

# The Last Testament of the Left Communist Gavriil Miasnikov

*Translated and annotated by Malcolm Archibald*



## Translator's Introduction

Among the activists agitating within the Bolshevik Party for proletarian democracy in the early Soviet Union was the left communist Gavriil Miasnikov (1889-1945). When Miasnikov was expelled from the Party in 1922, he refused to capitulate like other oppositionists. Instead he set about organizing the Workers' Group, an illegal organization which aimed initially at reforming the Bolshevik Party, a project which Miasnikov eventually decided was hopeless. While serving a term of exile, Miasnikov escaped abroad and lived in France for almost 15 years.

Miasnikov's life was rescued from obscurity by Paul Avrigh in a 1982 article which remains the standard biography in English.<sup>1</sup> But Avrigh did not have access to the sources necessary to establish the final phase of Miasnikov's life, and had to rely on rumour and conjecture. Miasnikov made an impulsive decision to return to the USSR towards the end of World War II, and his friends in France only gradually became aware of his disappearance. Relying on a note in Lenin's collected works, Avrigh stated that Miasnikov died in 1946, but in fact he was executed on November 16 1945.

Early in the post-Soviet period, the study of Miasnikov's life received a boost with the publication of materials from his file with the NKGB (People's Commissariat for State Security).<sup>2</sup> This file comprises three volumes:<sup>3</sup>

1. Miasnikov's book-length manuscript entitled "The Philosophy of a Murder or Why and How I Killed Michael Romanoff." This manuscript, more of a psychological study than a historical narrative, was never published by Miasnikov, but he mailed a copy to Stalin in 1940. Its retention in the file is baffling since it did not form part of the case against Miasnikov.
2. Various writings by Miasnikov, including his "Autobiography", "Liquidationism and Marxism", and "Victories and Defeats of the Russian Proletariat, or Who Betrayed October".
3. Transcripts of Miasnikov's interrogation and trial, and other documents related to his incarceration in Moscow's Butyrki Prison in 1945.

Documents which were purged from the file include Miasnikov's essays "Concerning Classes in Contemporary Russia", "A Brief Critique of the Theory and Practice of the VKP(b) [All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks)] and the Comintern", and "The Class Theory of the State of the USSR." These and other writings were burned, along with "material in a foreign language 352 pages long."

The published materials from Miasnikov's NKGB file have been used in two condensed biographies of Miasnikov published in French,<sup>4</sup> as well as a full-length study written by a local historian in Perm, Miasnikov's base in the Urals in the early years of Soviet power.<sup>5</sup> In 2010, Miasnikov's dossier with the French police was published, shedding more light on some of the ambiguities in his biography.<sup>6</sup> All this information has been used in annotating the English translation below of materials from Volume 3 of Miasnikov's NKGB file.

In 1924 Miasnikov was placed in a mental institution by the GPU. Although this was probably an early example of "psychiatrizing" dissidence, his behaviour throughout his career certainly gave rise to questions about his mental health, in particular, his tendencies to megalomania (exaggerating his own importance) and paranoia (complaints about his manuscripts being stolen). These qualities are on display in the interrogation protocols, along with what can only be called chutzpah, e.g. sending Molotov an itemized bill for "lost time." But sometimes in history an action can appear irrational due to a lack of understanding the underlying cause. This may be the case with Miasnikov's decision in November 1944 to quit his job and return to the USSR, to certain death. His third, and last surviving, son Boris, age 21, was killed at the front on October 10 1944.<sup>7</sup> Miasnikov may have received word of this event which triggered his fatal decision.

Miasnikov spent the last months of his life in a uniformly hostile environment without the support of family and friends. The documents below were edited by people who had no other object than to squeeze information out of him before killing him. Nevertheless, in face of constant bullying and ill-treatment, he acquitted himself well, refusing to give up his confederates and renounce his beliefs. Only towards the very end, when he fully realized the hopelessness of his situation, did he seem to waver a bit. Miasnikov's statements to his interrogators were sealed in an inaccessible archive for 50 years, but now they serve as his last testament.

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Note on the translation: in the transcripts, /.../ indicates the deletion of material of a repetitive nature. In the original texts, terms like "Workers' Group", "Central Bureau", "Appeal", etc. are invariably in quotation marks. These marks have been removed on the grounds that this is just another attempt by the prosecution to disparage Miasnikov's ideas.

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1 Paul Avrich, "Bolshevik Opposition to Lenin: G. T. Miasnikov and the Workers' Group," **Russian Review**, vol. 43 (1984): pp. 1-29.

2 G. I. Miasnikov, "The Philosophy of a Murder, or Why and How I Killed Michael Romanoff" [in Russian], *compiled* by B. I. Belenkin and V. K. Vinogradov, *Minuvsheye: Historical Almanac*, (Moscow/SPb, 1995): pp. 7-191.

<sup>3</sup> Central Archive of the Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation (TsA FSB RF), Archive No. H-17674, Volumes 1-3. The same archive includes the file for the Workers' Group, 1921-1928: H-1794, with 54 volumes.

<sup>4</sup> Philippe Bourrinet, "MIASNIKOV, Gavril Il'itch (1889-1945), dit 'Gan'ka'", 2002. Online at <http://www.left-dis.nl/f/biomiasni.pdf>; Michel Olivier, "Le Groupe ouvrier du Parti communiste russe (1922-1937) – G. Miasnikov," Paris, décembre 2009. See <http://www.leftcommunism.org/spip.php?article142&lang=fr>.

<sup>5</sup> N. A. Alikina, **The Don Quixote of the Proletarian Revolution: the Story of How the Motovilikha Worker Gavriil Miasnikov Fought with the Central Committee of the RKP(b) for Freedom of Speech and the Press (1920–1922)** [in Russian], (Perm, 2006).

<sup>6</sup> Bruno David, "Le dossier Miasnikov des archives de la Préfecture de Police de Paris," 2011. Read online on the site <https://halshs.archives-ouvertes.fr/>.

<sup>7</sup> <https://goo.gl/1w43hs>.

## **From the investigative file of 1945.<sup>1</sup>**

### **1. From a letter of the 1<sup>st</sup> Department of the NKGB<sup>2</sup> USSR to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Department of the NKGB USSR concerning the issuing of a visa to G. I. Miasnikov**

December 27 1944

Upon reviewing the possible return to the USSR from France of G. I. Miasnikov, well known to you, the executive of the Commissariat decided to issue him a visa with the goal of arresting him here as a traitor to the Homeland.

We have received a message from the NKID<sup>3</sup> USSR that Miasnikov was sent to the USSR by our embassy in France on December 18 1944.

[Vol. 3, separate envelope.]

### **2. Record of interrogation of G. I. Miasnikov; January 18 1945**

Q. Why did you flee abroad?

A: Starting in 1920, I had differences with the Central Committee of the RKP(b)<sup>4</sup> on the meaning of a proletarian state – on the dictatorship of the proletariat and proletarian democracy. I carried on an illegal fractional struggle, which took the form of the creation of the so-called Workers' Group.

The leaders of this Group had the notion that it would develop into a legal party capable of offering an alternative to the RKP(b) and carrying on a struggle with it legally.

By the end of 1922, the Workers' Group had taken shape in an organizational sense. This was reflected in the creation of a Central Bureau and the publication of a Manifesto, which I wrote myself, and which was adopted as the platform of our oppositional group. Somewhat later, the Central Bureau published its own organ, "The Workers' Path to Power." This publication was distributed illegally in the USSR, especially in the cities where the Workers' Group had some influence, namely: Moscow, Leningrad, Kharkov and Nizhny Novgorod.

While I was engaged in my illegal fractional work, I was repeatedly subjected to repression by the Soviet authorities and finally I was exiled to Yerevan.

Since I disagreed with the policies of the Soviet government and the Central Committee of the VKP(b),<sup>5</sup> and wished to avoid further persecution, I decided to flee abroad.

Q. Tell us how you prepared your escape.

A. At the beginning of 1928, after the illegal publication of my pamphlet "What Is the Workers' State," a secret meeting of the Central Bureau of the Workers' Group took place in Moscow. At that meeting it was decided that in order to avoid arrest in connection with the

publication of the pamphlet, I should escape abroad and serve as the foreign representative of the Bureau.

Q. Since you were in Yerevan at the time, how did you become aware of this decision?

A. I was told by Nikolai Kuznetsov<sup>6</sup> (I don't remember his patronymic) who was sent by the Central Bureau. /.../

Q. What sort of questions were you asked when you were interrogated by the political police in Tehran?

A. The police interrogator mainly wanted clarification of my motivation for escaping from the USSR, and asked probing questions to ascertain whether I was an agent of the GPU. I denied his suppositions, arguing that that would be incompatible with the political position which I held in relation to the leadership of the VKP(b). I had documentary evidence to prove that I was an exile and that I had recently lived in Yerevan.

During the interrogation, I demanded to be released from custody and given the opportunity to leave Persia.<sup>7</sup>

Soon the police informed me that the German government would allow me to entry to Germany. In order to be issued the necessary documents, I asked to be conveyed to the German consulate, where I was denied a visa thanks to an intervention by the Soviet ambassador. It was then that I decided to escape from custody. To this end, I requested a leave of absence of 24 hours for the purpose, ostensibly, of arranging my own departure from Persia through one of the foreign missions. Accompanied by a policeman, I went to the Soviet Embassy and entered alone, since the police weren't allowed to go in there. I told the consul I spoke to there that I intended to return to the USSR, which wasn't actually true. I left the Embassy by a different exit, thereby escaping from my Persian guard and simultaneously leaving the Soviet representatives with the impression that I intended to return to the USSR.<sup>8</sup>

Q. While you were in Iran, what persons or anti-Soviet organizations were you in contact with?

A. I sent telegrams to Trotsky in Istanbul and the president of the German Reichstag, informing them that I was in detention in Tehran and asking for their help.

Q. Did Trotsky help you?

A. No. Later, when I was in Turkey, his son Sedov told me that he had been ordered by Trotsky to send a letter and money to me in Tehran, but that the Persian authorities had sent the stuff back to Istanbul, where Trotsky was living at the time.

Also, I went to the embassy of Czechoslovakia where I met someone I had known previously in the Rostov prison (I don't remember his name). I gave him my manuscripts to send to the historical archive in Prague.<sup>9</sup>

Q. How long were you hiding in Persia?

A. After I escaped from the surveillance of the Persian police, I decided to look for help from someone I got to know during my detention, namely, a deputy of the Majlis.<sup>10</sup> I don't remember his name. He had been arrested for resisting the reforms of Shah Pahlavi and had been released before my escape. He provided me with money and a guide. On the very same day I left Tehran, and in June 1929 I reached the Turkish frontier with the help of smugglers.

[Vol. 3, pp. 31, 32, 34-36.]

### **3. Record of interrogation of G. I. Miasnikov; January 19 1945**

Q. We know that in Turkey you made contact with Trotsky. Why have you been quiet about this?

A. I'm not hiding the fact that I met with Trotsky in Turkey.

Q. Tell us about the circumstances which led to you establishing connections with Trotsky.

A. Upon my arrival in Istanbul, the police required me to sign an agreement that I would not undertake any political activity on Turkish soil and that I would leave the country as soon as possible. The police told me where to find Trotsky, and I went to the address they gave me. On that very day I met with Trotsky in his home.

Q. What was the purpose of your meeting with Trotsky?

A. I was in a very difficult financial situation and hoped to receive some support from Trotsky.

Q. Obviously, you were not only looking for financial support, but also to make contact with forces actively hostile to the USSR, were you not?

A. I wasn't looking for any kind of organizational or ideological alliance with Trotsky, since he was consistently ill-disposed towards the leaders of the Workers' Group and to me personally.<sup>11</sup>

Q. And yet upon arrival in Istanbul, you were in a rush to meet him. What did you talk about with Trotsky?

A. Trotsky received me in his office with a haughty manner. I told him about how I was being persecuted by the Turkish police and also about my financial difficulties. I asked Trotsky to help me get a visa to travel from Turkey to Western Europe. He refused to help me obtain a visa. But in connection with my lack of a place to stay, he invited me to stay at his place for a while. I spent several days at his apartment.

Q. And did you not discuss anti-Soviet activities with Trotsky?

A. At the very beginning of my conversation with Trotsky, he warned me that we would not be discussing any political issues. Therefore there was no discussion on this theme.

- Q. You're lying. Since you and Trotsky were both bitter enemies of the VKP(b) with a common hatred for Soviet power, you could not avoid talking about your treacherous actions against the Soviet state. Tell the truth – what did you come to an agreement about with Trotsky?
- A. Let me repeat: during my meetings with Trotsky, we did not deal with political questions. We talked mainly about stuff which had no relation to our struggles with the VKP(b). Trotsky seemed more interested in talking about fishing and hunting with his son Sedov<sup>12</sup> and his secretary Frank<sup>13</sup>. He didn't express any opinions of a political nature while I was present.
- Q. It's useless for you to try to describe your negotiations with Trotsky about plans for a joint struggle against Soviet power as banal conversations about fishing and hunting. Why don't you tell the truth? /.../
- A. I was forced to liaise with Sedov, and through him with Trotsky, due to my dire straits in Turkey. The fact is, I had no other contacts in Turkey besides them. So although I despised Trotsky both politically and personally, I wasn't in a position to sever relations with him.
- All my meetings with Sedov dealt with personal matters. There was only one meeting where I asked him to let Trotsky know that I was writing an article about the position of the Workers' Group in the case of war between the USSR and the bourgeois states. I wanted to have this article published in Trotsky's bulletin.
- Q. How did Trotsky react to your proposition?
- A. According to Sedov, Trotsky refused to publish my article in its entirety, and instead suggested that I submit a brief letter to the editor. I didn't agree.
- Q. How many meetings did you have with Sedov?
- A. I met with Sedov quite a few times, but these meetings, as I've already indicated, were about everyday concerns. I helped Sedov buy stuff for Trotsky's family, and was paid for my services.
- Q. We know that Trotsky provided you with money and not just for "household services." Tell us what kind of financing you received from Trotsky.
- A. I received money from Trotsky only twice and in insignificant amounts. The first time he gave me 10 dollars for personal necessities, and the second time, just before my departure for France, 25 dollars.
- Q. And did you not receive subsidies from him for anti-Soviet work?
- A. No, I did not. /.../

[Vol. 3, pp. 39-41.]

#### 4. Record of interrogation of G. I. Miasnikov; January 25 1945

/.../

Q. We know that while serving your term of exile, you engaged in anti-Soviet activities. Give us the details of your hostile actions in Yerevan.

A. While in exile in Yerevan, I wrote the pamphlet “What Is a Workers’ State?”, and finished writing two works I had started in the Tomsk isolator:<sup>14</sup> the book “A Critique of the Theory and Practice of the VKP(b) and the Comintern” and the pamphlet “The Current Deception.”<sup>15</sup> In my books and pamphlets, I analyzed the theoretical and practical policies of the VKP(b) and the Comintern. I accused the Central Committee of the VKP(b) and the Soviet government of moving away from the principles of the proletarian revolution and towards the establishment of state capitalism in the country. I argued that the working class of the USSR was politically powerless, and spelled out the program of the Workers’ Group. For technical reasons, most of the books I wrote remained unpublished. Only the pamphlet “What Is a Workers’ State?” was printed illegally by hectograph with a run of 200 copies. I distributed some copies of this pamphlet among workers at the pottery factory in Yerevan by placing them in locations where the workers congregated, for example, in the kiosk by the entrance of the factory.

Most of these pamphlets were sent through the mail by me to the factory committees of the following factories: Motovilikha, Lysva, Chusovsky, and Lessner in Leningrad, and others.<sup>16</sup> By this means I distributed around 150 copies, and the rest I destroyed before my flight across the border. I handed over several books to Kuznetsov, the messenger from Moscow, to be transmitted to the Central Bureau of the Workers’ Group.

Q. Did you stay in contact with the Central Bureau only through Kuznetsov, or were there also other people involved. Tell us about this.

A. My connections with the Central Bureau were sporadic. Activists of the Workers’ Group traveled from Moscow to Yerevan to visit me. They told me about their own illegal work. I, in turn, used them to transmit my instructions to the Central Bureau.

Q. Name the activists of the Workers’ Group who visited you in Yerevan.

A. The only name I remember is N. V. Kuznetsov.

Q. Again you are trying to conceal the identities of your collaborators in hostile activities. We insist that you name everyone associating with you in illegal work during your exile in Yerevan.

A. I’m not denying that there were other people besides Kuznetsov who visited me in Yerevan on behalf of the Workers’ Group. I just don’t recall their names.

Q. Was it just single couriers who visited you, or whole groups of leading members of the illegal Workers’ Group?

A. I admit that I was once visited by such a group.

- Q. When?
- A. In the summer of 1927 I got a visit from several members of the Central Bureau and we held a conspiratorial meeting.
- Q. How many members of the Bureau were present at this meeting?
- A. Including me, there were six members of the Central Bureau.
- Q. Name them.
- A. Besides myself, I can name only Sergei Tiunov.<sup>17</sup> I decline to name the other participants at the meeting.
- Q. Why?
- A. Because of personal ethical considerations.
- Q. What “ethical” considerations?
- A. I’m willing to risk my own neck and answer for my own actions, but I don’t want to betray other people and expose them to possible repression at the hands of the Soviet organs. Although in previous sessions and today I have named some of my colleagues in oppositional work, it’s only because it appears that they are already known to the investigatory organs.
- Q. Why do you assume that the other participants of the Workers’ Group and, in particular, members of the Central Bureau, are not known to the organs of state security?
- A. As far as I know, they were not previously subject to repression by organs of Soviet government, and I believe that they are currently living in freedom without any suspicions about their past relations with me.

/.../

[Vol. 3, pp. 46-47.]

## **5. Record of interrogation of G. I. Miasnikov; February 1 1945**

- Q. What did you do in Paris initially?<sup>18</sup>
- A. Soon after my arrival in Paris, I met with Prudhommeaux,<sup>19</sup> an editor of the anarcho-syndicalist newspaper “l’Ouvrier communiste.”<sup>20</sup> Through him I met with a certain Zhigulev-Irinin.<sup>21</sup>
- Zhigulev-Irinin at that time owned a small business washing store windows, and arranged some work for me.<sup>22</sup>



Q. We know that your connection with Zhigulev-Irinin was not just about his “business,” but rather you collaborated with him in active subversion against the Soviet state. So first off, tell us about this.

A. Zhigulev-Irinin (I don’t remember his first name and patronymic) had worked at the Soviet embassy in Berlin. In 1927 he became a non-returner; according to his political convictions, he was an anarchist. In Paris he edited the newspaper “Put truda” [The Voice of Labour]. Two of my articles were published in this newspaper even before my arrival in Paris – they were written by me in Turkey and sent from there to France.<sup>23</sup> Once I reached Paris, my first impulse was to collaborate with Irinin in this newspaper. However, differences between us soon cropped up, and I broke off all contact with him. The fact of the matter was that Zhigulev-Irinin seemed to me a very dubious person. I thought he was an agent of the French police or, in any case, connected with some kind of White Guard organization.<sup>24</sup> He insisted that I meet with the well known White emigrant Burtsev, at the same time as Burtsev was raising hell about me in his newspaper “Obshcheye dyelo” [Common cause], accusing me of organizing the murder of Michael Romanoff.<sup>25</sup> This campaign was picked up by the whole White Guard press, and I was forced not only to avoid Zhigulev-Irinin,<sup>26</sup> but to hide out at the home of my French friend Waldspurger. I lived in his apartment for nearly six months, without ever going out. Only at the beginning of 1931 was I able to find work as a mechanic at a shop owned by Durco.<sup>27</sup>

/.../

Q. /.../ While you were abroad, you had contacts in the USSR for the purpose of carrying out hostile activities. Tell us about them.

A. I didn’t have any sort of contact with the Central Bureau of the Workers’ Group. I recall that in 1931 I mailed my pamphlet “The Current Deception” to the address of the *zavkom* [factory committee] of the Perm military equipment plant (Motovilikha). I had written the pamphlet while I was still in exile in Yerevan and it was published at my own expense in 1931 in Paris. In this pamphlet I tried to prove that proletarian democracy did not exist in the Soviet Union, and that the Soviet state had transformed itself into a capitalist state. I wrote that state power in Russia had been taken over by a party-soviet bureaucracy and I called for the elimination of this bureaucracy.

Q. Bluntly speaking, you called for the overthrow of the existing system in the USSR?

A. In my pamphlet “The Current Deception,” I stated the need for fundamental reforms in the USSR. In particular, I called for the elimination of the *Sovnarkom* [Council of People’s Commissars], comparing it with the cabinet of a bourgeois state. I also wrote that there should be an amnesty for all political prisoners arrested for anti-Soviet activity, and pointed to the necessity to eliminate the judicial functions of the GPU and to encourage the development of alternative viewpoints opposed to the RKP(b) and the Soviet state.

Q. Where else in the USSR did you send anti-Soviet literature?

A. I didn't make any more such mailings to the USSR. One thousand copies of my pamphlet "The Current Deception" were printed, and I distributed them only abroad.

Q. By what means?

A. At first I tried to sell them through one of the White Guard shops in Paris, but was refused. After that I decided to distribute the pamphlet myself. I was only able to sell a few dozen copies. I sent some copies to the Workers' Communist Party in Germany [KAPD], the Congress of Industrial Unions in America [CIO?], the Independent Labour Party in England, and a few copies were sent to Belgium.

In addition, I passed a few pamphlets to leaders of the anarcho-syndicalist movement in France, with whom I had established personal contact at that time.

Q. With whom specifically?

A. I met with the publishers of the anarcho-syndicalist journal "Proletarian Revolution": Robert Louzon and Pierre Monatte. They helped me find a job. As anarcho-syndicalists, their views were close to mine, and I maintained friendly relations with them. Starting in 1931 I took part in the public life of the French anarcho-syndicalists and was a member of the Unitary General Confederation of Labour [CGTU].<sup>28</sup>

Also, I had good relations with Treint, the former General Secretary of the Central Committee of the French Communist Party [PCF].<sup>29</sup> He was in opposition to the Comintern, and to the leadership of the PCF. What drew us together was the idea of starting a Workers' International. I gave him the platform and statutes of a future International which I had written up while I was still living in Turkey. My plan was to bring together all the currents in the international labour movement which were in opposition to the 3rd International. My draft was translated into French by Treint, mimeographed, and distributed in France. Treint sent a few copies to Germany, Belgium, and America.

I should say that we attempted to set up a clearinghouse for all the opposition groups which hadn't joined the Comintern. However, in the end, nothing happened. /.../

In 1934 I wrote an Appeal to the French workers and had 2,000 copies printed off. In my Appeal, I wrote about the terror in the Soviet Union and about the massive persecutions of oppositionists for illegal activities. I wrote that Sergei Tiunov, the former editor of the "The Workers' Road to Power," organ of the Workers' Group, had been in custody for six years and was languishing in the dungeons of the GPU. I took a firm position against the VKP(b) and the Soviet state and called on the workers to demand the release of Tiunov.<sup>30</sup>

Q. Who was the source of the defamatory information about the Soviet Union which you used in composing your Appeal.

A. I was told about Sergei Tiunov's arrest by the GPU by the former employee of the Central Committee of the VKP(b) Volintsev, who escaped from the Soviet Union. I also spoke with a Belgian national who had previously worked in Moscow, as well as the anarcho-syndicalist Lazarevich,<sup>31</sup> who was another escapee from the USSR. The information I got

from conversations with these individuals was used in the preparation of the Appeal to the French workers. 1500 copies of this Appeal were distributed to anarcho-syndicalist unions in France; 400 copies were confiscated by the French police during a search.

Q. And what happened to the remaining 100 copies?

A. It's possible I sent them to be distributed in other countries, but I can't remember now.

Q. Were any sent to the Soviet Union?

A. As far as my memory serves me, I mailed some to Perm, to the address of the *zavkom* of the Motovilikha plant. I hoped that my old oppositional connections were still intact in Motovilikha, and that my Appeal to the French workers would be met with sympathy and support.

I have to say that after the publication of this Appeal in 1934, I was arrested by the French police and accused of meddling in the internal affairs of France. An order was issued expelling me from the country. I was released from custody under condition that I leave France within three days.<sup>32</sup> I didn't obey this order and hid at the home of my friend Henri Barré.<sup>33</sup>

Then, two months later, at the request of Jouhaux, the General Secretary of the Confédération générale du travail (CGT), the order expelling me from France was cancelled. I left Paris in 1934 and moved to the town of Coulommiers where I found work building a clinic for Dr. René Arbeltier. I worked there until 1936, then returned to Paris.

Q. Where did you work after your return to Paris?

A. I was hired at the International Exposition and worked there until 1937. At that time, I was working on my book "The Victory and Defeat of the Working Class in the USSR or Who Betrayed October – Lenin? Trotsky? Stalin?" I finished the book, but wasn't able to publish it. If it's necessary for the investigation, I can summarize the content of the book.

Q. Your hostility to the Soviet state and your slanders directed at the VKP(b) are sufficiently well known, so there is no need to dwell on the libellous content of your book. Tell us what you did next.

A. After the completion of the French pavilion at the International Exposition, I was out of work for some time. In 1938 I got a job at the Lustra factory, dressing and dyeing furs, but got laid off after six months. At the end of 1938 I got a job as a mechanic working for a private company making spare parts for the Metro. It was during that time that I finished a book about the transition from the bourgeois to the socialist revolution: "A Chronicle of the Labour Movement in Motovilikha." I should mention that in this book I did not commit any attacks against the VKP(b).

Q. Do you mean that you ceased your subversive activities against the USSR?

A. By that time I had ceased my struggle against the VKP(b) and no longer took any actions in that direction.

- Q. Is it not true that, being an implacable enemy of Soviet power, you engaged in active subversion against the Soviet state until quite recently? Don't try to hide anything from the investigation, and tell the truth!
- A. I'm not hiding anything from the investigation and I'm telling only the truth. I've told everything about my struggle against the VKP(b) and have nothing more to say.
- Q. "Nothing more to say" because you want to hide your connections with foreign intelligence services engaged in actions directed against the USSR?
- A. I never had any "connections with foreign intelligence services" so there is nothing more to say. Please believe me when I say that during the latter period I not only did not oppose the Soviet state in any way, but rather, under war conditions, considered it necessary to cease any struggle against the VKP(b). And I urged French workers to support the Soviet Union.
- Q. You're trying to pass yourself off as a patriot of the Soviet state. It's not going to work. Just tell us what you were up to in France during the German occupation.
- A. Under the Germans I worked as a mechanic in the workshop turning out spare parts for the Metro, and then, in early 1941, I was arrested.
- Q. What were the circumstances of your arrest by the Germans?
- A. On June 23 1941 I made up my mind to visit the Soviet Embassy in Paris to obtain permission to leave France for the USSR, or, at the very least, to offer my services to the Soviet authorities. But the Embassy had already been taken over by the Germans, who arrested me. When the Germans asked what I was doing at the Embassy, I answered that I had three sons eligible for military service living in the Soviet Union, and I had gone to the Embassy to inquire about their fate. After checking my documents, the Germans released me on condition that I register with the Gestapo on a daily basis. I had to do this for three months, and then was released from this obligation.
- Q. Obviously the Germans required you not only to visit the Gestapo, but also to collaborate with them, did they not?
- A. No, I didn't make any such commitment to the Germans, nor could I, since I was dead set against them. Until July 1942, I continued to work as a machinist doing production work, and then escaped to Toulouse in the unoccupied zone of France. A month after arriving in Toulouse, I was arrested by the French police.
- Q. For what?
- A. The police told me that my arrest was due to the fact that in 1934 I was supposed to be expelled from France as a foreigner. But when I presented the relevant document indicating that this order had been reversed, the police came up with a new charge, namely that I was a terrorist.
- Q. According to the police, what had you done to warrant being labelled a "terrorist"?

A. I was interrogated only once, and then I was sent to a concentration camp near Toulouse. I was kept in this camp for seven months. In April 1943, together with other prisoners, I was transferred to the “Soulac” camp, located 90 kilometres from Bordeaux. In August 1943 I escaped from this camp and made my way to Paris, where I lived illegally until the liberation of Paris from the Germans.<sup>34</sup>

Q. You are giving contradictory accounts of the circumstances of your arrest by the Germans and by the French police, and also about the time you spent in concentration camps. Obviously you are trying to conceal your treacherous work in France during the German occupation. At the next interrogation you will need to tell the truth. /.../

[Vol. 3, pp 56-62.]

## **6. Record of interrogation of G. I. Miasnikov; March 6, 1945**

/.../

Q. What did you do after the liberation of Paris from the Germans?

A. I continued working as a mechanic at Verboom & Durouchard, making metal parts for the Paris Metro. On November 27 1944, I stopped working in connection with my intended departure for the Soviet Union.

Q. Even though you are an implacable enemy of the Soviet state, you decided to travel to the Soviet Union. Tell us what your intentions were in deciding to come to the USSR.

A. I was going to work in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or as a correspondent for one of the national newspapers.

Q. And what did you propose to do in terms of struggling against Soviet power?

A. The permission granted to me to return to the Soviet Union I interpreted as the legalization of the Workers’ Group, which would be able to carry on oppositional activity under conditions of legality. To start off with, I intended to publish a journal which would bring together all the elements sympathizing with my ideas, thereby preparing the base for organizing a second party.

Q. What’s this second party you’re talking about?

A. Once I was in the Soviet Union, I envisaged creating a second party on the basis of the manifesto of the Workers’ Group which I had written back in 1923. According to my plan, this party would “compete” with the VKP(b) in all the social and governmental organizations of the Soviet Union, such as the soviets, trade unions, and co-operatives. An example of the sort of political system I had in mind for the USSR is the two-party system of government in the USA. Drawing on the experience of the two competing political parties in America, Democratic and Republican, I imagined that in the USSR there could also be

established two parties: the VKP(b) and a second party, headed by me, Miasnikov. This party would take up a position of opposition to the VKP(b) on all issues.

Q. What elements did you intend to count on for organizing this party.

A. I counted mainly on those elements of the working class and the peasantry which accepted our program.

Q. And more precisely?

A. To begin with, I expected to rely on the remnants of the Workers' Group and on all elements, including members of the VKP(b), who would side with me after the publication of the proclamation.

Q. What proclamation?

A. The proclamation announcing the legalization of the Workers' Group.

Q. With whom, specifically, from your previous anti-Soviet connections, did you plan to establish contact.

A. Any contacts would come from my future practical activity. I can't name any names now, because I've lived abroad since 1928 and never had ties with any illegal anti-Soviet organizations. /.../

[Vol. 3, pp. 66-67.]

## **7. G. I. Myasnikov to Peoples' Commissar of Foreign Affairs V. M. Molotov<sup>35</sup>**

April 1, 1945

Declaration

The right to asylum is one of the greatest achievements obtained in the historical battles of the titanic forces of freedom, thought and creativity versus the forces of slavery, oppression, violence and obscurantism. Even the Inquisition was forced to recognize it. By time-honoured tradition, a government which issues a visa to a political emigrant to enter its territory thereby waives prosecution for activities which took place before the visa was issued. Henri Guilbeaux, Jacques Sadoul, Maurice Thorez<sup>36</sup> – all three were deserters in wartime, but once they received a visa, their sentences were automatically abrogated and they were able to live and act freely. There are thousands of such examples.

I'm a working class thinker and writer who lived as a refugee in France and received an invitation from the government of my native land to return. I returned. And I was taken straight from the airport to the NKVD prison and handed over to counter-intelligence, which is fabricating outrageous and monstrous accusations against me. This treatment is accompanied by outright ridicule, vindictive bullying, and acute deprivation.

If my “faith” (convictions) are not compatible with living freely in the USSR, then I ask for the opportunity to go abroad. In France I worked as a mechanic. Following the instructions of the Embassy, I gave notice and left my job, and ended up in the Reserve of the personnel of the NKVD.

I used to earn 28 francs/hour, worked 208 hours/month:  $26 \times 208 = 5824$  francs (assuming roughly the purchasing power of the 1941 franc). Please order that I be paid my wages calculated from the moment I left my job to the day I’m back at work again.

Respectfully yours,

G. Miasnikov

[Vol. 3, pp. 66-67.]

## **8. G. I. Miasnikov to the People’s Commissar of State Security**

[April 1945]

To Citizen People’s Commissar [*Narkom*] of State Security

Declaration

The regimen of political prisoners in tsarist prisons was synonymous with everything barbaric, cruel, merciless, and vindictive.

The Russian people engaged in struggle with the tsarist regime. Our party of Bolsheviks was not the least of the forces of these warring armies, and I, as a member of this party, was not the least of the militants taking part. As such, I had the possibility of experiencing all the delights of this accursed regime. For belonging to this party, I received three sentences of hard labour, and another one for the possession and manufacture of explosives and shells (you can believe my word, Citizen *Narkom*, that the bombs we prepared were not intended as desserts for the Romanoffs and their lackeys).<sup>37</sup> When I was incarcerated in various jails and hard-labour prisons for eight years, neither at the preliminary investigation stage or after conviction, was I ever forbidden:

- 1) to correspond with relatives and friends;
- 2) to receive visits from relatives and friends;
- 3) to have writing materials and the possibility to engage in literary work.

That was then. And now, thinking that the Paris air was bad for me, I was enticed to leave and thrown into that purgatory for the bodies and souls of Soviet citizens – the dungeons of the secret police. There, in a tiny cell, with hardly any light, air, or food, I’m without tobacco, visits, and writing materials and am not allowed to talk.

Since I’ve spent three months in this purgatory, I must be purged of any contagion and my soul saved. Therefore at least permit me the same privileges as the tsarist regime.

With respect to this institution and its chief,

G. Miasnikov<sup>38</sup>

[Vol. 3, separate envelope.]

**9. Record of interrogation of G. I. Miasnikov; May 7 1945**

Q. What did you do in the “free” zone of France?

A. Within a month of my arrival in Toulouse, I was arrested by the French Police. /.../

After I was charged, I Appealed to the American consul in Vichy to take me under protection as a Soviet citizen wishing to avoid being handed over to the Germans as a hostage. In my declaration to the American consul, I wrote that during my time in the Soviet Union I had held a number of responsible positions, and I listed them. Then I had begun an oppositional struggle against the Central Committee of the VKP(b), and for political reasons had emigrated to France.

In spite of this, the Soviet government had not deprived me of citizenship. I asked the consul to take this into consideration and to render assistance to me to avoid being handed over to the Germans by the Vichy authorities. This declaration had the effect of limiting the actions of the police, and I was sent to a French concentration camp.

[Vol. 3, pp. 70-72.]

**10. Record of interrogation of G. I. Miasnikov; October 19 1945.**

Q. Since coming back to the USSR, have you changed your views on fractional activity?

A. I haven't changed my views nor do I intend to change them.

Q. Returning to the USSR, was it your intention to carry on work in accordance with your political convictions, which you defined earlier?

A. Returning to the USSR, I believed that I would have the possibility to work for the creation of a new party.

Q. Do you have anything further to tell the investigators related to the charges against you?

A. Regarding the charges against me, I completely confirm the evidence I have given and there is nothing more of substance that I can add.

Q. Do you have any kind of declaration or petition related to the investigation of your case?

A. Just that I petition for my release from detention on the basis that I will undertake to not engage in any kind of political fractional activity. /.../

Q. Since you remain adamant in your hostile political stance in relation to the VKP(b), how dare you petition to set aside the preventative measures applied to you?



A. I, remaining resolute in my political convictions, will refrain from any kind of political activity without the permission of the relevant authorities.

Q. Do have any other petitions or declarations?

A. I don't have any other petitions or declarations. /.../

[Vol. 3, pp. 95v.-96v.]

**11. From the transcript of the court session. October 24 1945. Top secret.**

MINUTES of the closed judicial session of the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court of the USSR.

City of Moscow

Chairperson: Colonel-General V. V. Ulrich

Members: Major-General of the judiciary A. M. Orlov

Major-General of the judiciary I. O. Matulevich

Secretary: Captain of the judiciary Mazur

At 20:50 the Chairperson opened the judicial session of the Military Collegium and announced that the purpose of the hearing was to review the case against Gavriil Ilich Miasnikov, prosecuted under Art. 58-1a of the Criminal Code of the RSFSR /.../.

Chairperson: Defendant Miasnikov, do you understand the charge brought against you and do you acknowledge your guilt?

Defendant: I understand the charge brought against me; however, I can not acknowledge myself guilty as it is not my fault that I have the convictions that I have.

The facts stated in the indictment do not correspond to reality for the following reasons: in the first place, the indictment states that Miasnikov was arrested in January 1945 by the organs of state security of the USSR for conducting anti-Soviet activities. From this it appears that I was supposedly on Soviet territory all the time and conducting anti-Soviet activities. I was living in France. I was brought to the USSR by fraudulent means...

Chairperson: How you arrived in the Soviet Union is not part of the charge against you...

Defendant: But I want you to understand the circumstances under which I was arrested by the organs of state security. Secondly, the indictment states that upon returning

from Germany, Miasnikov again established criminal contact with his accomplices Kuznetsov and Tiunov. I want to explain to the court that when I arrived back from Germany, Kuznetsov had already been arrested, and I didn't even know Tiunov at that time. Furthermore, upon arrival from Germany, I myself was arrested. So how can you write in the indictment that I established contact with them?

Thirdly, the indictment says that Miasnikov, finding himself in the city of Yerevan, wrote a series of anti-Soviet, libellous brochures which he printed himself on a hectograph and distributed in Yerevan, and which he also sent to other cities of the Soviet Union. Let me clarify that I never wrote brochures with anti-Soviet content. I wrote one pamphlet which I printed myself on a hectograph, and not a "series," as it says in the indictment. I never wrote any documents with anti-Soviet content...

Chairperson: And how else to understand your productions, which are saturated with an anti-Sovietism?

Defendant: I was defending my own program. I stand for the reform of the Soviet state. /.../

Chairperson: The testimony you gave during the preliminary investigation – do you confirm it?

Defendant: I confirm it for the most part, with the exception of some of the language written by the investigator. In particular, he wrote: "an implacable enemy of the Soviet state." When was I ever such? /.../

Chairperson: Who helped you to travel from Turkey to France?

Defendant: At the initiative of left socialists, a "Committee to Help Miasnikov" was created in France and Berlin to get me out of Turkey...

Chairperson: And who gave you a visa to enter France?

Defendant: The then French foreign minister – Briand.

Chairperson: Why did you go to France?

Defendant: I went to France because no other state would give me an entry visa.

Chairperson: And where were you during the German occupation of French territory?

Defendant: I was working in one of the illegal organizations. Then, when I learned that the Germans were going to arrest me, I fled. /.../

Chairperson: When did you publish the anti-Soviet brochure "The Current Deception"?

Defendant: In 1930.

Chairperson: Whom did you denounce in this brochure?

Defendant: The Central Committee of the VKP(b). You should also read my manuscript “The Philosophy of a Murder,” where you will not find anything anti-Soviet. I sent this manuscript to Stalin in 1940.

Chairperson: In the course of the preliminary investigation, you named some of your associates. Why have you refused to name the rest of your associates, the ones who visited you in Yerevan to collaborate on anti-Party and anti-Soviet activities?

Defendant: I haven’t named them for moral-ethical reasons. Generally speaking, if someone trusts me with their secret, then I can’t reveal it to others. Besides, I’ve never been a snitch.

/.../

Member of the Court Comrade Orlov: You told the court that you were “amicably” disposed towards the Soviet government. Then why, using the excuse of ethics, are you concealing enemies of the people, when your duty as a citizen of the Soviet Union is to help the organs of the Soviet government in their struggle with enemies of the people?

Defendant: I’m against snitches, the same as Catherine II was. We all must answer to ourselves.

Member of the Court Comrade Matulevich: Tell us, Defendant Miasnikov, who was the author of the anti-Soviet article “Capitulation and the Bloody Line”, where, in particular, it is said: “. . . to fight for the kind of state found in Russia, where you have in charge of production, at the level of the ruling class, an unchecked bureaucracy which controls all the resources of industry and proletarian labour, fulfilling all the functions of the overthrown bourgeoisie...”

Defendant: It was written by me. In that article I proposed to re-constitute the Soviets of Workers’ Deputies of enterprises, but was not opposed to the Soviet state generally. I did not hide my own views and I have not renounced them. I wrote all this stuff prior to 1934.

Member of the Court Comrade Matulevich: And how are we to understand your testimony on February 24 1945 where you said: “I would like to clarify these statements. The fact of the matter is that prior to 1934 I opposed the Soviet state in print, but after 1934 no such writings were published. However, up to 1938 I continued to write books directed against the Soviet Union.”

Defendant: Those were my thoughts, which were not published.

Member of the Court Comrade Matulevich: But they were intended for a readership, but fortunately were not published – am I right?

Defendant: Yes, but after the Munich Agreement, when I saw the storm clouds gathering over the Soviet Union, I didn't write any more and stopped criticizing the USSR. It's my point of view that criticism is useful for correcting errors.

*The defendant had nothing more to add, so the hearing was declared finished. The courtesy of the last word was extended to the defendant, who said:*

I do not deny the facts of the charges against me, but I do not consider my beliefs to be wrong, and I am prepared to die for them.

To anyone familiar with my biography, it will be clear that my experience of struggle – in prisons, at hard labour [*katorga*] and in exile, both under the tsarist regime and under Soviet power, forged my beliefs about the necessity to fight for the liberation of the working class.

From your point of view – that's a crime. From mine – it's not. Maybe I was mistaken and got on the wrong path.

I ask you to consider all this and give me the possibility of living in the USSR together with my family,<sup>39</sup> and I solemnly promise never to write such stuff again. If I have learned this lesson, it is only after a long and arduous journey.

*At 22:05, the Court retired to deliberate.*

*At 22:45, the Court resumed the session. The Chairperson pronounced the sentence and explained the procedure for filing a petition for clemency to the Defendant.*

*At 22:49, the Chairperson declared the Court session of the Military Collegium closed.*

[Vol. 3, pp. 119-125.]

## **12. The Sentence.**

October 24 1945

Top Secret

In the name of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court of the Union S. S. R.

composed of:

Chairperson – Colonel-General of Justice V. V. Ulrich

Members: Major-General of Justice A. M. Orlov and I. O. Matulevich

Secretary – Captain Justice Mazur.

in closed court session in the city of Moscow on October 24 1945 reviewed the case against:

Miasnikov Gavriil Ilich, born 1889, native of the city of Chistopol, Tatar ASSR, Russian, former member of the VKP(b), previously repeatedly repressed,

charged with an offense under the Criminal Code of the RSFSR, Art. 58-1a.

The preliminary and judicial investigation established that the defendant Miasnikov, an implacable enemy of the Soviet state, has since 1920 taken the path of organized struggle against the Soviet government. In 1928, betraying his Homeland, he fled abroad. While in Turkey, Miasnikov established relations of an organizational nature with the enemy of the people Trotsky. Then, while living in France up to 1945, he continued his own treacherous activity, grouping around himself various anti-Soviet elements. He also wrote a series of brochures and articles of an anti-Soviet, libellous character.

Miasnikov's hostile actions against the Soviet state did not stop until the day of his arrest in January 1945. Thus the Defendant Miasnikov is proven guilty of treason to the Homeland, i.e. in the commission of a crime under Art. 58-1a of the Criminal Code of the RSFSR.

Based on the foregoing and guided by Art. 58-1a of the Criminal Code of the RSFSR, the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court of the Union SSR

**SENTENCED**

Gavriil Ilich Miasnikov, on the basis of Art. 58-1a of the Criminal Code of the RSFSR, to the highest measure of punishment – to be shot, with confiscation of all personal property.

The verdict is final and is not subject to Appeal.

/.../

[Vol. 3, pp. 126, 127.]

### **13. Information on the execution**

**CERTIFICATE**

The sentence of the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court of the USSR of October 24 1945 in respect of the sentence of execution by shooting of Gavriil Ilich Miasnikov, born 1889, was carried out on November 16 1945.

Deputy Chief of Section “A” of Division 1 of the NKGB USSR

Lieutenant-Colonel Balishansky

[Vol. 3, p. 130.]

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<sup>1</sup> Central Archive of the Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation (TsA FSB RF), Archive No. H-17674. In further references to this archive, only the volume and page numbers are given.

<sup>2</sup> People's Commissariat for State Security.

<sup>3</sup> People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs.

<sup>4</sup> Russian Communist Party (bolsheviks).

<sup>5</sup> All-Union Communist Party (bolsheviks).

<sup>6</sup> Nikolai Vladimirovich Kuznetsov (1882-1937), a lathe operator, was a member of the Bolshevik Party from 1904 to 1921. Under the tsarist regime, he was sentenced to a term of exile. In 1917 he was elected to the Constituent Assembly from Orlov province as a Bolshevik candidate. In 1921 he joined the Workers' Opposition and was expelled from the RKP(b) in 1922. In September 1923 he was arrested for being an activist of the Workers' Group and sentenced to three years in the camps. Upon release in 1925, he went into exile in Ust-Kamenogorsk (Kazakhstan) until 1927. In 1929 he was convicted under Art. 58-10 and sentenced to a prison term, followed by more exile in Kazakhstan. His last arrest was in 1936; he was shot in 1937.

<sup>7</sup> Prior to 1935, Iran was known in Western countries as Persia.

<sup>8</sup> Miasnikov's NKGB file includes a special identity card with the statement: "The Consulate General of the USSR in Tehran hereby certifies that the bearer of this card Miasnikov Gavriil Ilyich is a citizen of the USSR who is travelling to the USSR. Miasnikov G. I. illegally crossed the border of the USSR into Persia during the night of 7– 8 November 1928. Valid until May 15 1929." (Dated April 15 1929).

<sup>9</sup> The Russian Historical Archive Abroad (Russkii zagranichnyi istoricheskii arkhiv - RZIA) was founded in Prague in 1923 by Russian émigrés living then in Czechoslovakia. The Archive acquired books, journals, newspapers and archival documents pertaining to Russian revolutionary movements, the revolutionary year of 1917, the Russian civil war and the consequent development of the USSR. After WWII, the Archive was carted off to Moscow.

<sup>10</sup> Iranian parliament.

<sup>11</sup> The "Workers' Group" criticized both Stalin and Trotsky during the period when the two Bolshevik leaders were fighting each other for supremacy. Trotsky in particular was accused of being unprincipled.

<sup>12</sup> Lev Lvovich Sedov (1906–1938), Trotsky's son by his second wife, Natalia Sedova, was an important leader of the Trotskyist movement in his own right.

<sup>13</sup> Jakov Frank, an economist who had belonged to the Austrian Communist Party in the 1920s, worked as a secretary for Trotsky in 1929.

<sup>14</sup> Isolator = Soviet prison for political prisoners.

<sup>15</sup> Miasnikov's essay "The Current Deception", first published in the original Russian in Paris in 1931, is usually known in English as "The Current Deception" or "The Latest Deception." The French translation is titled "L'Ultime mensonge" (The Ultimate lie).

<sup>16</sup> Motovilikha, Lysva, and Chusovoy were towns in the Urals near Perm with huge metallurgical plants. Miasnikov had a long history of revolutionary activism at the Motovilikha plants. The Lessner metallurgical plant in Leningrad was renamed the Karl Marx Plant in 1922, but Miasnikov still refers to it by its pre-revolutionary name.

<sup>17</sup> Sergei Yakovlevich Tiunov (born 1894 or 1896) was an economist and a member of the Bolshevik Party from 1916. He joined the "Workers' Group" in 1922 and was first arrested in 1923. He was exiled to Minusinsk (Siberia) for three years. In the 1920s he edited "The Workers' Road to Power", illegal organ of the "Workers' Group." Arrested again in 1929, he was sentenced to three years in an ITL (corrective labour camp) under Article 58-10. In 1932 he was sentenced under the same article to a term he served in the Verkhne-Uralsk isolator for political prisoners. In 1935 his sentence was extended by two years. In 1937 he was sentenced to eight years in the camps under Article 58-10; in 1954 he was again sentenced under the same article. His subsequent fate remains unknown.

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<sup>18</sup> Miasnikov arrived in France on May 8 1930.

<sup>19</sup> The left-wing journalist and publisher André Prudhommeaux (1902–1968) was a council communist at the time he met Miasnikov, but moved to anarchism in the early 1930s. Although, over time, his political views diverged from Miasnikov's, they continued to be on good terms personally throughout Miasnikov's stay in France.

<sup>20</sup> *L'Ouvrier communiste* is more correctly described as council communist in orientation.

<sup>21</sup> Alexei M. Zhigulev (1905–?), was an engineer, a graduate of the Petrograd Polytechnical Institute, who was attached to the Soviet trade mission in Berlin in 1925. Within the next year or two he became a "non-returner" (*nevozvraschenets*), a Soviet citizen who refused an order to return home (during the Cold War such people were known as "defectors"). He moved to Paris, where he involved himself in various Russian emigré organizations and publications. In his journalism, he often used the pen name "Irinin." According to an unconfirmed story, he returned to the USSR in 1947.

<sup>22</sup> It is Prudhommeaux, not Zhigulev, who is known to have been in the window-washing business around this time, so Miasnikov's memory may have failed him, or he may have been engaging in a little obfuscation.

<sup>23</sup> The two articles published in *Put' truda* (La Voix du travail), organ of the foreign bureau of oppositionists, were: "Capitulation and the Bloody Line" (No. 1, May 16 1930, pp. 3-7) and "Towards an Understanding of the Miasnikov Phenomenon" (No. 2, June 1930, pp. 10-12).

<sup>24</sup> Zhigulev-Irinin was accused by other Russian emigrés, for example, the former Soviet official Boris Bazhanov, of being a Soviet agent. While no documentary evidence of this has turned up, his actions during the period in question clearly show signs of provocation so that it is quite possible he was under the control of agents of the Soviet security organs. Paris in the early 1930s was a hotbed of Soviet intrigues. (The editor is indebted to Yuriy Kravetz for this insight.)

<sup>25</sup> Grand Duke Michael Romanoff, brother of the last tsar, was executed in Perm on June 13 1918, the first of the Romanoffs to be killed by the Bolsheviks.

<sup>26</sup> Miasnikov's break with Zhigulev-Irinin was in fact dramatic in character. On October 3 1930, he lodged a complaint with the Paris police against "Alexis Jigouleff a.k.a. 'Irinin' and Arseny Palkin", alleging the "theft of documents of interest to the Soviet government." In his essay "The Current Deception", Miasnikov gives an inventory of the missing documents: letters to Stalin, Bukharin, Zinoviev, and Rykov; transcript of a conversation with Maxim Gorky in Yerevan; an account of Miasnikov's escape from the USSR; a short commentary on the Communist Manifesto of Marx and Engels; "On the Workers' State"; a critique of the program of the Comintern; the program and constitution of the Communist Workers Party of Russia; "Three Questions"; "The Thoughts of a Materialist"; outline of a program for a Communist Workers International; three chapters of Miasnikov's memoirs; etc. The case came to court in January – February 1931 and was covered in the Paris press of the Russian Whites. The accused Palkin explained that his only interest in Miasnikov's papers was his account of the murder of the Michael Romanoff, which in fact Miasnikov had not yet written. According to Palkin, Miasnikov was trying to sell his story of the murder to a publisher in the USA. It was also alleged at the trial that Miasnikov had tried to sell his story to Michael's widow, but she vehemently denied this. The case seems to have ended inconclusively.

<sup>27</sup> So in the transcript. According to Miasnikov's French police file, he worked for M. Ducroc, 1107 Rue de la Croix Nivert (15è) as a locksmith.

<sup>28</sup> The monthly journal *La Révolution Proletarienne*, founded by Pierre Monatte (1881–1960) and Robert Louzon (1882–1976), published contributions by socialists, syndicalists, and anarchists throughout the 1930s. The anarcho-syndicalism of Monatte and Louzon was mainly in the past, and the same goes for the CGTU, which had been strongly anarcho-syndicalist at its founding in 1922 as a split from the CGT (the largest French trade union federation), but which gradually became more reformist until its re-absorption by the CGT in 1936.

<sup>29</sup> Albert Treint (1889–1971) was expelled from the PCF in 1928 and was a militant anti-Stalinist throughout the next decade.

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<sup>30</sup> Miasnikov's Appeal can be found here: <http://www.left-dis.nl/f/miasrp.htm>. It was published in *La Révolution prolétarienne*, No. 178, July 10 1934, p. 262.

<sup>31</sup> Nikolai Ivanovich Lazarevich (1895–1975) did not actually “escape” from the USSR. He was arrested in Moscow in 1924 for anarcho-syndicalist organizing, and expelled from the country in 1926 as a result of an international campaign of protest.

<sup>32</sup> There is no record of Miasnikov's arrest by the French police in 1934, and no expulsion order was issued. Miasnikov may have been looking ahead and trying to account for his arrest in the unoccupied zone of France in 1942.

<sup>33</sup> Henri Barré (1898–1972), like Albert Treint, was an anti-Stalinist expelled from the PCF in 1928.

<sup>34</sup> There are a number of inaccuracies in Miasnikov's response according to the French police file: (1) Miasnikov was interned in the Récébédou camp near Toulouse no longer than two months; (2) he was then assigned to work as a forced labourer for the German Todt Organization building defense structures (the Atlantic Wall) in southwestern France; (3) while Miasnikov may have lived in Soulac (near Bordeaux) while working for the Germans, he was not in a concentration camp; (4) Miasnikov was released from his work obligations in July 1943 and returned to Paris legally to live at his former address until the Liberation. At the time of Miasnikov's arrest in Toulouse, his foreign identity card as an “industrial worker” had expired, and this seems to be the real reason for his flight to the Unoccupied Zone, rather than any heroic activity in the Resistance. Miasnikov was no doubt well aware that the MKGB regarded any work done for the Nazis, even slave labour, as treasonous.

<sup>35</sup> At the 11<sup>th</sup> Congress of the RKP(b) in 1922, Molotov had spoken approvingly of Miasnikov's expulsion from the Party, ridiculing his program of freedom of speech and the press – even for anarchists. Trotsky spoke in similar terms at the same congress.

<sup>36</sup> The journalist Henri Guilbeaux (1885–1938) was one of the first French socialists to support the Bolshevik Revolution, arriving in Russia in 1917; sentenced to death for high treason in absentia in 1919, he was later amnestied and returned to France in 1930. He had worn out his welcome in the USSR by supporting Trotsky, but upon his return to France, gravitated towards fascism. The French Army officer Jacques Sadoul (1881–1956) defected to the Bolsheviks while on diplomatic mission to Russia. Sentenced to death in absentia by a French military court, he was acquitted in a retrial upon his return to France in 1924. During WWII he collaborated with the Vichy regime. Maurice Thorez (1900–1964), long time leader of the French Communist Party (1930–1964), abandoned his military unit in the French Army in October 1940 and fled to the USSR. He was tried in absentia in France and condemned to death, but received a pardon after France was liberated in 1944. Thorez was apparently on the same plane which took Miasnikov to Moscow in January 1945.

<sup>37</sup> Miasnikov uses his knowledge of French to make a pun based on the dual meaning of the word bomb/bombe.

<sup>38</sup> This letter is translated from a typewritten copy found in Miasnikov's NKGB file. Included on this copy is the decision rendered by NKGB deputy commissar B. Z. Kobulov: “To be added to the file. No action will be taken until Miasnikov starts talking candidly about his anti-Soviet affairs. Inform him of this decision.”

<sup>39</sup> The only surviving member of Miasnikov's family was his wife Darya Grigorevna. Although living in Moscow in 1945, she was unable to visit her husband in Butyrki Prison and seems to have become aware of his presence there only after his execution. Avrich, following Roy Mevedev, claims that she became unhinged upon learning of her husband's death, and soon died. The Russian researcher Nadezhda Alikina, who spent over 30 years tracking down information about Miasnikov's life, discovered that Darya Grigorevna remarried and died on January 28 1965.