.

The Soviet Government show almost no sign of being as concerned with angering the British as they had been earlier, e.g. during the Leningrad Trial and Shakhty Affair. During these incidents, even though they at this point did not have an official diplomatic relationship, the Soviet authorities seems to have threaded lightly when it came to

¹²⁷ *ibid.*

¹²⁸ The commercial agreement was reached in may 1930, and lasted until October 1932, when they began new negotiations in order to decide whether or not they would renew the agreement or create a permanent one. This continued until April 1933, when the British decided not to renew it and instead break off any commercial contact with the Soviet Union, due to the Metro-Vickers Affair, which will be discussed in the next chapter. For more on the 1930-32 Agreement, see Lih, et.al and Kenneth M. Starr (The Framework of Anglo-Soviet Commercial Relations: The British View).

¹²⁹ The questions can be found on page 32-33, with the discussion on the 1929 renewal of Anglo-Soviet relations.

¹³⁰ TNA: CAB 24/215/49

arresting British-connected personnel and accusing anyone of sabotage and wrecking activities on behalf of Great Britain. Now, when they once again have an official diplomatic relationship, the Soviet government are seen allowing harsh accusations of British-supported sabotage and specific political profiles colluding with enemies of the Soviet state. This could potentially mean that the Soviet government had begun to view their own position in world politics differently, thinking they stood on more stable ground than previously. Over the last decade, they have gone from trying to keep any international scrutiny from their domestic and foreign policies, to now almost seeking this scrutiny out. They almost seem to be showing off in some sense, willing the international society and specifically the British government to retaliate in some way. The actions of the Soviet government at this time was seldom a fluke, so it should not be a stretch to claim that this paradox of antagonistic versus friendly activities was a strategic choice by the Soviet Union. The Soviet perspective of themselves and their position had clearly changed, and soon other nations also began to see this.

On the 31st of March, the Secretary of State for War, Thomas Shaw, provides a memorandum for the Cabinet, in which he gives his thoughts of the situation in Europe.¹³¹ It begins with a general discussion of the various differences between the general military situation in Europe now vs. how it was in 1914, before it continues into a more specific discussion on the issue of the Soviet Union. Shaw states that without the participation of the Soviet Union in the disarmament plan implemented after World War I, many of the other nations will not cooperate, seeing as they will be too frightened to disarm with their greatest aggressor continuing armament.

The Soviet Government never ceases to preach to its people the imminent danger of attack. Much of this attitude is due to the desire to exact the necessary sacrifices from their people to face this so-called danger; but the phenomenon remains and, however ill-founded, there is in this belief an undoubted substratum of sincerity.¹³²

A most interesting aspect of the memorandum, when discussing it in connection with Anglo-Soviet relations and the on-going Soviet use of Anti-British propaganda, is found towards the end of the Russian section and in the conclusion. Here Shaw draws your eye to the lack of trust from the European community towards Soviet promises. With statements such as "Nor would a promise by Russia to disarm materially alter the situation, as no fate would be put on Russian promises", Shaw provides an insight into the British leadership's view on Soviet morals and trustworthiness. It is effectively giving us an indication as to their preferred actions and probable reactions to various events. He concludes:

It is difficult to see what can be done in eastern Europe unless some means can be devised not only for inducing Russia to accept reduction, but for convincing her neighbours that she has carried it out.

Let us put this perspective into the main topic of the trials and general Anglo-Soviet contact during this time. Their relationship was heavily based on a mutual understanding that they were both better off as allies than as enemies. They were both strong nations that had played an important role in World War I and who was currently holding military capacity that could affect the European power balance. The fact that the British government, or at least some of the prominent individuals that had contact with the Soviet Union at the time,

¹³¹ TNA: CAB 24/220/46, 31 March 1931

¹³² TNA: CAB 24/220/46, 31 March 1931

had such little faith in the trustworthiness of Soviet statements and promises, only adds to the dilemma of relations. If the British government did not trust the word of the Soviet government, how could they cooperate on any level? As we have seen in the examples of trials up until this point, the British reporting of the trials and the various opinions and analysis of them were often sceptical of the sincerity and validity of the accusations, the prosecutor's statements, and the positions of the defendants. Seeing Shaw's view on the trustworthiness of the Soviet government, this type of reporting does not seem out of place, nor does it seem to be notably different from the opinions of the British leadership.

The discussions on trade and other topics continued on throughout 1931 and into 1932. On the 7th of May 1932, Henderson provides the Cabinet with a memorandum on Russian Propaganda, specifically concerning an article printed in the "International Press Correspondence", which is an organ of the Comintern.

I am advised that the article may be held to constitute a breach (though possibly not a very direct one) of the undertaking with regard to propaganda entered into by the Soviet Government in 1929.¹³³

The dilemma brought to the Cabinet is how the British government should be seen handling the alleged breach. He provides them with three options to how they can react, according to himself: (1) to protest directly to the Soviet Government, which most likely will result in the Soviet Government denying any control or authority over the Comintern, seeing as that has been their tactic until now, (2) to protest to the organisation against the publication and continue to do so up to the point where diplomatic relations will most surely sever, or (3) ignore it all and do nothing.

This marks, at least in the documents found during the writing of this thesis, the second time over the last two years (1930-1932) that Soviet propaganda, through the Comintern, had made the British Government ponder the severing of diplomatic relations only just renewed a few years earlier (1929).

The strategies of the Soviet government did not so much change from 1927-1932 as they found their footing and thus were able to work with an increased capacity. Between 1929 and 1932, Stalin and his government were working towards the collectivisation of the whole country, mainly of the industrial and agricultural spheres. With this backdrop they were also conducting massive purges of various governmental offices. They were seemingly working towards gaining full control of any governmental organ through Communists or communist-supportive officials, and the various trials were one way in which they completed this. They might not have appeared to directly attack foreign individuals, as in the Shakhty case, but they were dragging foreign states into conspiracies of sabotage and espionage on such a massive scale that it seemed as if traitors and spies were around any corner. As we will see in the next chapter, this escalation did not stop here. Up until now they had first accused Britain through vague connections to Soviet citizens, then they accused British highly placed officials of organising large anti-Soviet operations through Soviet citizens. Next, with the Metro-Vickers case, they tried to combine the two tactics, as well as take it one step further and arrest actual British citizens.

¹³³ TNA: CAB 24/230/3, 7 May 1932

5. The 1933 Metro-Vickers Affair and Its Consequences

The U.S.S.R. is one of the few countries in the world where a display of national hatred or an unfriendly attitude towards foreigners as such is punishable by law. There has never been, nor could there be, a case of any one becoming an object of persecution in the U.S.S.R. on account of his national origin.

– Joseph Stalin, Reply to a letter from Mr. Barnes, March 20, 1933¹³⁴

After several years of perfecting their trial technique and parameters, the Soviet government brought it all together in an affair that led directly to open conflict with Great Britain. The Metro-Vickers Affair brought together the accumulated tactics and experience of the past six years of trials, purges, and diplomatic relations. The trial combined the tactic of arresting and sentencing foreign individuals for wrecking activities from the Shakhty Trial, together with the accusations of anti-Soviet and counter-revolutionary activities supported by foreign states from the Industrial Party Trial, into a dramatic and, possibly, politically dangerous situation.

5.1. The 1933 Metro-Vickers Affair

In March 1933, six of Metropolitan-Vickers Electrical Export Company's (MVEEC) engineers, together with 11 Soviet engineers and other personnel, were arrested due to faulty turbines found in various Soviet Power plants. They were found guilty of wrecking and espionage by a Soviet court in what is now known as the Metro-Vickers Affair of 1933.¹³⁵ The accused British engineers and MVEEC employees were:

1. Alan Monkhouse, the manager of the Moscow office of the MVEEC;
2. William Henry Thornton, Mr Monkhouse's assistant;
3. William MacDonald, technical expert of the company;
4. John Cushny, electrical engineer;
5. Charles Nordwall, erecting engineer;
6. A.W. Gregory, erecting engineer.¹³⁶

On the 12th of April, 1933, at twelve o'clock noon, the first session of the trial began. Vasiliy V. Ulrikh presided as President of the Court, with A.F. Kostiusenko as Secretary, plus three members of the Court with electoral engineering knowledge. Vyshinskii was the Public Prosecutor, and he was assisted by G.K. Roginskii, the Assistant Prosecutor of the RSFSR.¹³⁷ Each of the defendants, both the British and the Soviet, were represented by members of the Collegium of Defence. The first session focused mainly on delivering the indictment, which fills over 70 typed pages, read by Secretary Kostiusenko. It detailed the

¹³⁴ Stalin, Works Vol. 13, p. 265. Mr. Barnes is most likely referencing a Mr. Ralph Waldo Barnes, an American journalist who covered the Moscow bureau for the *Herald Tribune*, a New York based newspaper, from 1931-35.

¹³⁵ Getty, J. Arch, and Naumov, Oleg V. *The Road to Terror. Stalin and the Self-Destruction of the Bolsheviks, 1932-1939.* New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1999: 112-113

¹³⁶ Newspaper: *Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer*, Wednesday 12. April 1933. Page 9.

¹³⁷ Morrell: 120. In addition to the three Court members with technical expertise, there was also a panel of five engineering experts who would 'add detailed substantive technical grounds to the political grounds of the case that would be extracted from many of the defendants'

various criminal actions, anti-Soviet motivations and international organization of the 'wreckers' at various power stations across the country, and placed the Moscow office of the MVEEC and especially its British staff in the middle of the conspiracy.

The first session and the reading of the indictment was also the first time the charges against the British engineers were stated in full. Their charges varied, but most were charged under Articles 58-6, 58-7 and 58-11 of the Criminal Code. Thornton, Monkhouse, Cushny and Nordwall was in addition charged under Article 58-9.¹³⁸ The accusations covered espionage, destruction of soviet property, and organisation of a counter-revolutionary nature. MacDonald and Thornton seem to have been 'cast' as the leaders and instigators of the operations, and were thus targeted with the harshest allegations. Their actions were connected to both the other British defendants and the Soviet defendants, in order for the prosecution to build an interconnected web of anti-Soviet actions.

Both MacDonald, Thornton and Monkhouse had 'confessed' during their long hours of interrogation before the trial. When the trial began, Vyshinskii brought these confessions up as a winning argument and evidence of their wrecking activities, which in turn made them all reversed their statements, denying all pre-trial confessions. This led to a back-and-forth between Vyshinskii and the defendants on the trustworthiness of their statements now and earlier, as well as a discussion of the conditions of their imprisonment and treatment. Just as with the German defendants in the Shakhty Affair, the British engineers recounted experiences of extensive interrogations and a possible lack of proper medical help.¹³⁹

In addition to the British defendants, eleven Soviet defendants were also accused in connection with the MVEEC employees' activities. Their charges ranged from a few conversations with some of the British, the transfer of light information on Soviet affairs, to the more serious charges of sabotage and wrecking on the power plants, and collaboration with the British in order to pass on important information of Soviet affairs. The Soviet defendants were: V.A Gussev, L.A Sukhoruchkin, A.T Lobanov, V.A Sokolov, N.G Zorin, M.L Kotliarevskii, M.D Krasheninnikov, V.P Lebedev, P.I Oleinik, I.I Zivert, Anna Kutuzova.¹⁴⁰

After about a week of deliberations, testimonies, witness statements, and cross-examinations, on the 19th of April the Court concluded that most of the accused were guilty of the crimes presented. However, none of the accused were sentenced to execution, the court opting instead for the full deprivation of freedom through imprisonment for most, and expulsion from the Soviet Union for some.

1. Gussev, Sukhoruchkin, and Lobanov – 10 years
2. Sokolov, Zorin, and Kotliarevskii – 8 years
3. Krasheninnikov – 5 years
4. Lebedev – 2 years, "in view of the fact that he was merely a tool of Lobanov"
5. Thornton – 3 years
6. MacDonald – 2 years, "in so far as he acted under the direct instigation of his immediate superior, Thornton, on the one hand, and in view of his frank confession"
7. Monkhouse and Nordwall – Expulsion from the USSR for five years, "in so far as they did not take part in causing breakdowns"

¹³⁸ Morrell: 121-123. Article 58 of the Criminal Code can be found in appendix A.

¹³⁹ For the German experience, see Rosenbaum, 1962. For the British experience, see Morrell.

¹⁴⁰ Morrell, 123. Gussev and Sukhoruchkin were chiefs of two different power stations. Kutuzova was the MVEED secretary. The rest were either junior or senior men in the electrical field.

8. Cushny – expulsion from the USSR for five years, “in view of the lapse of time since the crime ... (1928)”
9. Oleinik – 3 years, “taking into consideration the fact that he was subordinate to Thornton and that he was an employee of a private firm”
10. Kutuzova – 18 months, “for the same reason as above [Oleinik]”
11. Zivert – no punishment, “taking into consideration that by the work he has done since 1931 he has proved that he has sincerely broken off all connections with the wreckers”
12. Gregory – acquitted, “in view of the inadequacy of the evidence”.¹⁴¹

5.2. British reactions during and following the trial

Even though the sentences of the British employees were light compared to those of the Soviet engineers, they still pushed the British government to retaliate to some degree. Already on the 21st of March the same year, Sir Robert Vansittart, the Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, distributed a memorandum to the Cabinet on the “Arrest of Metropolitan-Vickers Employees by the Soviet Government”.¹⁴² In this memorandum, Vansittart discusses the advice and suggestions for a course of action given by Sir E. Ovey, the British Ambassador to Moscow, received a few days before. He also provides his own thoughts and advice in connection to these suggested actions. Ovey sees three main steps available to the British Government:

“(1) The Soviet Government should be informed that unless the prisoners are immediately released trade negotiations will be suspended, with the result that on April 17th the present commercial agreement will lapse [...]; (2) the Soviet Government should, [...], be informed verbally that if no satisfactory answer regarding the release of the prisoners is forthcoming within a short specified period, he himself will be recalled from Moscow and the recall of the Soviet Ambassador in London will also be requested, [...]; (3) Should this action prove insufficient, it should be intimated that the continued imprisonment of these British subjects or their condemnation in any form by the Court will force His Majesty’s Government definitely to sever all diplomatic relations with the Soviet Government.”¹⁴³

Vansittart argues that option 3 would be unfortunate at this point in time, since that would mean they could not comfortably resume relations, as they did after the 1927 break, without satisfaction given by the Soviet Government. He does not see this as a likely possibility for a very long time, and as such this option should only be chosen as a last resort. He states that there are far more effective and less invasive options available, such as limitations or prohibitions of Soviet trade. These options would be strong incentives to the Soviet Government. According to Vansittart, trade with Britain was one of the only sources of income the Soviet Union had that made them capable of fulfilling their commitments in Germany and other countries.

A threat to prevent such sales would thus bring them face to face with the ruin of their whole foreign trade system, which is based on credit, and of the Five Year Plan itself, which depends on a constant supply of imports of

¹⁴¹ Morrell: 150-151

¹⁴² TNA: CAB 24/239/28

¹⁴³ TNA: CAB 24/239/28

machinery, etc.; and it seems hardly conceivable that, even in their present state of hysteria, as Sir E. Ovey has described it, they would be prepared to face such consequences rather than release a few foreigners.¹⁴⁴

After further discussion on the different points of Ovey's recommendations and the possible consequences of each, Vansittart puts forth a list of his recommended actions for the British government in case any of the possible sentences were to take place. If the prisoners are shot, he argues that they should break off all relations and bring Ovey and the Legation home. If the prisoners receive light sentences or are released after a trial, the British government should decline to renew commercial negotiations. Finally, if the prisoners are released early, they should drive an even harder bargain than originally planned in the commercial negotiations, as a way to further display their victory in pressuring the Soviet Government. Vansittart viewed possibility one and three as relatively unlikely, whilst possibility two seemed to be the more probable event, and he was proven right one month later.

Together with Vansittart's memorandum, two reports from Ovey dated 19-20th and the 21st of March, are also distributed to the Cabinet. The first one contains the possible actions and steps that Vansittart discusses in his text, whilst the second one contains further thoughts from Ovey concerning the unstable situation in the Soviet Union at the time of writing and how this might potentially interfere with the case. In the last part of his second report, Ovey states that no matter what happens with the prisoners, which sentence they will receive, the Soviet government should feel some consequence, as it would otherwise convince them that such actions as were shown in the Metro-Vickers Affair were perfectly doable and acceptable.

[...] to restage a similar trial at expense of ourselves or any other country, with the knowledge that such affairs, as they openly state here, 'always pass over in due course after a certain amount of unnecessary fuss on the part of the Government concerned'.¹⁴⁵

The British Government thought along similar lines as Ovey, and as such, began discussions on consequences that would impact Soviet trade. As early as March 28th 1933 a draft for a Bill on import prohibition of Russian goods was distributed to the cabinet.¹⁴⁶ The draft was written by the president of the Board of Trade, Walter Runciman, and together with the draft he also provided an overview of the possible effects an embargo would have on British export and import, as well as industrial production.¹⁴⁷ About two weeks later, on the 10th of April, Runciman again circulated a memorandum on the topic, but this time it concerned various issues with the prohibition of all Soviet import versus the prohibition of specific classes of goods.¹⁴⁸ On the 17th of April, the British Government officially terminated the Anglo-Soviet Trade Agreement of 1930 due to the events of the trial, and as such, when the decisions of the trial came on the 19th, they had no legal impediments in enacting the import prohibition. Therefore, on the 19th of April, the British Government implemented the Russian Goods (Import Prohibition) Act of 1933, effectively cutting the Soviet Union off from large parts of British trade.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁴ TNA: CAB 24/239/28

¹⁴⁵ TNA: CAB 24/239/28

¹⁴⁶ TNA: CAB 24/239/35

¹⁴⁷ TNA: CAB 24/239/36

¹⁴⁸ TNA: CAB 24/240/1

¹⁴⁹ Morrell, 151.

The embargo included roughly 80 percent of export goods from the Soviet Union, delivering a heavy blow to Soviet trade and industrial production.¹⁵⁰ The British government was able to enact an embargo on such a high percentage of Soviet export due to the fact that they felt they had other options for their trade, e.g. Scandinavia and the Empire itself. The embargo seemed at first to work as intended, by pressuring the Soviet government to release Thornton and MacDonald, the two who had received sentences of imprisonment. However, the Soviet government retaliated by putting their own embargo on the goods not covered by the British Act, goods purposefully not included due to their importance for British production and industry.¹⁵¹ This meant that the British leverage was not as strong as first assumed, forcing them to re-evaluate their plans. This back-and-forth between the Soviet and British governments continued for several months, finally reaching an agreement towards the end of June. Maxim Litvinov and John Simon, the current Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, met in London on the 26th of June, with both sides introducing their suggestions for how to proceed. After a few days of deliberations and discussions internally amongst each government, they met again on the 28th of June, where they agreed to proclaim a joint statement ending the British and Soviet embargoes. Only then, would the Soviet government issue a commute of the two sentences, from imprisonment to expulsion. Thornton and MacDonald were finally released on the 1st of July, 1933.¹⁵²

5.3. Its historical placement and Soviet reasons for conducting it

The Metro-Vickers Affair is often discussed in regards to the 1936-1938 Moscow Trials, where many of the highest positions in the Communist Party and Soviet Government were purged, effectively removing any personnel that might interfere with Stalin's plans of socialising and industrialising in the future.¹⁵³ Often relegated to the unimportant, but early stage of Soviet purges in the 1930s, the Metro-Vickers trial is seldom given the focus it deserves. Robert Conquest is one example of this perspective, as he describes it as a vague foreshadowing for the mass arrests and trials to come.¹⁵⁴

I would venture here to instead place the trial as the accumulated result/ ending of the industrial and economic purges happening between 1927-1933. The reason for this is, among others, found in the various motives indicated for the Soviet Government to want the trial, as well as its outcome. The trial reignites the discussion and themes of the previous Industrial Party Affair and the 1929-1930 purges. The topics of counter-revolutionary and anti-Soviet actions existing within the Soviet industrial sphere, as well as foreign interference and subterfuge, had at this point been put on the back burner of public perception. They had more immediate concerns, such as food shortages, due both to a heavy increase in industrial production and to the famine that ravaged big parts of the nation, e.g. the Holodomor in Soviet Ukraine where the death toll has been estimated to be anywhere between 3-12 million people from 1932 to 1933.¹⁵⁵

What Stalin did with the Metro-Vickers Affair, was providing the public with a foreign scapegoat for their suffering. In the accusations and trial statements of the prosecution, as well as in various Soviet newspapers, the six accused British MVEEC employees were painted as criminals steadily working towards the weakening of Soviet production

¹⁵⁰ Morrell, 155.

¹⁵¹ Morrell, 156. Morrell also continues on with details on the economic and industrial position of the Soviet Union at this point, all indicating that their situation was not as dire as the British government might think.

¹⁵² Morrell, 165-168

¹⁵³ Getty & Naumov, 1999:

¹⁵⁴ Conquest, Robert, *The Great Terror: Stalin's Purge of the Thirties* (1973)

¹⁵⁵ Viola et.al, 2005

capabilities. They were successfully putting the blame for the Soviet people's suffering in the hands of capitalists and specifically into the hands of Great Britain.

As seen in the case of the Industrial Party Affair, these trials were often used as a way of shaping the beliefs and behaviours of the public. Previously, in the context of the Leningrad Trial, the Shakhty Affair, and the Industrial Party Affair, we have seen how the trials were purposely staged and broadcasted in order to shape how the new Soviet government was perceived amongst both their own population and that of foreign states. This trial was no exception, providing the public with both foreign connected saboteurs and actual foreign citizens operating on Soviet soil. The combination of these two factors, made the Metro-Vickers trial an even stronger tool in the Soviet battle against Western Capitalist interference, and can be seen as an amalgamation of all that the Soviet Government had been working towards for the past six years in regards to their industrial and counter-revolutionary purges.

The trial marks the end-point in what this thesis has deemed group A of the 1920s-30s Soviet show trials. With it, the Soviet government were finally successful in something they had been working towards for years: to sentence a foreign citizen to imprisonment or other on accusations of anti-Soviet activities and wrecking. Even though the response from Great Britain was rapid and severe, the fact that the Soviet government felt strong enough in their diplomatic position to make the attempt in the first place, points to the changing political balance occurring in Europe at the time. 1933 was an impactful year in general for European and western history, with events such as Hitler's rise to power marking the beginning stage of the lead-up to another world war. The new Soviet confidence in their political power and strength would become more prevalent over the next couple of years, leading into World War II. This growing confidence was already visible at this point, shown through their treatment of the British defendants of the Metro-Vickers trial, and through their unflinching attitude towards possible British retaliation.

6. Conclusion

The Anglo-Soviet relationship during the 1920s and 30s had been troubling ever since its inception. The trouble might have stemmed from the conflicting nature of its participants. Or the topics on which they found themselves in opposition. Or it could be the general political uncertainty that characterised the inter-war period as a whole. Whatever the reason, their contact throughout the period, of any nature, was often harsh and antagonistic, and it went through several changes. The Soviet show trials happening in the 1920s and 30s contributed to this development, and in some cases they even instigated the changes occurring in the Anglo-Soviet relationship.

Show trials was not a new phenomenon, neither were they specific to the Soviet Union. What is special with the Soviet show trials, however, is the systematic political usage of them, and the width and depth of this use. The Soviet government began utilizing show trials closely following the conclusion of the civil war in 1922. They quickly became a favourite form of entertainment amongst the Soviet population, depicting topics ranging from humorous events concerning neighbourhood incidents, to serious discussions of deep-seated plots of sabotage and domestic terrorism. Over the next few years, covering most of the 1920s, these trials became a way for the Soviet government to teach their population ideologies and behaviours most preferred, that corresponded with the growing Communist agenda.

In 1927 their usage of the trials changed drastically in nature, going from mainly being a form of propaganda and entertainment, to becoming a judicial and political tool. This new use came down to dealing with actual trials and the fate of real people accused of anti-Soviet activities, not just actors and staged plays with a script.

The source material strongly indicates that the 1927-33 Soviet show trials were a strategic tool used consciously by the Soviet government in order to influence and control both domestic and international incidents. With both the Shakhty trial, the Industrial Party trial, and the Metro-Vickers trial, the Soviet government directly connected the alleged activities of the accused to on-going domestic issues troubling the soviet population.

They connected a lack of domestic technological advancement directly to the German engineers and other foreign personnel. They connected the technical experts of the Industrial Party to the failures of the state-pushed industrialisation, and the subsequent nation-wide famine. And finally, they used both of these tactics together, in addition to several others, during the Metro-Vickers trial, where they placed the blame of the nation's entire roster of issues on six British engineers and eleven Russian ones. Stalin quite successfully removed blame from himself and his government, placing it amongst western capitalist states, through anti-Soviet citizens of their own and a blanket statement of foreign support.

The trials between 1927 and 1933 should be viewed as their own period/ grouping of historical importance and influence in the larger setting of inter-war show trials. They are often grouped together in discussions of the Moscow Trials happening between 1936 and 1938, not given their own focus or prioritizing in research. Many historians describe the Moscow trials as something new and exceptional, due to their magnitude, the political importance of their defendants, and the severity of the accusations. They look at the judicial events of these three years as something rarely seen before. The five trials discussed in this thesis, are seldom mentioned; and if they are at all, it is mostly as separate events, and as an early stage or insignificant event in connection with the Moscow trials, speaking of more to come. I believe this period or grouping of Soviet show trials should be viewed as one greater political process; one in which the Soviet Union tested and developed the methods and techniques seen again in the Moscow trials. The trials

established the structures, the tactics, the rhetoric, and the political position of the Soviet Union that was utilized heavily during the Moscow trials.

The Leningrad Trial established how the Soviet authorities could implement mass arrests and executions of their own citizens without interference from their western neighbours. The Shakhty Trial showed them how much foreign nations would let slide when it came to the arrest of foreign citizens. The Trial of the Three Chiefs indicated how unstable and unsafe the position of any higher official was. The Industrial Party Trial helped normalized in the eyes of the Soviet public the purging of people supposedly a danger to public safety and the development of the country. And the Metro-Vickers Trial brought all of these various teachings into one big trial dealing with both Soviet citizens, foreign citizens (British), higher officials and technical experts, and purging in order to help or save the rest of the country.

By separating the trials from each other, you undermine the influential and necessary developments of the period as a whole. You can look at e.g. the Metro-Vickers trial separately as an early stage of the Moscow trials, but by doing so you ignore the development that was necessary for the Metro-Vickers trial to happen in the first place. Also, for the further research into the Moscow trials, this period is important to acknowledge in order to fully grasp the actual political weight and importance of the Moscow Trials. This is why, in my opinion, one cannot split them up, and why it is important to look at the period as a whole to fully understand the political development of the Soviet Union in the inter-war years.

Finally, the trials had a strong impact on the development of the Anglo-Soviet relationship between 1927 and 1933. The Soviet government used Great Britain as the scapegoat for the cases of domestic terrorism and anti-Soviet activities found during this period. They blamed the corruption of its Soviet citizens on the tempting and organisations of western capitalist states, especially prominent British diplomats. The increasing political power of the trials, their growing number of defendants, and their expanding geographical reach, all contributed to the heightened turmoil between the two nations. The Soviet government consciously used the trials to both affect their domestic situation and control, and their relationship with Great Britain.

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Primary Sources

This thesis has used a variety of primary sources, mostly government correspondence from Norway or Great Britain found through the Norwegian National Archive and the British National Archive. In addition, it has also used some British newspapers, official public statements and memorandums found through other means than the national archives, and finally, minutes from the House of Commons.

Riksarkivet

In order to find the correct sources from the Norwegian National Archive, the correct code is required. In regards to the Norwegian Foreign Office Archive in Riksarkivet, you need to include this section:

RA/S – 2259 – UD

The sources found within are all sorted by four levels of identification: the first four-digit number reference the box it is held in. The second code consisting of a letter and a number reference the topic it is discussing. The third code consisting of a single letter reference the group within this topic. And the last code, consisting of a two-number fraction, reference the specific case within this group. An example of this would be:

7370, H62 – D – 1/27

This specific code refers to box no. 7370, main topic H62 "Norges innen og utenrikspolitikk", group D which is "konkrete saker i forbindelse med Norges ivaretagelse av krigførende land mm.", and finally 1/27 which reference the specific case of "Russland – England. Handelsforbindelser (efter bruddet I Mai 1927) og Norges ivaretagelser av britiske interesser I Russland."

This thesis has mainly used four boxes, the first one being the one described above. The other three are no. 7371, 7372, and 8400. The private collections of Andreas Urbye and Benjamin Vogt has also been looked at, but neither of them have been used heavily throughout the text. They have, however, contributed to the overall understanding of the Anglo-Norwegian relationship during the writing of this thesis, and as such warrant a mention here. Their codes are 0659 – Vogt, and 0235 – Urbye.

Within the main four boxes, there are two topics represented: H62 "Norges innen og utenrikspolitikk", and R25 "Nasjonalrett og rettsordning ikke annensteds oppført". H62 mainly consist of various correspondence between the Norwegian Legation in Moscow, the Norwegian Foreign Office, and the British Foreign Office and government. R25, on the other hand, specifically consist of any reference found in correspondence from the Norwegian Legation in Moscow concerning judicial incidents and questions, approx. between 1924 and 1937.

7370, H62 – D – 1/27: "M.I.S.' direktør i Moskva." Nine documents of various correspondence between the Norwegian Legation in Moscow and the Norwegian Foreign Office and the British government. 28. February – 22. March 1928.

7370, H62 – D – 1/27: The arrest of Mr. Telejinsky. Correspondence between D.R. Trefusis and the Norwegian Legation in Moscow. Trefusis represented the British company Mr. Telejinsky worked for. 12. March 1928.

7371, H62 – D – 4/27: Ettersørsel om statsborgerskap eller visum for Mrs. Evreinov. Andreas Urbye to the Norwegian Foreign Office. 11. June 1927.

7371, H62 – D – 5/27: Memorandum concerning the location of a Peter Verigin. Unknown sender and unknown recipient, but it seems to either come from the British legation in Canada to the Norwegian legation in Moscow, or from the Canadian government to the British Government. 30 July 1927.

7371, H62 – D – 5/27 I: "Varetagelse av britiske interesser i SSSR. Bagage for Imperial War Graves Commissioner Creed." Three documents of various correspondence between the British and Norwegian governments and Norwegian Legation in Moscow. 8. July 1927.

7372, H62 – D – 7/27: "Arrestasjon av personer i forbindelse med den britiske legasjon. Andreas Urbye to the Norwegian Foreign Office". 12. June 1927 The quote is from "Conference with Chicherine, Sunday July 24th, 6 o. cl. P.m." by Anders Urbye.

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7372, H62 – D – 7/27: *The Daily Chronicle* newspaper articles concerning the Leningrad 'spies'. 14. September 1927.

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8400, R25 – G – 3/24: "Legasjonen og G.P.U.". Andreas Urbye to the Norwegian Foreign Office. 1. June 1927

8400, R25 – G – 3/24: *Times* newspaper article and correspondence regarding the execution of British 'spies' in the Soviet Union. Benjamin Vogt to the Norwegian Foreign Office. 17. September 1927.

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National Archives in London

More in-depth explanations on the various reference codes used for the Cabinet Papers can be found at:

<https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/cabinetpapers/cabinet-gov/meetings-papers.htm>

A short description, based on the information found through the link above, relevant to the specific sources used here, follows:

From the National Archives in London, two main categories have been used: The Cabinet Memoranda (CAB 24) and the Cabinet Conclusions (CAB 23). References to Cabinet

conclusions were made by using symbols or codes in the form CC 34 (38) 5. The letters refer to internal reference for conclusions, and the numbers to the details of the meeting, year and place on the agenda. References to Cabinet memoranda changed in 1919 to CP, with the return to a traditional Cabinet size. Up until 1922 these papers were numbered consecutively from 1 to 4379, resembling the G and GT series before. From 1923 onwards a new referencing system was used. It included the year, so CP 1 (39) denotes the first paper laid before the Cabinet in 1939.

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Appendix

A. Article 58 of the Criminal Code of the RSFSR

Special Section

I. Counter-Revolutionary Crimes

Art. 58 (i).

Any act designed to overthrow, undermine or weaken the authority of the workers' and peasants' Soviets and the workers' and peasants' governments of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics of the Union and Autonomous Republics, elected by the Soviets on the basis of the Constitution of the USSR and the Constitutions of the Union Republics or designed to undermine or weaken the external security of the USSR and of the basic economic, political and national achievements of the proletarian revolution, is deemed to be a counter-revolutionary act.

In view of the international solidarity of the interests of all the toilers, such acts are also regarded as counter-revolutionary when they are directed against any other Workers' State, even though not forming part of the USSR.

Art. 58 (i.a).

Treason against the homeland, i.e. acts committed by citizens of the USSR to the detriment of the military strength of the USSR, its State independence, or the inviolability of its territory, such as: espionage, betrayal of a military or State secret, desertion to the enemy, flight abroad by land or air are punishable: by the supreme measure of criminal punishment – death by shooting and the confiscation of all property; in extenuating circumstances – by deprivation of liberty for a period of ten years and the confiscation of all property.

Art. 58 (i.b).

These same crimes, if committed by military personnel, are punishable by the supreme measure of criminal punishment – death by shooting and confiscation of all property.

Art. 58 (i.c).

In the event of flight abroad by land or air of a member of the armed forces, the adult members of his family, if they in any way assisted the preparation or the commission of this act of treason, or even if they knew of it but failed to report it to the authorities, are to be punished: by deprivation of liberty for a period of from five to ten years and confiscation of all property.

The remaining adult members of the traitor's family, and those living with him or dependent on him at the time of the commission of the crime are liable to deprivation of their electoral rights and to exile to the remote areas of Siberia for a period of five years.

Art. 58 (i.d).

Failure on the part of a member of the armed forces to report preparations for or the commission of an act of treason entails:

Deprivation of liberty for ten years.

Failure on the part of other citizens (not members of the armed forces) to report is punished in accordance with Article 58 (xii).

Art. 58 (ii).

Armed insurrection or incursion of armed bands into Soviet territory, with counter-revolutionary aims, the seizure of power at the centre or in the provinces with the same aims, in particular, with the aim of forcibly separating from the USSR or from a separate Union Republic any part of its territory or of violating treaties concluded between the USSR and foreign States, entail:

the supreme measure of social defence – death by shooting, or declaration as an enemy of the labouring masses, and the confiscation of property and deprivation of citizenship of the Union Republic and thereby of the USSR, and banishment beyond the frontiers of the USSR for ever; in extenuating circumstances a reduction of sentence is permitted to deprivation of liberty for a period of not less than three years and the confiscation of all or part of the property.

Art. 58 (iii).

Maintenance of relations for counter-revolutionary purposes with foreign States or with individual representatives of those States and also assistance, rendered by any means whatsoever, to a foreign State at war with the USSR or engaged in fighting the USSR by means of intervention or blockade entails:

measures of social defence as indicated in Article 58 (ii) of the present Code.

Art. 58 (iv).

The rendering of assistance, by any means whatsoever, to that section the international bourgeoisie, which, not recognizing the equal rights of the communist system which is coming to replace the capitalist system, is endeavouring to overthrow it, and also to public groups and organizations, under the influence of or directly organized by that bourgeoisie in conducting activities hostile to the USSR entails:

deprivation of liberty for a period of not less than three years and confiscation of all or part of his property; to be increased in especially grave circumstances to the supreme measures of social defence – death by shooting, or declaration as an enemy of the toiling masses, coupled with deprivation of citizenship of the Union Republic and thereby of citizenship of the USSR, and banishment for ever beyond the frontiers of the USSR, and the confiscation of property.

Art. 58 (v).

Influencing a foreign State or any public groups within that State, by maintaining relations with its representatives, use of false documents or by any other means to a declaration of war, to armed intervention in the affairs of the USSR, or to any other hostile acts, in particular: to blockade, to seize the State property of the USSR or its Union Republics, to break off diplomatic relations, to break off agreements concluded with the USSR, etc. entails:

measures of social defence enumerated in Article 58 (ii) of this Code.

Art. 58 (vi).

Espionage, i.e., the transmission, theft or collection, with a view to transmission to foreign States, counter-revolutionary organizations or private persons of information accounted by reason of its contents an especially guarded State secret is punishable by:

deprivation of liberty for a period of not less than three years, with the confiscation of all or part of property; in cases when espionage has caused, or might have caused, especially grievous consequences to the interests of the USSR, the supreme measure of social defence—death by shooting, or the declaration to be an enemy of the labouring masses and the deprivation of citizenship of the Union Republic and thereby of the USSR and banishment beyond the frontiers of the USSR forever, and confiscation of property.

The transmission, theft or collection with a view to transmission of economic information not constituting by virtue of its contents an especially guarded State secret but not intended for divulgence to the organizations or persons enumerated above, as the result

of direct prohibition by law or by order of the heads of departments, establishments, or enterprises, either for recompense or gratis is punishable by:

deprivation of liberty for a period not exceeding three years.

Art. 58 (vii)

The undermining of State industry, transport, trade, monetary exchange or the credit system and also of the co-operative network, committed for counter-revolutionary purposes by means of making use to such ends of State establishments and enterprises, or by means of impeding their normal functioning, and also the utilization of State establishments and enterprises, or the impeding of their functioning in the interests of their former owners or of capitalist organizations interested in them is punishable by

the measures of social defence, indicated in Article 58 (ii) of the present Code.

Art. 58 (viii)

The commission of terrorist acts, directed against representatives of the Soviet regime or members of revolutionary workers' and peasants' organizations, and participation in the commission of such acts, even by persons not belonging to a counter-revolutionary organization is punishable by:

the measures of social defence, indicated in Article 58 (ii) of the present Code.

Art. 58 (ix)

The destruction or damage, for counter-revolutionary purposes, by explosive arson or other means, of railways or other means of transportation, of the means of public communication, of water conduits, or public stores and other constructions or of State or public property, is punishable by:

the measures of social defence, indicated in Article 58 (ii) of the present Code.

Art. 58 (x)

Propaganda or agitation containing an appeal to overthrow, undermine or weaken the Soviet regime, or to commit individual counter-revolutionary crimes (Articles 58 (ii) to 58 (ix) of the present Code), and also the distribution, the preparation, or the conservation of literature of this nature, entails:

deprivation of liberty for a period of not less than six months.

Art. 58 (xi)

Any type of organizational activity, directed towards the preparation or the commission of crimes provided for in the present chapter, and also participation in an organization formed for the preparation or the commission of one of the crimes provided for in this chapter, is punishable by:

the measures of social defence, indicated in the relevant articles of the present chapter.

Art. 58 (xii)

Failure to report reliable knowledge of preparations for, or commission of a counter-revolutionary crime entails:

deprivation of liberty for a period of not less than six months.

Art. 58 (xiii)

Actions or active struggle directed against the working class and the revolutionary movements, if committed by those in a responsible or secret (agent's) post under the

Tsarist regime, under counter-revolutionary Governments during the Civil War, are punishable by:

the measures of social defence indicated in Article 58 (ii) of the present Code.

Art. 58 (xiv)

Counter-revolutionary sabotage, i.e. deliberate non fulfilment by anyone of duties laid down or the wilfully careless execution of those duties with a view to weakening the authority of the Government, the functioning of the State apparatus, entails:

deprivation of liberty for period of not less than one year, with confiscation of all or part of his property; to be increased in especially grave circumstances, to the supreme measure of social defence—death by shooting with confiscation of property.

Source: Juridical Publishing House, Moscow, 1949. Translation by R. Conquest, *The Great Terror*, appendix G.

B. 1921 Anglo-Soviet Trade Agreement

Trade Agreement Between His Britannic Majesty's Government and the Government of the Russian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic.

Whereas it is desirable in the interests both of Russia and of the United Kingdom that peaceful trade and commerce should be resumed forthwith between these countries, and whereas for this purpose it is necessary pending the conclusion of a formal general Treaty between the Governments of these countries by which their economic and political relations shall be regulated in the future that a preliminary Agreement should be arrived at between the Government of the United Kingdom and the Government of the Russian Socialist Federative Soviet Government.

The aforesaid parties have accordingly entered into the present Agreement for the resumption of trade and commerce between the countries.

The present Agreement is subject to the fulfilment of the following conditions, namely:-

- (a) That each party refrains from hostile action or undertakings against the other and from conducting outside of its own borders any official propaganda direct or indirect against the institutions of the British Empire or the Russian Soviet Government respectively, and more particularly that the Russian Soviet Government refrain from any attempt by military or diplomatic or any other form of action or propaganda to encourage any of the peoples of Asia in any form of hostile action against British interests or the British Empire, especially in India and in the Independent State of Afghanistan. The British Government gives similar particular undertaking to the Russian Soviet Government in respect of the countries which formed part of the former Russian Empire and which have now become independent.
- (b) That all British subjects in Russia are immediately permitted to return home and that all Russian citizens in Great Britain or other parts of the British Empire who desire to return to Russia are similarly released.

It is understood that the term "conducting any official propaganda" includes the giving by either party of assistance or encouragement to any propaganda conducted outside its own borders.

The parties undertake to give forthwith all necessary instructions to their agents and to all persons under their authority to conform to the stipulations undertaken above.

Source: Cab 24/121. Pages 27-32 and 121-136.

