

Sanitized - Approved For Release : CIA-RDP75-00149R000400430018-5



# Who Killed Khrushchev?

## 25 Years Ago, a Soviet Master Spy Was Shot Here; Some Called It Suicide, Others Cried Murder

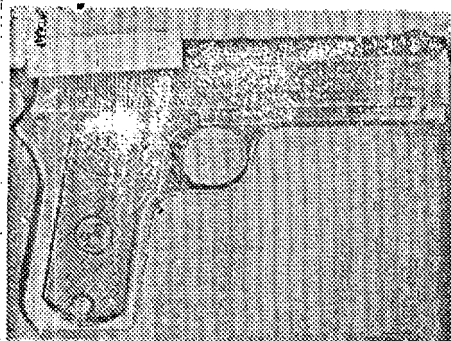


Aaron Sopher

Sanitized - Approved For Release : CIA-RDP75-00149R000400430018-5

Continued

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**By Flora Lewis**

Washington Post Staff Writer

**T**HE MAID found the body at 9:30 Monday morning, Feb. 10, 1941, when she went in to clean up the room. She opened the door with a passkey that hung in the hall linen closet and saw the man's feet and legs on the bed, lying the wrong way round with the feet toward the head of the bed. He was wearing trousers and socks, so she went on in to ask what time she could come back without disturbing him. He didn't answer.

When the police sergeant came about half an hour later, the maid, Thelma Virginia Jackson, 21, told him: "So I walked on over to the bed and looked and I saw he had blood all over his head . . . Then I saw he wasn't breathing. . ."

It was a modest description. A 130-grain mushroom bullet, the kind with a scooped head to make a larger wound, had been fired from a .38 automatic at close range. It had torn through the man's brains from the right temple to below the left ear, leaving a hole the size of a substantial potato. The bullet was lost somewhere in the hotel room wall. The dead man was slight, gray, unprepossessing, fully dressed, apart from shoes and jacket. There was nothing about him or the room that looked important: a brown canvas satchel, a photograph of a boy, three notes written respectively in English, German and Russian. The gun, covered thickly with drying blood, lay on the floor.

### A Genteel Setting

**A**N OBVIOUS CASE of suicide, Det. Sgt. D. L. Guest concluded. He made the routine possession and identity checks, sent for the morgue wagon and left the hotel staff to clear up the mess.

The death of a guest is always an embarrassment for a hotel, and it was all the more jarring in the genteel but modest atmosphere of the Hotel Bellevue, 15 E st. nw.

The dead man was not known at the Bellevue. He had come in only the afternoon before and had done or said

nothing remarkable except to die. It seemed such a typical transient tragedy that the police were not even intrigued by the discovery that he had registered under the name of Walter Poref but carried in his pocket a formal affidavit identifying him as Samuel Ginsberg, born in Russia in 1899.

The note in English was in an envelope addressed to Louis Waldman, 205 Broadway, New York. Accustomed to misleading hotel registrations and probably thinking little of it, Washington police wired New York police asking them to inform Waldman of the death of Samuel Ginsberg and to request instructions for disposal of the body.

### A Hunted Spy

**W**ALDMAN RECEIVED the police call that afternoon. That broke it. He immediately identified Ginsberg as Walter Krivitsky, formerly chief of Soviet military intelligence in Western Europe, a master spy who had known many secrets, turned against Stalin and spilled a few, been marked and hunted since by Soviet agents.

More than once Krivitsky had said to Waldman, who was his lawyer, "If ever I am found dead and it looks like an accident or suicide, don't believe it. They are after me. They have tried before." Waldman knew that the dead man had said the same thing to several others.

An obvious case of murder, the lawyer concluded. He flew to Washington and demanded an FBI investigation. It was refused. He asked for the homicide division's file. It was refused. He went to the Bellevue to look at room 532, a simple room furnished with narrow twin beds, dresser, desk, chair and a reproduction of a forest scene. The police said the door had been locked from the inside. The maid had not said whether she tested the door or not, only that she had stuck her passkey in the hole and opened it.

The window, overlooking what was then a jumble of shacks and is now a parking lot, was open a few inches. But it was the fifth floor and there was no ledge or fire escape by which anyone could enter the room through the window.

The lock on the door was not automatic. Even with the latch shut, it opened easily to a passkey and was the crude type that probably would have opened to almost anything, including a sturdy toothpick.

### Neighbors Both Sides

**T**HE SUITE to the left of Krivitsky's room and the room to the right had been occupied. The walls and doors are not thick. Sometimes hotel residents complained of hearing every

telephone conversation, every snore and snort of their neighbors.

There was no silencer on the gun found beside the body. Yet no one in the hotel said he had heard a shot between the time Krivitsky arrived, at 5:49 p. m. Sunday, according to the register, and the time his body was found Monday morning. The police surgeon placed the probable time of death at about 4 a. m., a quiet hour when there are few other sounds to muffle a shot.

No one knew of any calls or visitors for the man in 532, though the hotel is big enough for people to come and go at normal hours without attracting notice. From the time he entered his room until he was carried away to the morgue, the only evident activity of the man in 532 as far as the hotel staff knew had been to order a bottle of club soda.

A bellboy took it to him, went downstairs with the dollar bill offered in payment and went back up with the change. That was between 6:30 and 7 Sunday evening.

Randolph Thompson, 29, the bellboy, told police when asked if the man appeared despondent, "He appeared to



me to be just like all foreign people, quiet and solemn." John Vernon Wilson, 30, the elevator operator, said to the same question, "He seemed to be just like anyone else would be."

There was no sign of a scuffle in the room and nothing appeared to have been removed or disordered.

### A Trotsky Parallel

**I**N ADDITION to Waldman, most of Krivitsky's friends and a number of other people who knew of him but had not met him made immediate public statements of their conviction that he had been murdered by the Soviet secret police.

Mrs. Leon Trotsky, widow of the revolutionary leader who had been murdered in Mexico the summer before, declared: "Krivitsky's death was not a suicide. That suicide theory is

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just one of the OGPU's many schemes to attempt to cover up its murders. Stalinists, for example, tried to make the first unsuccessful attempt on Trotsky appear as self-assault."

Alexander Kerensky, head of the short-lived Russian government that overthrew the Czar and fell to the Bolsheviks, said in New York: "I am sure it was murder . . . If it was not a murder, then it was a suicide provoked by a direct menace. I understand that they had been menacing his son, whom he loved dearly."

Krivitsky's widow had no doubt that her husband had been killed. Suzanne LaFollette, a close friend to whom the note in German was addressed, said that Krivitsky had previously been approached by three OGPU agents. "One of them told him to stay out of the midtown area of New York if he didn't want to get into trouble. The man said, 'We work in threes and we've been on the lookout for you constantly.'"

### A Newspaper Flurry

ALL THIS was prominently published in Washington, New York and other major newspapers for a day or two after his death. For about ten days more, Hearst papers and various columnists who regularly called attention to Communist activities gave spectacular reviews of Krivitsky's dramatic story and echoed the demand for an official investigation of his death. Several newspapers and columnists sympathetic to the left counter-attacked with fierce mockery at the suggestion that Stalin's arm reached to a Washington hotel room.

But nobody did anything; there wasn't much to be done. Krivitsky was found dead on Feb. 10, 1941. On June 22, 1941, Nazi Germany invaded the Soviet Union. On Dec. 7, the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor and the United States and Russia soon became allies. Few people wanted to think further in those months about the death of one strange and difficult man.

But he had been an extraordinary man. His life also was extraordinary, its secrets enmeshed with the ugly secrets of a world in venomous struggle.

Now, a quarter of a century after his death, the FBI files on Krivitsky and those inherited by the CIA remain sealed, as are Moscow's files. In part, that is probably because they identify agents and double agents who are still active or might turn up again.

Mostly, though, it must be because the things in which Krivitsky was embroiled cast a long, unpleasant shadow that has not yet blurred painlessly with history. On the contrary, time has sharpened outlines that were hopelessly confused when Krivitsky lived and died.

### A Period Illuminated

THE WAY the world has gone has unraveled some of the mystery around the man with his head blown to pieces on a hotel bed, and Krivitsky's mystery holds clues to larger riddles. If there is still no certain solution, there is enlightening evidence in the case about a period and a kind of mentality that spawned some of the aching problems of today. In Washington's bland reaction at the time lay also one of the keys to its later travails.

One way or another, the tragedy can be traced with a certain logical inevitability to Krivitsky's life and times. His name at birth was indeed Samuel Ginsberg. What he first saw of the world was the dusty lethargy of the small town of Podwoloczyska, Russian-ruled when he was born June 28, 1899, Polish between the great wars and part of Russia again after the shift in Poland's borders following World War II.

Jews in such small towns lived pressed warmly together against a hostile, heavy-handed world, a life rich in melancholy and abrasives to sharpen the wits of those who had them. Schmalka Ginsberg did. Sensitive, keen-minded, alert, he grew into a slight but wiry child, independent, passionately eager to throw his meager weight against the oppressiveness of the world he saw.

Later he wrote: "At the age of 13 I had entered the working-class movement. It was a half-mature, half-childish act. I heard the plaintive melodies of my suffering race mingled with new songs of freedom.

"But in 1917, I was a youngster of 18, and the Bolshevik Revolution came to me as an absolute solution of all problems of poverty, inequality, injustice. I joined the Bolshevik Party with my whole soul. I seized the Marxist and Leninist faith as a weapon with which to assault all the wrongs against which I had instinctively rebelled."

### Behind-Lines Saboteur

IT WAS NOT an idle metaphor. Like many of his comrades, Ginsberg took a revolutionary name—Walter Krivitsky—and became a serious fighter, tough, guileful, uninhibited by any other ties in devotion to his cause. He was worth more than the gun he carried.

In the Russian civil war that followed the revolution, he was sent behind the White army's lines in the Ukraine to organize sabotage, intelligence, resistance at the enemy's rear. He so distinguished himself at these guerrilla tasks, which he called "missions of a revolutionary-military character," that at the conclusion of the war he was sent to a special academy for

eral staff courses and assigned to military intelligence.

It was still the proletarian-style army of Trotsky's creation, without formal rank, and Krivitsky's position of Kombrig (commander of a brigade) did not entitle him to be addressed as general, though, it was the equivalent of brigadier. Later he was made Komdiv (commander of a division), the equivalent of major general.

But his assignments were always "revolutionary-military," with emphasis on the former, though in a hard-nosed, practical way without much windy oratory or feverish agitation. Even when propaganda was part of his job, he was the organizer, the arranger of deals and coups, not the spouter.

His first experience as an export technician in revolution came in Germany in 1923. Lenin thought the Bolsheviks could not survive without another major industrial country as partner, and he thought that Germany, despoiled by inflation and fuming with anger at French occupation of the Rhineland were ripe for revolt.

It was a devastating miscalculation for the German Communists, who were crushed. But the ardent Krivitsky determined to save something from the wreckage. Out of the organization built to make a German revolution, he created an extensive network of reliable agents.

Despite many later disasters, the roots were firm enough to provide top-level intelligence from the German high command throughout World War II. So prompt and efficient was the system that there were times when Soviet commanders at the front must have received almost simultaneously the disposition and attack orders sent from Berlin to the Nazi commanders facing them.

### Revolutionary Romance

THROUGHOUT THE twenties, Krivitsky moved surreptitiously from Moscow to France, Holland, Switzerland, Italy and Austria. He had not gone unnoticed when he tried to organize a Red German army, however, and in 1926 he had to hide out from the Berlin police in the Soviet Embassy for two months. After that, he dealt with the German network mostly from the periphery.

In Vienna at one point, he met another Soviet revolutionist, a striking blond named Antonina Porfirjeva. She was from Leningrad (St. Petersburg) when she was born there Feb. 18, 1902) and as different from Krivitsky as the sparkling Russian north from the heavy-scented, swarthy south.

He was the intense, electric-minded intellectual. She was the broad-shouldered, sentimental Slav to him the sturdy, all-embracing soul of Mother

Russia. They shared their devotion to the Soviet cause and it was not necessary to sort out whether ideology counted a little more for one and proud patriotism for the other, since the two urges fused for both in glowing satisfaction.

In 1926, they married in Moscow. The marriage register gave his name as Walter Krivitsky. The Ginsberg past was far behind him. The reality was the revolutionary.

Necessity made it an intricate and shifting reality. They lived in many places under many names, carried many different colored passports.

Once, Krivitsky told a friend much later, he was traveling north from Rome on an Italian train. He was engaged in obtaining for Russia the blueprints of a new Italian submarine. The task took over a year and many trips, but was successful in the end.

Extractors of the highest secrets must be highly secretive. An old acquaintance happened to see Krivitsky on the train and greeted him for what he was, a good and long-standing friend. "I just stared blankly at him," Krivitsky said, "as though I didn't even speak his language."

He had learned to perfection all the arts of espionage, including the suppression of instinctive little human reactions and total attention to detail, which are the hardest. Such well-tempered armor is bound to steel the man inside, as well.

### Early Anti-Stalinist

THAT HARDNESS helped as Krivitsky unavoidably noticed the way reality was shifting inside the Soviet Union. He wrote later with cold but savage contempt of the way Stalin maneuvered the Red Army into supporting the vicious collectivization drive of the thirties and the initial purges of Old Bolsheviks.

Krivitsky always knew what was going on, partly because of his position and partly because of his mind, a taut precision instrument that could spring to understanding of the most devious manipulations at a nudge from the simplest, most trivial-seeming facts.

"I saw from him how a master spy's mind works," his American lawyer, Louis Waldman, recalled later. "One day we were coming back from Ellis Island on the ferry after an immigration hearing. Krivitsky was reading the papers. The headlines were full of negotiations going on in Europe for collective security against the Germans.

"It must have been late, 1938 or early 1939. He didn't pay much attention to the main news, but suddenly way in the back of the paper he saw a one-paragraph item and grew terribly excited.

"Look at this," he shouted. "There's going to be a war. Stalin will move against Poland."

"The item," Waldman continued, "was a dull little bit about the use of old films from the 1919-20 Russo-Polish war in the new training course for the Red Army. Krivitsky said it meant that secret preparations had started for a Soviet move on Poland and that Red Army soldiers were being insidiously accustomed to consider Poles as the obvious enemy. It seemed absolutely preposterous at the time."

### A Distressing Order

FROM WHAT he said afterward, Krivitsky's soul no doubt squirmed with disappointment and distaste at many things he saw and foresaw in Russia all through the bewildering thirties. But he believed in his cause and he was trained to serve it without question.

It distressed him when, in December, 1936, a time when Hitler was dumping Communists in concentration camps and Moscow was publicly scouring the world for allies against Germany, to be told that his espionage network in Germany must be leashed. Moscow and Berlin were on the verge of an agreement, he was told, and nothing must be done to upset Hitler. Still, he obeyed.

It was in September, 1935, that Krivitsky established himself as chief of Soviet military intelligence in Western Europe. He had offices in Paris, agents everywhere, and made his headquarters comfortably in The Hague, where he posed as an Austrian dealer in rare books. His wife Tonya and small son Alek, born not long before, accompanied him there. Outwardly, he led the roving but placid existence of a collector of handsome, interesting, harmless old volumes. In fact, it was a life with sudden bursts of frenetic activity, breathless dashes from city to city, excruciating periods of enforced waiting, and always nagging worries.

### A Literal Cover

SOON AFTER he settled in The Hague, Krivitsky got his first lead on what was to become a major espionage coup and old books became not only the cover for a spy but themselves a repository of secrets.

Germany and Japan, he learned, were secretly negotiating an agreement that would mean war in the Pacific as well as in Europe when the moment came. It was of vital importance to the Soviet Union, not only because of the military meaning of possible war on two fronts of its vast territory but also because Stalin himself was secretly seeking an exclusive agreement with Hitler.

Krivitsky's performance was a masterpiece of disguise. The German-Japan

ese talks were so secret that not even the German Foreign Office knew they were taking place. It was not possible to penetrate them from the German side. However, the Nazis had succeeded in breaking—or perhaps stealing—the Japanese diplomatic codes.

Krivitsky managed to buy the codes from the SS, though without of course explaining how Soviet intelligence meant to use them. They were smuggled out of Berlin in a valuable early edition of Francis Bacon, secretly defaced with markings to indicate the coding keys.

Then Krivitsky's agents in Berlin got hold of the full file of the Japanese negotiator's cabled reports to Tokyo on the talks and established a tap on further correspondence. The files were smuggled out on microfilm. With the codes, a first-rate translator of Japanese, microfilm technicians and couriers, Krivitsky worked feverishly in Holland to speed the sinister news to Moscow.

Later, with the pylons for this network well established, he was also able to tell Moscow of the secret Japanese decision not to attack the Soviet Union in the event of a Pacific war. That was information worth many divisions.

### Even Used Fascists

MOST OF THE people he worked with were trusted Communists, but not all. His task was concrete action and he used whatever tools he found.

In the case of the Italian submarine, the key to success was a high-ranking Fascist who loved money even more than he loved Mussolini.

Krivitsky's duty and his interests brought him intimate knowledge of the underside of high politics in Russia and Western Europe, and he had learned to take it as it came. In his mind's eye, he was still an idealist, driven purely by the passion for a better, kinder world. But his mind's hands had grown horny in dealing with harsh facts and his mind's stomach had been inured against revulsion.

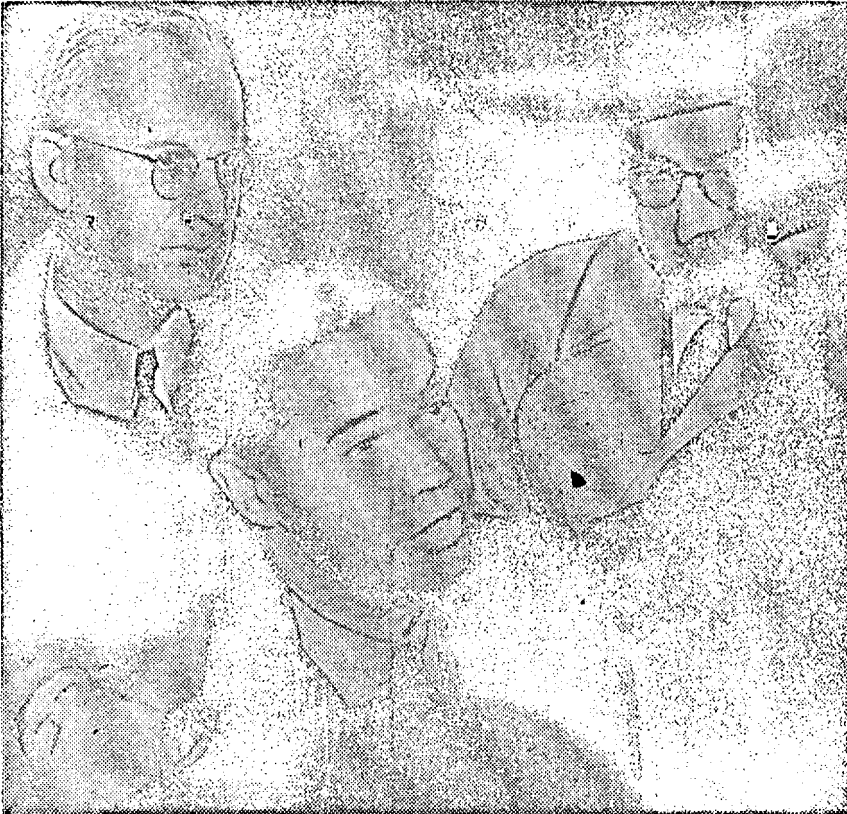
He was the complete professional, fully equipped to set off without cavil the dirty means against the distant shining ends. Or so he and his superiors supposed.

But it wasn't always easy. Each trip back to Moscow chewed further at the galvanized protection against doubt. The terror there, as the juggernaut of the purges rolled on, was undeniable. The Revolution had been god. Now, in the mid-thirties, Stalin had come to proclaim himself the Revolution.

Penetrating minds like Krivitsky's trembled, and shrank to find solace in narrower loyalties, more distant horizons. He watched the Old Bolsheviks being cut down with cringing confession. It was much harder for him when the plague turned



# Rep. Martin Dies, left, Listened to Krivitsky But Heard Very Little



Washington Post Photo.

Attorney Louis Waldman, center, rushed to the morgue to view Walter Krivitsky's body and claim he was murdered.

on the Red Army, his home in the Revolution.

## A Personal Jolt

AFTERWARD, exposing Soviet collusion with Nazis on the forgeries that provided props for the Red Army purge of 1937, Krivitsky was able to write: "It is one thing to consign to the firing squad batches of politicians, such as Zinoviev or Kamenev. It is another to wipe out the helmsmen of a nation's war machine.

"Would Stalin dare to shoot a figure like Marshal Tukhachevsky or a leader like Gamarnik, Vice Commissar of War (and Krivitsky's admired chief in intelligence), at such a critical international moment? Would he dare to leave the Soviet power defenseless before its enemies by decapitating the Red Army?"

Stalin did. Krivitsky quivered but said nothing. When he went to Moscow in March, 1937, Krivitsky felt after a time that the delay in being sent back to his post was getting ominous. Stoi- cally, he messaged his wife in The Hague to prepare to return to Moscow with their child, though by then no army officer could be sure of survival at home.

When, after all, he was dispatched once more to Western Europe, he took his reassignment as bestowal by Stalin "of the highest testimonial of loyalty within his power." There was some pride in that, despite the waves of nauseous misgiving he had begun to feel.

For another top Soviet agent, an old and close associate of Krivitsky, his pride was already drowned by over- whelming disgust and disillusion. Ig-

natz Reiss, who worked under the code name of Ludwig in Western Europe and had connections with America, could swallow the ravishments of his beliefs no longer. He wrote a letter to Stalin, and he wrote to his favorites in the network under him, declaring his defection.

Krivitsky knew that Reiss was wavering. A few hours before an appointment with his friend, at which Reiss presumably meant to reveal his decision, a high Soviet police official insisted on seeing Krivitsky in Paris. The police, then called the OGPU, had gradually moved in on military intelligence so that all Soviet agents abroad came under OGPU orders.

Spiegelglass, the police official sent specially from Moscow, showed Krivitsky the letter Reiss had just written. He had intercepted it before it even left Paris. The letter ended: "No, I cannot continue any longer. I am returning to freedom. Back to Lenin, to his teachings and his cause." Then Krivitsky was cautiously but unmistakably asked to help trap his friend "the traitor."

## A Silent Caller

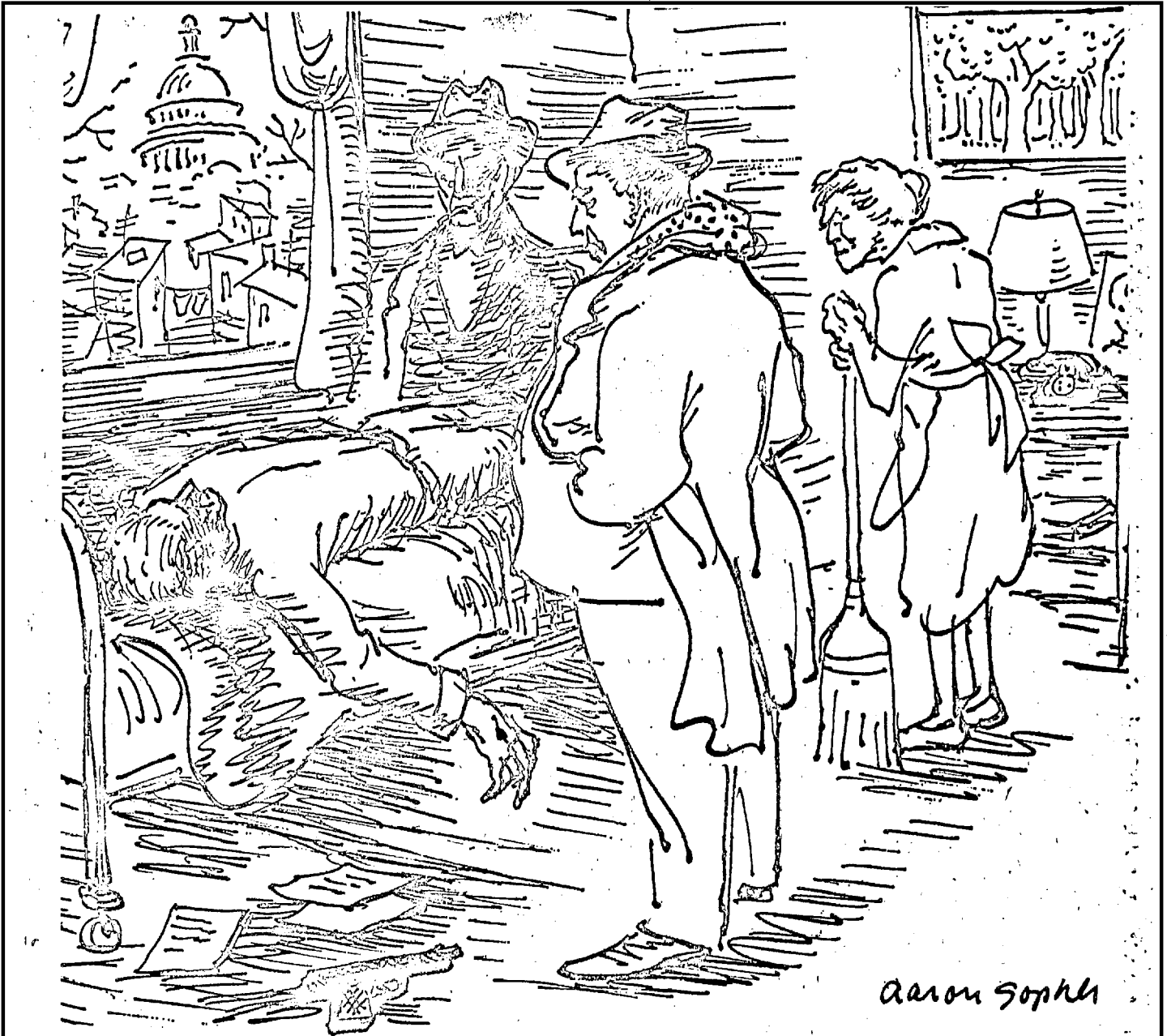
HE DELAYED and evaded, managing to warn Reiss to escape. The technique of warning that Krivitsky chose captured precisely the nightmare fantasy of the atmosphere among "comrades" in that summer of 1937.

He was sitting with Spiegelglass and another agent in a restaurant at the Paris World Fair. There was gaiety, mindless pleasure, light-hearted elegance around them. From time to time after midnight, Spiegelglass went out apparently to confer with other agents stationed nearby. Each time, Krivitsky sneaked to a pay telephone, called Reiss and hung up as soon as there was an answer. It would have been beyond daring to say even one word.

Reiss understood at last and fled at dawn the next morning. He didn't last long, though. On Sept. 4, 1937, Reiss's body, riddled with machine gun bullets, was found in a hotel in Switzerland.

The Swiss police acted quickly and





Aaron Sopher

*"such a typical transient tragedy that police were not even intrigued."*

energetically. That assassination was solved: murder by the OGPU after Reiss had been lured to a rendezvous by a woman who had worked under him and had hinted that she was about to join him in defection.

Krivitsky felt sure that he had badly blotted his copybook by refusing to help kill Reiss. After that, he too was under constant surveillance by Soviet agents in Paris.

The Reiss murder carried his mental processes one step further. Even the intimate loyalty to a dear friend was not to be allowed him. He still planned to return to Moscow, but he had come to understand, as he later wrote, that "the choice before me was between a sure bullet in the Lubianka (the OGPU headquarters and prison in Moscow) from Stalin's assassins or a

rain of bullets from a machine gun outside Russia from Stalin's informal assassins."

It was at the end of September, dogged at every step, that he made what he called "the momentous decision of my life." His wife asked him his chances for survival if they returned to Moscow. He answered, he wrote later, that there was none.

"But there is no reason you should be punished on account of me," he added. "When you get back, they will make you sign a paper repudiating me and denouncing me as a traitor. As a reward for this, you and our child will be spared. As for me, it's sure death over there. I will not go to certain slaughter."

TONYA KRIVITSKY decided to defect with her husband. The escape had to be carefully planned. Krivitsky planned it with the same detailed care he had always given to his work. Paul Wohl, a Central European who had known him before, helped him and secured the protection of the French police and the patronage of the French Socialist Premier, Leon Blum.

The Krivitskys surrendered their false documents to the French Minister of Interior, and in the appeal for asylum, Krivitsky wrote: "I know that a price has been put on my head. The assassins are after me, and they will not spare even my wife or child."

(He knew that Gertrud Schildbach, who had lured Ignatz Reiss to his

by giving the family a box of chocolates filled with strychnine. She was fond of the Reiss child and apparently could not bring herself to do this, so the roadside ambush was arranged instead. The poisoned chocolates were found in her Lausanne hotel room after she had fled.)

Krivitsky added in his appeal, "I have often risked my life for my cause, but I do not wish to die for nothing . . ."

It was on Oct. 6, 1937, that Krivitsky finally made his break. Twice in the months that followed in France, he was approached by a handsome young Dutchman named Hans Bruesse, whom Krivitsky had recruited for the Soviet service. The first encounter convinced him that Bruesse, who had been an extremely warm friend, had been detailed to lure him to the same fate as that of Reiss.

Krivitsky was wary, he knew the tricks. The French police were vigilant. They guarded him night and day. But the detective inspector assigned to him was unable to catch Bruesse and three colleagues when an actual attempt was made on Krivitsky.

Krivitsky decided that he must go much farther from Moscow in search of a life at peace. Paul Wohl helped him get to the United States. He arrived early in 1938, preceded by a buzz of excitement among the small circle of Russian exiles and journalists who followed Soviet affairs closely and had read the few anti-Stalinist articles which Krivitsky published in European socialist newspapers after his defection.

They knew that he carried treasures of information in his head, even about Soviet secret activities in America, though he had never worked here. Nobody else in the United States had ever heard of Krivitsky, nor paid him any attention now.

### Stalin His Scapegoat

HE KNEW the details of many kidnappings and executions carried out by Soviet agents far beyond the borders of the Soviet Union. He also knew the Soviet mentality—perhaps the only one he knew. It allowed, in Stalin's time at least, for no wavering. There could be no such thing as resignation from a task assigned because it caused a crisis of conscience. He who did not obey perfectly, accept everything, was a traitor.

In his own heart, Krivitsky found an answer for himself. He still loved the revolutionary ideals that had become the meaning of his life, but he hated Stalin. It was Stalin, he reasoned, who had betrayed the revolution, not those whom Stalin called traitors.

But Krivitsky knew that his view had the force of a flea against an elephant in the power circumstances



Harris & Ewing Photo

*Adolf Berle, whose warnings about Russian spys were ignored, leaves the White House in 1938 when he was an Assistant Secretary of State.*

of the time. By Moscow's definition, he was a traitor and marked for punishment. There was method in Moscow's attitude. Men like Krivitsky knew too much. And if they got away, their example might encourage others.

Even when he came to the United States, Krivitsky knew he could never really share the comfortable safety that was taken for granted by the crowds he mingled with on the street. It distressed and at the same time profoundly impressed him.

Once, when he recognized a Soviet agent in New York and called the police in fear, he was told that nothing could be done because it is impossible to arrest a person in the United States before a crime is



*A police file photo of Walter Krivitsky with his real name scribbled on the side.*

attempted.

"Imagine," he told his friend Suzanne Lafollette. "What a wonderful country. People are free unless they actually commit crimes." By that time, in Russia, it was getting to seem that only criminals could go free. Things were different in the United States, much more than Krivitsky at first realized. In this country, too, it was a strange time.

### A Time of Schism

THE TERRIBLE strains of the depression were over, but in many ways this was still a divided and bewildered country when Walter Krivitsky arrived in early 1938. President Roosevelt was trying, gradually and cautiously, to bring the country to a mood of support for the European democracies against the wild blatherings of Hitler.

British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain was putting off in the small planes of the time for reconciliation meetings with Hitler.

Krivitsky knew the dirty little truths that made up so much of what was really going on. Sometimes it depressed him; sometimes it made him furiously impatient that Americans not only did not know, but so often refused to listen.

### An Upstate Refuge

FROM HIS POINT of view, America must have looked full of contradictory quirks. He had a wife and small son, no money, no profession but revolutionist and spy, which were not on the "help wanted" lists. A number of people were kind to him; a cottage was found for him in upstate New York and he spent the summer there, catching his breath.

Another refugee couple, Eitel and Marguerite Dohert, lived nearby. Dohert had been a Nazi in his youth, had quit in disgust as Hitler came to

*Krivitsky moved surreptitiously from Moscow to France, Holland, Switzerland, Italy and Austria.*



produced. For a penniless political refugee, it was a fortune.

And it proved to be a serious, finally overwhelming, problem. Don Levine knew his public and how to attract them. The first article, detailing underhanded Soviet machinations in Spain, set the subject and then began: "I happen to be the sole survivor abroad of the group of Soviet officers and officials who had a direct hand in organizing Soviet intervention in Spain, and am the only one who is now free to bare this dramatic chapter of current history . . . I was on the inside . . . I held in my hands the main keys to Stalin's foreign policy . . ."

It was effective, but it wasn't Krivitsky's tone of voice or cast of mind. He would have preferred sedate, analytical articles on the Foreign Affairs Quarterly model or, even better, in the heavy, guttural tones of the European socialist journals. But Levine knew that the Saturday Evening Post wasn't paying \$5000 a piece to bore its readers.

### Between Two Desires

LEVINE DRAMATIZED and sharpened and personalized. Krivitsky squabbled and complained bitterly. Levine wanted details, names, precise sensations. Krivitsky held back, ducked, bickered, torn between the satisfaction of revealing Stalin's monstrous conspiracies and lies and the desire still to protect old comrades, old ideals, old devotions.

He still loved Russia. Sometimes, he told a friend, he would go down to the New York docks just to stare for hours at the Russian ships in the harbor. The nostalgia was not only for a country; it was also for a faith. Not communism but Stalinism was what he wanted to condemn.

Neither Stalin nor America conceived that there might be a difference. Both sides insisted that a man could only be totally for or totally against both. It angered Krivitsky that his disclosures were indeed made to serve those he had always considered enemies of the revolution, but it was not possible to trace a subtle path.

What he had to tell the American public was truly sensational. He told of large-scale Communist counterfeiting of American money to finance propaganda in this country, Communist forgeries and fakes to set the Moscow show trials, Communist terror and murder and conspiracy. Most startling of all, he told in 1938 that Stalin had ordered Communist collusion with Nazis on several occasions and had been seeking an agreement with Hitler steadily since 1934.

Only the most active, almost professional, and Communist-minded were able to believe that. It was a devastating

power and was as obsessed as Krivitsky with the politics of Europe. The families became close friends. Other friends, mainly Paul Wohl at the beginning, sought to help Krivitsky launch his new life.

His one asset was his knowledge. It seemed self-evident that he should seek to earn his living by writing, and it seemed a satisfying outlet for the warnings he so badly wanted to give a heedless world.

But in a strange country and a strange language, he needed agents

and collaborators. Friends introduced him to Isaac Don Levine, a Russian-speaking writer fluent in the special skills of popular journalism, highly knowledgeable in Communist affairs, warm, voluble and above all judicious in marketing exciting articles.

Krivitsky could make a series of hair-raising revelations. Don Levine automatically sought the widest, most rewarding market. The Saturday Evening Post agreed to pay \$5000 each for a series of up to eight articles on the life of the revolution which could be expected. In the end, only five were



# He lost reality as a man and . . .

charge, too distressing for the credibility even of those who had no sympathy at all for communism but were determined to awaken this country to the evil of Nazism.

The existence of two, ostensibly opposed, wicked leaders in the world seemed too much to swallow. If Hitler were bad, Stalin, whom he attacked, must be good. If Stalin were bad, how could people be aroused against Hitler?

That was the reasoning of many honest people, or rather it was the emotional urge that suppressed clear reasoning. It led not only to a tolerance of Communist sympathies in the government and intellectual society, but to an irritated intolerance of those who denigrated communism.

## A Commie Target

ALL THROUGH the thirties, the despair of the depression and the doubts it nurtured about the competence of the democratic system in modern society had tightened the lines on both sides of the ideological tug-of-war in America. There was no climate for objective assessment of facts. For each side, there was an identifiable set of bad guys and all the others were accepted as more or less good, regardless of actual behavior.

The dominant voices of Washington had correctly identified the wickedness of Nazism and did not want to blur the danger signal with undertones. The effect tended to separate anti-Nazis and anti-Communists and make each more strident in their efforts to register the more impressively.

American Communists organized deliberately to promote this effect. They scornfully attacked even those who made moderate criticisms of communism, Russia and Stalin. Krivitsky, who knew names and dates and places with exactitude, was a serious setback and therefore a major target.

It was all the worse for them that his revelations were trumpeted across the country by the Saturday Evening Post at its most sensational, rather than in some dusty polemical pamphlet which might have satisfied Krivitsky. An answer was inescapable.

At first, the Daily Worker and the New Masses insisted that Krivitsky simply did not exist. He was, they argued, an invention of the extreme right devilishly concocted to spread lies about the left. But he did exist. He gave newspaper interviews, had his picture taken.

Then the Communist papers announced that he had invented himself, that he was really only Schmelka Ginsberg, "a well-known habitue of Paris cafes" but never a Soviet agent, let alone an intelligence chief. The \$25,000 from the Saturday Evening Post was made to sound a proof of venality. The arguments did not erase Krivitsky from the scene, but they did succeed in giving him a highly distasteful, suspect aura.

In the public print, he lost reality as a man and became a windy controversy. Somehow, he couldn't make his facts weigh, only the fury that surrounded them. It was an ironic contradiction of the sharp-edged, hard-minded man he was.

## Friendships Sour

OTHER EXILES who might have shared his attitudes quarreled with him, partly no doubt out of envy for the money and attention he had won in a country that ignored their own particular abilities. He was hard to befriend, convinced by his own success that he knew best how to conduct his affairs and cynically mistrustful from terrible experience.

Eventually, Krivitsky broke with both Paul Wohl and Isaac Don Levine, his early collaborators. His intense brilliance was fascinating but it was not set in amiability; his agile mind could not absorb the public and private briefings without reaction.

Krivitsky could find no way to cope with the transformation of his public personality produced by the American style of political in-fighting. His defenders sounded as wild and woolly as his attackers. Congressmen were persuaded to denounce him and inquire why he had been allowed to enter the United States. With such prodding, the Immigration Service prepared to deport him.

Krivitsky went to Louis Waldman, twice Socialist candidate for governor of New York and famed as a labor lawyer, a persistent, frisky terrier of a counselor. Whether or not an explicit deal was made, the deportation order was dropped and Krivitsky agreed to testify before Rep. Martin Dies' House Committee on Un-American Activities.

He wasn't eager to do it, it only increased his problem of getting a sober hearing for his facts. But it answered his urgent need to assure a place for his family and himself in the United States.

The testimony, read now, is startling in its empty insignificance. Krivitsky must have felt as Einstein would have if he had been solemnly asked to put on public record the sum of 2 and 2. He knew so much of subtle ploys and plots; all the Congressmen kept asking him, during a day of testimony, was to confirm that the Kremlin ran the Comintern and Stalin ran the Kremlin.

At the time, of course, many Americans refused to believe that the Communist Party of the United States actually listened to Moscow's commands; that the Comintern was not merely a loose confederation of like-minded but quite independent political parties in various countries which happened to include the world's only Communist state. Krivitsky simply said that these things, as obvious and elementary to him as his own face in the mirror, were true, and he volunteered nothing.

There was something more he wanted, however, than just the right to stay in the country. He wanted protection. Once in New York, he ran across a Soviet agent he had known named Sergei Basoff, a husky red-headed former sailor from the Crimea. It was in a cafeteria on 42d Street, something of a rendezvous for OGPU men in the United States, as it turned out.

Basoff was with several others who followed ominously. Krivitsky was scared. He knew of Soviet kidnappings in Paris, of the Reiss murder, of the American woman Julia Stuart Poyntz who vanished outside her New York hotel one day and of the way a drugged man could be smuggled aboard a Soviet ship and disappear forever.

With cunning, Krivitsky maneuvered Basoff into following him to the New York Times building nearby. There he had a friend who summoned half a dozen other friends. For a time, Krivitsky talked there with Basoff, who revealed that Antonina Krivitsky's brothers, both engineers and Communists, had been executed along with the rest of her family in Leningrad because they were related to defectors.

When Basoff left, his unidentified companions kept guard at the entrance to the New York Times. It took a whole conspiratorial arrangement carried out many hours later to spirit Krivitsky away to a friend's apartment. There he spent most of the night, waiting until he could be sure

that there was no one to observe him going to Riverside Drive, where he lived under a false name.

There were other encounters. Sometimes Krivitsky called the police; they could do nothing for him. It had been better in France, where his sponsor Leon Blum had made sure he was protected. He knew he needed some official backing.

### Dovetailed With Chambers

**M**EANWHILE, his prediction of a Nazi-Soviet pact came stunningly true, and a few days later, Europe was at war. Both his lawyer Louis Waldman and his collaborator Isaac Don Levine realized that Krivitsky could help the cause of the West and so help himself by establishing a claim for concern about his safety. They went about arranging contacts for him separately.

Levine introduced Krivitsky to Whittaker Chambers, a former Soviet agent in the United States who had quit and gone to work for Time magazine but had not spoken publicly of his underground existence. It was an exciting meeting.

The two men sat in Levine's apartment exchanging experiences, discovering as they went along that again and again one had the missing pieces to the other's jigsaw puzzle. They found, comparing dates and places and descriptions and plots, that they knew a number of the same agents though often by different names.

Long after midnight, Levine went to bed and left them talking. When he woke the next morning, not early, they were still at it. Much that had seemed mysterious looked clearer.

That led to another meeting, later famous, and lighted a fuse that eventually exploded into the McCarthy period. It fits later in the story. But the first Krivitsky-Chambers session was an important element in what developed because Levine saw that the two men, who had worked for Moscow quite independently of each other, confirmed key parts of each other's knowledge.

### A White House Link

**W**ALDMAN WENT ABOUT getting Krivitsky to help the United States quite differently. He had known Franklin D. Roosevelt well from the President's days in New York State politics; he had friends on the White House staff. He told Krivitsky he would do everything possible to get him immigration papers and American protection, but on condition that Krivitsky agreed to do all he could for the United States.

A session was arranged at the State Department. Ruth Shipley, a self-willed woman whom Roosevelt had once publicly called an ogre, headed the Passport Division and kept

many albums of passport photographs submitted by people whose activities or identities she thought questionable.

Krivitsky was told to go through an album and point out any pictures that he recognized. There were a number of people he had known as Soviet agents and he gave details of when and where he'd met them. He didn't even get through one book that day. When the session was over, Waldman went privately to State to check on the performance.

"They told me he was candid and correct," Waldman said much later. "The information jibed with what the Department knew." But the session hadn't begun to plumb the crowded depths of Krivitsky's knowledge. A second meeting was arranged for a week or two later. After that one, Waldman checked again and was told that Krivitsky had done poorly, clearly withholding and disguising information.

"I went back to the hotel and asked Krivitsky why he'd changed. I'd warned him that if he didn't cooperate fully, I'd have nothing more to do with him. He was angry.

"He said that there was no use telling the American Government anything in confidence because it was so sloppy about security and so honey-combed with agents that everything he'd said the first time had got back to Moscow within 48 hours. I asked him how he knew. He wouldn't tell, but whatever he'd learned had certainly convinced him," Waldman said.

Despite his desire not to hurt friends on the other side whom he still considered innocent and his contempt for American security, Krivitsky was fully cooperative in at least one circumstance that he thought vital. While they were working together, he told Isaac Don Levine and Waldman of one and perhaps two Soviet agents in key positions in Britain.

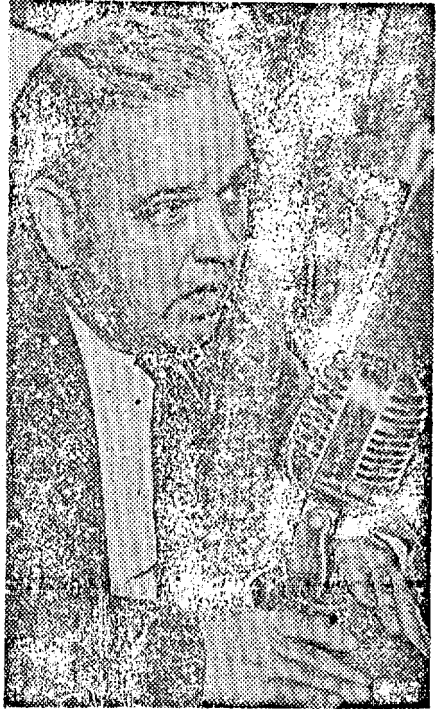
An appointment was made with Loy Henderson, an Assistant Secretary of State. Henderson passed Krivitsky on to the British Embassy. The Marquis of Lothian was Ambassador.

As Don Levine had feared, the first meeting went badly. The elegant British diplomat was not impressed with the unpolished little Russian. Henderson intervened to suggest with great politeness that Krivitsky might be worth listening to. In the meantime, the embassy had made a routine check with London and discovered to its surprise that Krivitsky was right on enough points to be taken seriously.

There was, he said, a leak in the Cabinet Defense Committee, the most secret group at the summit of Britain's war effort. Since the Hitler-Stalin deal was in effect, there was a danger that Moscow would promptly forward to

London. Had it gone on, it could have cost Britain the war in the terrible year when she was fighting Germany alone.

The British asked Krivitsky to come to London. He was leery. He told Waldman he didn't trust the Neville Chamberlain government not to make a deal



Associated Press Photo

*Whittaker Chambers and Krivitsky fitted pieces in each other's puzzles.*

with Stalin if the time came, and then to throw him in as lagniappe.

The political way his mind worked led him to seek political protection in Britain before he ventured there. It was arranged by Waldman with the late Herbert Morrison, then a prominent figure in the British Labor Party.

### A Canadian Detour

**T**HE UNITED STATES, not then at war, was uneasy about Krivitsky's being sent on the mission directly from American soil. A second arrangement was made whereby Krivitsky would spend some time in Canada and obtain there a regular immigration visa for his later return to the United States.

Boris Shub, a young Russian-speaking American, went along to use the time reworking the Saturday Evening Post articles into a book, "In Stalin's Secret Service," which was published by Harper in 1939. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police provided the screening that Krivitsky felt necessary for his safety.

The British sneaked him from Canada to England on a warship. As a result of his help in London, the



King, a code clerk with access to the most crucial documents. The wartime trial and conviction were only announced several years later.

Krivitsky also described another agent in the British Foreign Office, a dashing Scotsman given to smoking a pipe and sometimes wearing a cape. The clues were insufficient. What details Krivitsky had given seemed to fall into place years after the war, however, when Donald MacLean defected to Moscow with his Foreign Office friend Guy Burgess and a still

uncertain number of valuable British and American secrets.

Krivitsky proved to be a productive defector in England, and he was adequately guarded there. He was asked to stay, but he had his heart set on settling down in the United States. In America, though, there is no indication that he ever did give much.

One night spent walking the Long Island seashore, and pouring out tales to David Shub, father of his collaborator Boris, Krivitsky went on at length about the dangers to which he was exposed. He told Shub, "I don't know how to tell you, but I'm afraid of you still

he's afraid? Why should Stalin be after you now? After all, you've already told everything and nothing further can make a difference."

"Oh, no," Krivitsky said. "I haven't told the most important."

### Officially Unplumbed

**A** PART FROM his reluctance to tell, he was not officially asked. The Dies Committee only sought a kindergarten description of the international Communist hierarchy. The FBI didn't bother with Krivitsky. It had only long been interested in his activities and was still concentrating on rack-

executed by the FBI. Dillinger. To the extent that it made even a passing effort at counter-intelligence, it was Nazi agents that the FBI was after.

There was no CIA or anything of the sort. Army and Navy Intelligence went after strictly military matters of direct interest to each service, not cooperating and sometimes competing. The State Department accepted information brought to it, but had no investigative branch.

It is hard to resist the speculation that the sensitivity still surrounding the Government's secret Krivitsky files is much less because of what they contain than because they contain so little that mattered.

The whole approach to security and intelligence at that time was "primitive," in the word of former Secretary of State Dean Acheson. In view of the general state of affairs, the casual treatment given Krivitsky was not so surprising.

The situation in the State Department was not improved by personal feuds already developing into political vendettas. Adolf Berle was then the State Department officer in charge of liaison with military intelligence. He had been a child prodigy, and as a teenager at Harvard Law School he had offended Felix Frankfurter, then a leading professor.

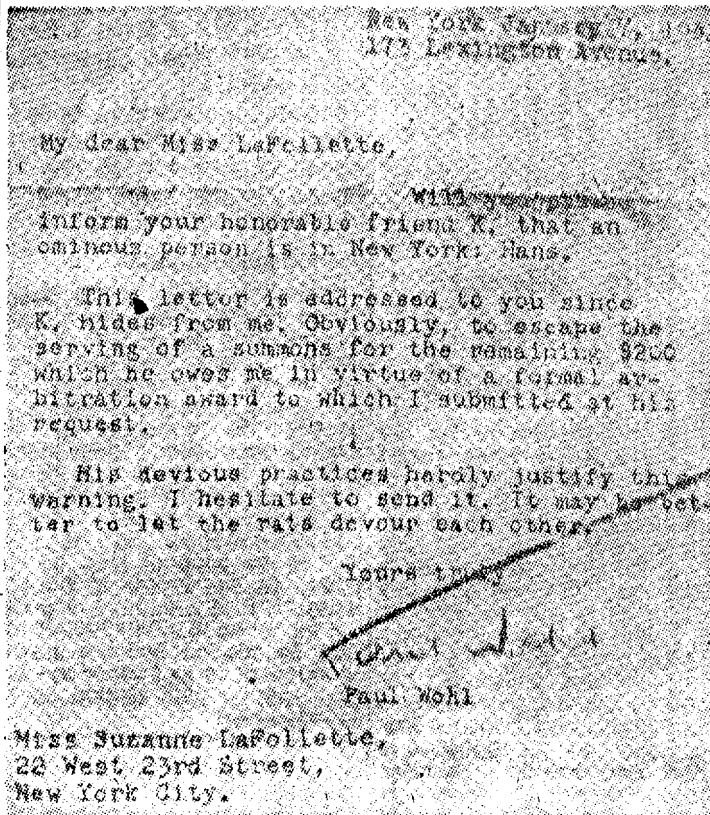
The mutual distaste lasted and spread, even more virulently, to Dean Acheson, who was a devoted admirer of Frankfurter's. People took sides in the State Department and the quarrel reached into the White House.

Berle's assignment carried with it a hostile sensitivity to Soviet behavior, a traditional attitude among old hands in State. Acheson's assignment, involved in supporting Britain against Germany and later, on President Roosevelt's orders, in helping Russia buy supplies in this country, tugged him the other way.

Even during the Nazi-Soviet pact, a number of people in State believed that eventually Stalin would have to fight strength. The atmosphere was abrasive. Hitler and that it was therefore important to help the Russians build up. There were sharp quarrels over daily decisions and a certain amount of intrigue in the attempt to influence them.

An early example came in drafting President Roosevelt's statement on the Soviet Union's digestion of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia after the Hitler-Stalin partition of Poland. Fast footwork by Loy Henderson, James Dunn and then Under Secretary Sumner Welles got an official denunciation out of the White House before others in State could water it down. But it was followed by an... whether the Baltic States' assets in the

# *"It Was Stalin Who Betrayed The Revolution, Not Those Whom He Called Traitor"*



United States should be handed over to the Russians as Moscow was demanding.

Nobody succeeded in establishing an orderly system of policy priorities that sustained the basic aim of opposing Hitler and still left room for what seemed conflicting decisions on the merits of immediate questions. It wasn't so much that Krivitsky was frozen out of the picture; he just never got in.

The situation he confronted was demonstrated even more clearly when, in 1941, Isaac Don Levine arranged a meeting between Whittaker Chambers and Adolf Berle. Chambers, reinforced by the lecture he had learned from Krivitsky, recited a story of spy rings

within the United States Government and provided a series of names. One of them was Alger Hiss.

There were other respected officials. It was an explosive charge with much substantiating circumstance. Berle took it to the White House. Nobody paid any attention. There was no investigation. The incident was forgotten until it was brought out in the postwar cross-fire of charges and countercharges that led to the Hiss trial.

In the McCarthy period that followed, deliberate suppression was charged. But the atmosphere at the time of the Chambers-Berle meeting makes it more likely that the Berle memorandum was simply brushed off as a part of the continuing game of push and pull in



the State Department, not to be taken seriously. The Acheson side automatically supposed that there would be something fishy in anything that came from Berle, and vice versa.

### The Other Extreme

THE HAPHAZARD concern for security, the personal animosities, the emotional frenzy stirred for Russia once the U.S.S.R. and the United States became allies in war—this immoderate background was doubtless an important factor in swinging the pendulum wildly to the other extreme when World War II had ended and the cold war was at its height. Looking back, the McCarthyites decided that there must have been conspiracies because so much carelessness seemed incredible in the new post-war awareness of intelligence operations.

There had been espionage and Communist penetration of the Government without doubt. Those germs of substance were multiplied into a national fever because they were so difficult to trace in the general mush of the period that had harbored them. According to their temperament, people concluded either that the whole culture was tainted or that it had always been pure.

Emotion gave credibility on a basis of very few facts in the McCarthy period, just as it had denied credibility on a basis of very many facts in the period of Stalin's purges. Krivitsky happened to speak at the wrong time to be heard in earnest. He even died at the wrong time to be buried in earnest.

By early 1941, he was back in the United States and out of steam. He had quarreled with his collaborators and exhausted the fraction of revelations he was prepared to make. Still, reading the papers and watching European developments closely, he hoped to put his penetrating mind and burden of experience to use as a foreign affairs analyst. Columns are not so easily come by. He began to cast about for a new start in life.

His friends Eitel and Marguerite Dobert had established themselves on a farm near Charlottesville. They had only a few hundred dollars to begin. It was a pioneering struggle, but they were making a life, and they were at peace.

There were prospects, too. Dobert had become a lecturer at the nearby University of Virginia. Krivitsky was attracted by the idea. He began to talk about moving with his wife and child to join the Doberts, and work the farm in partnership.

### Two Open Attempts

THERE WAS SOME urgency in considering the move. Twice since he

had been in the United States, there had been what he considered open OGPU attempts to surround and then, no doubt, to kill him. On other occasions, he had grounds for suspicion.

Once he had called Loy Henderson at the State Department to say that he was in danger, and was told to get in touch with the New York police. The police were, in effect, willing enough to hold a nervous foreigner's hand if he dropped into a precinct station, but they were neither able nor willing to give regular protection.

Then in early 1941, Krivitsky received a message that set him shiver-



*Alexander Kerensky, former leader of Russia, was convinced that Stalin agents murdered Krivitsky.*

ing with fright. He took it to his lawyer, Louis Waldman, on Jan. 9. It was addressed to his friend Suzanne Lafollette, who had handed it on. The message read:

"Will you please inform your honorable friend K. that an ominous person is in New York: Hans . . . K's) devious practices hardly justify this warning. I hesitate to send it. It may be better to let the rats devour each other."

The note was from Paul Wohl, bitter over his quarrel with Krivitsky, which had been primarily about money, but still aware of his former friend's danger.

The reference to Hans meant Hans Bruesse, the Dutchman who had once worked for Krivitsky and twice before had tried to kill him. Wohl had seen Bruesse boarding a bus on a Manhattan street. There was no question of identity; he was sure. He had known the Dutchman well in the days when

Bruesse was a favorite at Krivitsky's headquarters in The Hague.

Krivitsky was just as sure, when he received the warning, that Bruesse's sudden and no doubt illegal appearance in the United States was to fulfill the old mission. An OGPU agent who had failed twice was bound to be in serious trouble himself, redeemable only by final success.

Krivitsky began to talk about buying a gun to protect himself. Waldman pointed out that in New York or New Jersey, he would have to get a permit. Living under an assumed name, more than ever eager to hide his tracks, Krivitsky fumed and said he would think it over.

Without telling Waldman, he found out that no permit was necessary in Virginia, but he did say that he was going there to arrange to buy a farm. Waldman insisted that the reluctant Russian testify before a New York legislative committee investigating communism in the schools, and Krivitsky wanted the appearance date postponed until after the Virginia trip. His hearing was set for Monday, Feb. 10.

The Friday before, he took the train south. He stopped off in Washington to see Loy Henderson, mentioning his new fears and his decision to buy a gun for self-defense. Then he went on to the farm near Charlottesville.

The Doberts listened to his explanations and answered his unending stream of questions, but they couldn't help feeling dubious.

"I just couldn't see Walter as a chicken farmer," Marguerite said later. "He was a total intellectual, just not the type."

Krivitsky was a man without hobbies, without interest in sports, in nature, in the use of his hands or legs for the pleasure of it. It was the brain that did all his working and living. But he went on endlessly about the farm, the chores, the cost.

All that remained to settle the deal, he said, was for his wife Tonya to have a look and give her agreement. Tonya and their son Alek, then 6, had stayed behind in New York that weekend.

Krivitsky went on about his plans late into the night. Tired from the day's work, the Doberts went to bed, but after a short time, Krivitsky knocked on their door. He had a bad headache and couldn't sleep, he said.

Marguerite, a tall, warm woman of great practical competence and steady good cheer, handed him some aspirin and writing paper from behind the door. She wished him goodnight.

But her guest was restless. The next morning he told them that he still couldn't sleep after writing his letters and had gone for a walk in the woods. He spoke appreciatively of the country—and peaceful here, he told the Doberts.



## ... became a windy controversy

"He was nervous," Marguerite said later, "but then he always was. Afterward, I couldn't help thinking that I should have noticed more carefully whether there was something wrong. But I didn't. I didn't think of anything. He was the usual high-strung Walter."

### Target Practice

**S**ATURDAY MORNING, Krivitsky and Marguerite Dobert drove into Charlottesville. They went to a hardware store and bought a gun without any difficulty. Later, the clerk identified the gun as the one found in the hotel room and he identified Mrs. Dobert and a photograph of Krivitsky as the customers who had bought it.

For some reason never brought out, he sold mushroom bullets as ammunition instead of ordinary bullets, unusual for sale to a person explaining that he lived in a wilderness and needed something to protect himself. When he spoke about the gun, according to all those who heard him, Krivitsky talked only in terms of his urgent need for self-protection after the warning he had received.

The next day, Marguerite Dobert drove Krivitsky back to Washington so he could catch a train. He mentioned his appointment in New York on Monday morning. She took a wrong turning on the way and for a time they wandered about country roads. Later, she remembered that as evidence that they had not been followed because she would have noticed another car on the back roads.

Before she dropped him at the corner of Union Station, she asked Krivitsky if he wanted her to mail the letters he had mentioned writing late Friday night. He said he would look after them himself. She asked him if he had remembered his "artillery." He patted the canvas bag that was his only luggage and said it was in there.

Krivitsky asked her whether Union Station, like railroad stations in most big European cities, had facilities for travelers to bathe. There was no running water on the farm and he wanted to clean up while he was waiting for the next New York train. She didn't know the answer.

But she did know, looking back, that it was an altogether normal conversation with every sign that Krivitsky was intent only on boarding the train, no sign that he had other plans.

But he never left Washington. He went to the Bellevue Hotel, a five-minute walk from the station. No one knows whether he went there directly or entered the station first and then changed his mind. No one knows

whether he saw someone in or around the station who frightened him.

The Bellevue had no record of his making any telephone calls from his room. Its residents and staff paid no special attention to the man who registered as Walter Porcf until the maid called the housekeeper to his room the next morning.

No photographs were taken in the hotel room to establish the trajectory of the bullet; no effort was taken to recover the bullet from the wall; no fingerprints were sought. All this was common practice when there was any suspicion of crime. But the immediate police assumption was that they were dealing with a clear-cut case of suicide, and the coroner took their word for it that afternoon.

### A Question of Style

**T**HAT EVENING, however, Louis Waldman, Tonya Krivitsky and other people spoke out to challenge the verdict. Waldman hurried to Washington. It was too late to seek evidence at the scene of Krivitsky's death; everything had been tidied.

There was no doubt that Krivitsky had died with his brains blown out, but no absolute proof that the gun found in his room was the weapon used nor that he and no one else had pulled the trigger. All that was left was the body, the three notes and the long Krivitsky story with its heavily charged undertones.

The notes looked self-explanatory to the police, but to people who knew Krivitsky, they looked strange in many details. It was his handwriting, all right, and it was on the same kind of paper that the Doberts had given him at their Virginia farm. But the style was not quite typical of Krivitsky.

Each note carried a sentence beneath the signature. He had never been a man to write postscripts, a man to have afterthoughts. All who knew him agreed that he always was clear in his mind on what he wanted to say and stopped when he had said it.

Each P.S. mentioned third persons. The note to Waldman had an added item referring to the Doberts, though not by name. The note to Suzanne Lafollette mentioned her brother and sister-in-law, though they scarcely knew Krivitsky. He was a man thoroughly trained to recognize the implications of involvement in scandal. It was odd that he should drag the names of irrelevant people into his personal tragedy.

Even more inexplicable to his intimates was the way he had written the notes. They said nothing specific

about any intention of killing himself or why. The nearest they came to the self-justification that is the one constant to expect in suicide notes was a general reference to the inescapable obligation to "go." Only the note to his wife Tonya went that far. It said:

"This is very difficult and I want to live very badly, but it is impossible. I love you, my only one. It is difficult for me to write, but think about me and then you will understand that I must go. Don't tell Alex yet where his father is gone. I believe that in time you will tell him because it is best for him. Forgive, it is very hard to write. Take care of him and be a good mother to him, and be always quiet and never get angry at him.

"He is very good, and always very pale. Good people will help you, but not enemies. I think my friends are big. I see you, Tonya and Alex. I embrace you. Vela.

"P.S. On the farm of Dobertov I wrote this yesterday, but I did not have any strength in New York. I did not have any business in Washington. I went to see Dobertov because that is the only place I could get the firearm."

It had been written in Russian. Mrs. Krivitsky challenged the police translation as soon as she saw the note. Instead of rendering the first sentence to suggest that Krivitsky found it "impossible" to live, she said, a correct translation would be:

"It is very difficult but I want very badly to live, but to live is no longer allowed me."

### Inference of Coercion

**T**HE LOGIC of the situation and the man seemed to dictate that legitimate suicide notes would have read quite differently, with some mention of the OGPU's hounding him, his disillusionment with Moscow, his problems in creating a new life in the United States. If Krivitsky did choose to kill himself, these were doubtless the reasons, and he was not given to cryptic or fuzzy expressions.

Of course, a man's state of mind in contemplating suicide is likely enough to be illogical. No certain deductions could be made from the notes. But their very oddness served to convince his wife and other intimates that he had been cunning to the end.

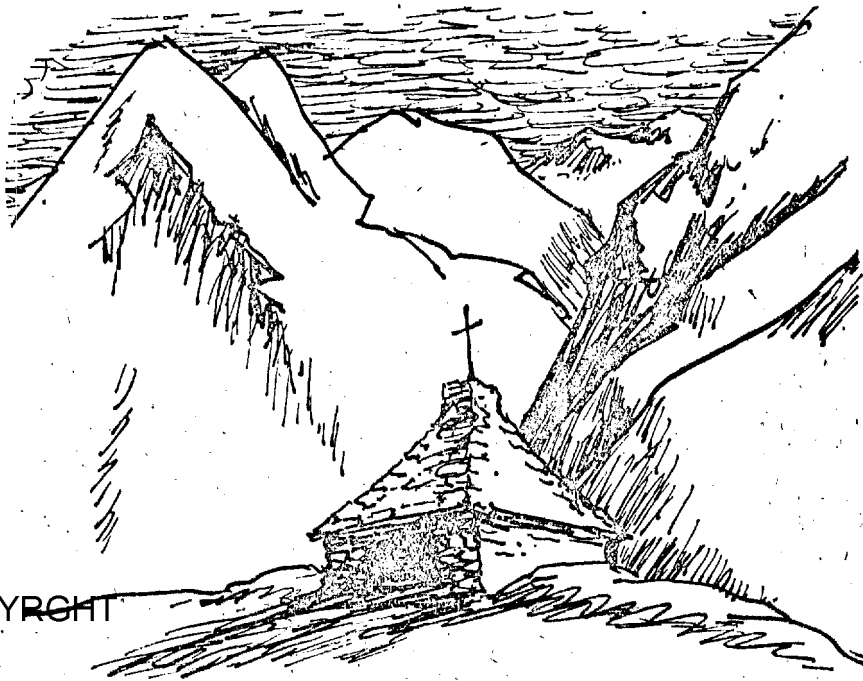
The notes read, they felt, as if Krivitsky had been forced to write them and had cannily found words and forms that would reveal mortal blackmail to the addressees but not to the blackmailer, however astute he might

"I believe," the widow told the press,

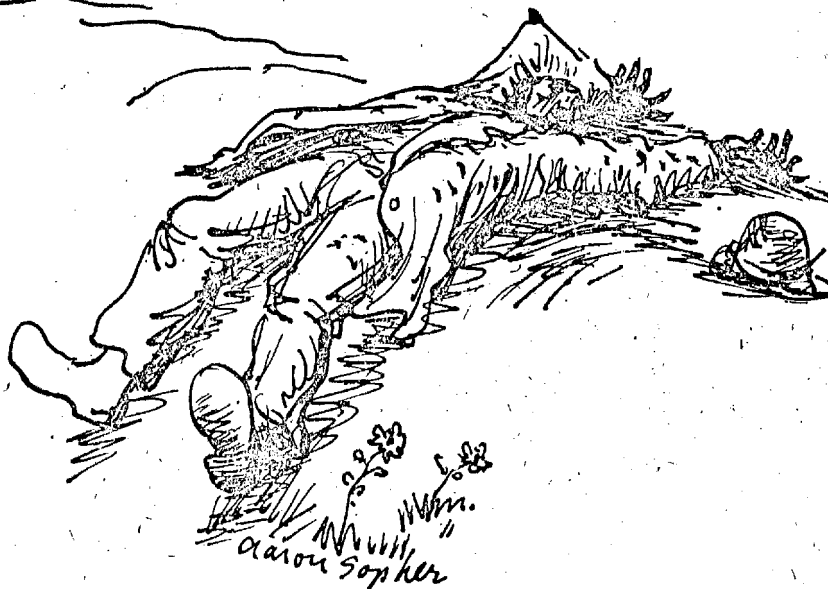
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*Reiss's body, riddled with machinegun bullets, was found beside a lonely road in Switzerland.*



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"the letter (to her) was written under coercion. The OGPU had threatened that they would kidnap or harm me and our child unless he did what they directed—kill himself. He made this bargain because of his great love for us. But he was murdered in this fashion just as surely as though they had pulled the trigger of the gun."

Waldman argued passionately for an FBI investigation. It was refused on the ground that a possible murder in the District of Columbia was not a Federal but a State and District of Columbia jurisdiction rested entirely with the

Metropolitan Police. The lawyer pointed out that Krivitsky had been and was likely to have continued to be a witness before congressional committees and grand juries, and that could have been a proper basis for an FBI investigation.

After 24 hours of hullabaloo in the press and a Congressman's speech deploring inefficient, negligent police work on the case, the Washington police reluctantly reopened it. They interviewed the maid, the housekeeper, the bellboy and the hotel manager in the rooms adjacent to Krivitsky.

They checked the empty shell found on the floor and confirmed that it was fired from Krivitsky's .38. It was too late to look for fingerprints on the gun. It had been covered with blood when the police first arrived and had been cleaned in the meantime.

### Invented a Telegram

**R**EPORTERS TRACKED DOWN Mrs. Dobert on her farm. She had first learned of Krivitsky's death from the Tuesday morning papers at her friend's house in Washington, where she had spent the night after leaving Krivitsky at the station. At first she refused to believe it, still sure that he had returned to New York the previous Sunday. But there was his picture and photostats of the notes in his handwriting.

Distraught and bewildered, she invented for her hostess a telegram from her husband asking her to come home quickly. She drove off without a word about the affair. But when it came out that she had brought Krivitsky to Washington and was one of the last to see him, her evidence was sought.

Detective Chief Bernard W. Thompson reported to the press that "now, as before, we are convinced that Krivitsky killed himself." The Washington Post reporter added in his account, "Thompson stressed the words 'as before,' emphasizing that almost from the moment he was found . . . investigators have deemed the death a suicide." The police were smarting under the charge of inexcusably sloppy work when the body was found.

The only thing Mrs. Dobert was able to say to repeated questions about Krivitsky's state of mind when she left him, and about clues to his intentions from his behavior over the weekend, was: "He did tell me, 'If anything should happen, to me, look after Alex and Tonya.' That was on the drive back to Washington on Sunday. I said, 'Don't be silly, Walter. Nothing will happen to you.' He didn't argue with that. He was calm and cheerful, still full of plans about the farm."

### Ideological Debate

**T**HE REAFFIRMED coroner's verdict did not end the excited public argument. Pressed again, the FBI said that it "did not and is not going to investigate the case." The spokesman was S. J. Tracy in the office of J. Edgar Hoover, who did not personally make a public comment or agree to receive Waldman.

Newspapers with strong anti-Communist editorial policies kept up the clamor for a few days, reviewing some of Krivitsky's life and other cases of OGPU assassinations beyond Soviet borders. Newspapers with strong leftist editorial policies answered derisively. Ben Hecht wrote in PM: "Swinging

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Roman candles over its head, blowing smoke out of its ears, complete with electric-lighted nose, fright wig and fire gong hitched to its fanny, the Press is galumphing up and down the highways looking for the scoundrel who murdered that darling man, Gen. Walter Krivitsky . . . The point and purpose of the Rumpelstiltskin manhunt is to blow up the deviltries of Stalinism and allow Moscow, rather than Berlin, to frighten the pants off everybody . . .

CPYRGHT "The Red Menace being pumped out of the comatose Krivitsky is on your corner newsstand. And the presses printing it are not being supervised by OGPU and Gestapo chieftains, knout in hand. It is, nevertheless, as giddy an example of the cynical contempt for readers' intelligence as ever came over the short waves from Europe . . ."

Ralph Ingersoll, also in PM, poured scorn on the fuss and asked with righteous indignation why Krivitsky's death deserved more attention than the seven lines reporting the suicide of a Brooklyn clothing worker on the same day. "Where is our conscience . . .?" he demanded. "What treacherous OGPU lives in us that we must accept and take into our hearts any dirty rat . . .?"

#### A Belated Interest

WHEN THE EXCHANGES of vituperation shifted to other topics, other news. Nobody reported seeing Hans Bruesse again. Twenty-five years later, intelligence services in the United States and Western Europe would, in the words of one official,

"give an eyetooth to find him." They no longer doubt his existence.

After the war, the FBI did develop an interest in the Krivitsky case and its implications. It began collecting a file which is still secret. Suicide is no longer a firmly held official judgment. But neither has any new evidence emerged to prove that Krivitsky was murdered, by another or by his own hand under threat of dire harm to his wife and the son he adored.

The boy has grown up now and is an engineer living a normal life under another name. The widow, who also uses another name, still lives in New York, ill after all the years of desperate struggle to earn a living and protect her son. They are no longer afraid, but they have had nothing more to do with politics since that February day in 1941.

The proof of exactly what happened must lie in Soviet police archives, more secret even than the guarded FBI and CIA files on the case, for whether the OGPU engineered Krivitsky's death or simply sat by and won its goal without exertion, reports had to be made.

But even as a riddle, Krivitsky's story illuminated a period and its sanguine aftermath. The frenzy of the postwar Communist hunts had its roots in the prewar propaganda battles and the lackadaisical unconcern for security in those days.

Nobody responsible then bothered much with the kind of problem Krivitsky evoked. Then, as now, many shouted at each other to advance their arguments. Few looked to the case at hand.

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