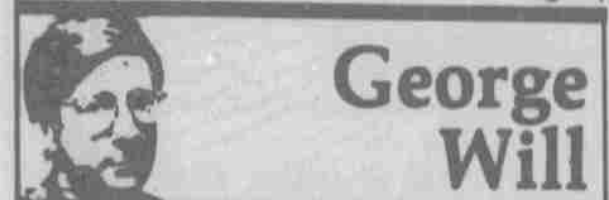


Anti-Trotsky play typifies Soviet views

For a regime that fancies itself the vanguard of revolution, the vessel of history, fountain of progress, destroyer of reaction and designer of outmoded things to the ash can of history, the Soviet regime is remarkably tradition-bound in one regard. It clings to its animosities. Some societies define themselves in their admirations, some in their animosities. America defines itself in admiration of Washington,



George Will

Jefferson, Lincoln. The Soviet regime (Soviet society has no voice) bristles with defining animosities: the most durable of which is for poor old Leon Trotsky.

Not content with having driven him into exile, even into rural Mexico, and having sent hither an assassin to drive an ice axe into his skull, the regime took the trouble to erase him from history books and even from photographs (some of which showed him distressingly close to the sainted Lenin). But now Trotsky is back, for another bashing. A Los Angeles Times headline says: "Trotsky Revived as Villain in Soviet Play."

The subhead is: "Discredited Old Bolshevik Portrayed as Double Agent."

Decades ago Trotsky was slung down the memory hole. It was as though he had never existed. That was rude treatment for the creator of the Red Army that saved the Russian Revolution.

But Trotsky ran into trouble with Stalin. Trouble with Stalin was fatal for millions. For Trotsky it was singularly obliterating. Yet now he has been resurrected so that he may be condemned to death yet again, this time by a play that portrays him as Stalin did — as an anti-Bolshevik.

The Trotsky-Stalin feud was dressed up in ideological nuances. Trotsky, who had a powerful if warped and narrow mind, said Soviet Russia could not survive isolation, so there must be world revolution, pronto. Stalin, who would have lowered the intellectual tone of the St. Valentine's Day Massacre, argued for "socialism in one country." But the real issue was that the Soviet Union, which spans 10 time zones, was too small for the two of them.

What does the re-emergence of Trotsky, if only for another drubbing, mean? It probably is additional evidence of the de-de-Stalinization of the Soviet Union, the rehabilitation of Stalin, the most prolific killer of the most killing century. (An enchanting rumor is that Volgograd, which

was Tsaritsyn until 1925 and then was Stalingrad until 1961, may soon be Stalingrad again.)

The anti-Trotsky play certainly is evidence of the amazing continuity of the basic impulses that animate the Soviet regime. Denial of such continuity is an essential component of the mental makeup of Western enthusiasts for the arms-control process. They always see the Soviet Union on the verge of "fundamental" change.

In totalitarian societies little things, such as the reappearance of Trotsky, mean a lot. So they are not really little. Churchill knew this.

In April 1933, less than two months after Hitler seized power, Churchill warned Parliament of such German "martial and pugnacious manifestations" as "appeals to every form of the fighting spirit, from the reintroduction of dueling in the colleges to the Minister of Education advising the plentiful use of the cane in the elementary schools." Churchill noted these things because he knew what many of today's arms-control enthusiasts ignore: There is a link between the internal dynamic and external behavior of a totalitarian society. A system sustained by the Gulag Archipelago is not tamable by "dialogue" or by parchment covered by arms-control phrases. That is why it was right for Avital Scharansky, the wife of the most famous Jewish prisoner of conscience in the Soviet

Union, to be here haunting the proceedings.

Now, return to the Los Angeles Times story about the re-denouncing of Trotsky in accordance with Stalin's old mythology. The story contains this hilarious sentence: "Western observers of cultural trends say that publication of the play may reflect increased official willingness to be more realistic about Soviet history."

Of course. The reappearance of an utterly traditional, utterly tendentious fable of Stalinist history is evidence of — what else? — new "realism," and therefore is grounds for optimism about U.S.-Soviet relations. So say the usual suspects, those "Western observers of cultural trends."

The moral of this little story about Trotsky is timely, and should be spelled out in neon across Geneva, the host to the world's recurring illusions. The moral of the story is this:

There is a mobile army of "Western observers" whose observations condition the atmosphere that produces things like the arms-control process. These observers can be counted on to announce that anything — absolutely anything — that happens in the Soviet Union is heartening, the harbinger of "realism" and a reason for hastening to Geneva and expecting "fundamental change."

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Penitentiary escapees pose threat to Nebraskans' safety

If you're looking for a nice safe place to live and raise your family, why not check into a cell at the State Penitentiary? That seems to be the one place these days where you won't run



Bill Allen

into a hardened criminal, because they're all leaving.

Thirty-one criminals, some of them killers, escaped from Nebraska correctional institutions in 1984.

It seems to defeat the purpose of putting them in prison if you let them out at that rate.

Why, I wouldn't be surprised if these criminals aren't escaping from prison at a faster rate

than their lawyers are getting them out, and that's fast.

The latest escapees, as you know if you've been listening to the news or reading the newspapers, are Paul Henry Krider, 55, and Antonio Vigil, 42, both murderers.

Krider was convicted of killing a 78-year-old woman in 1964. After escaping last week, he supposedly killed his wife and took her car, which was found in Oklahoma. Twenty years of prison obviously didn't help him.

Vigil pleaded guilty in the 1970 death of his wife. She was found nude and decapitated.

Both these men are serving life terms. These are not pickpockets and swindlers. They are killers.

I would hate to think that the person sitting next to me in the Nebraska Union is an escaped killer. I'm kind of nervous that way. There are enough criminals out there already without let-

ting the convicted ones out, too.

Some people say prisoners today have it too easy with TV, work releases, recreation and decent food. However, I feel confinement is punishment enough for anyone. Let's at least make sure they stay confined.

Police and other law enforcement officers have enough to do without finding criminals they have already caught and the courts convicted.

The big issues, of course, is the safety of people in Nebraska, and in the case of the recent penitentiary escapees, the safety of the people of Lancaster County.

On any given night you can walk through this town and see 13- and 14-year-old girls and boys hanging around in front of game rooms and phone booths, smoking cigarettes and being cool, and also being very vulnerable to many things. If irresponsible parents can't protect their children from crime, the least the state can

do is make sure criminals already in prison won't be on the prowl.

Does a serious incident have to happen to convince authorities to strengthen security measures?

One escaped criminal could be chalked up to carelessness. The person responsible could be fired or reprimanded and a public apology would be sufficient, provided the criminal was recaptured with no serious incident.

If four or five criminals escaped, I would consider this a serious problem that should be corrected.

But last year, 31 criminals — some of them murderers — escaped from Nebraska correctional institutions or didn't return from work releases or furloughs. That raises serious questions about the competence of state correctional officials and officers. More importantly, it raises questions about the safety of Nebraska residents.

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