

Correspondence

Editors' Note: Readers are welcome to send communications dealing with matters discussed in *Problems of Communism*. Letters should be addressed to the Editors, *Problems of Communism*, U.S. Information Agency, 1776 Pennsylvania Avenue NW., Washington 25, D. C.

THE "PARLIAMENTARY" TACTIC IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA

In his report to the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU last February, Nikita Khrushchev stated that under present world conditions "... the working class ... [is afforded] the possibility of inflicting a defeat on the reactionary anti-popular forces and of gaining a firm majority in Parliament, converting it from an organ of bourgeois democracy into an instrument of genuinely popular will." As an example of this new "parliamentary" tactic, Anastas Mikoyan, on the same occasion, pointed to Czechoslovakia as a country where "the socialist revolution was carried out by peaceful means." Due to the "favorable postwar situation," said Mikoyan, Communists were able to "come to power by allying themselves not only with the parties of the working people which were close to them but also with the bourgeois parties which supported the common national front." The Czechoslovak experience teaches us, he concluded, that in some countries the "people" (read: Communists) can "win ... in their own way, yet also without civil war."

As a Czechoslovak national who was in Prague in 1945-48, I feel obliged to caution the world that Comrade Mikoyan's "new story" is an old story indeed. The postwar Czechoslovak Parliament was "converted" into an instrument of "genuinely popular will" only by force of Communist arms and at the expense of all democratic procedures and traditions—all in the name of making it an "instrument of genuinely popular will."

How was this done? In 1945 Czechoslovakia was "liberated" from the Nazis, and the Czechoslovak Communists, working in the shadow of the occupying Red Army, gained overwhelming influence in many of the local committees of national resistance. The combined pressure of the occupation forces and the Communist-dominated local organs forced the National Front Cabinet and the President reluctantly to agree to far-reaching nationalization measures.

On the eve of the Constituent Assembly elections in May 1946, the Red Army ostentatiously moved sizable numbers of troops from Austria into Czechoslovakia. But despite this move and the growing power of local party activists, the Communist Party polled only 38 percent of the vote in the elections.

This was a very poor showing under the circumstances, and thereafter the influence and power of the Communists declined steadily. By the end of 1947 the strength of the Czech Communists had deteriorated to such an extent that the non-Communist parties were confident of making considerable gains in the elections scheduled for the early spring of 1948.

The Communists were well aware of the situation, however, and availed themselves of their strength in the Ministries of Interior and National Defense to pack the police and the army with their members. When the protests of the non-Communist majority of

the Cabinet were ignored by the Communist Ministers, including the Premier, the twelve non-Communist Ministers resigned. They hoped thereby to topple the Cabinet and force new elections, which would undoubtedly have resulted in a Communist defeat. Their resignations were refused, however.

At this point the Communists abandoned all pretense of democratic procedure. They decided to use armed force. The violent *coup* of February 1948 was staged by Valerian Zorin (now Soviet Ambassador in Bonn), who had been sent from Moscow to Prague with this specific task. Strong Communist-commanded police forces were concentrated in and around the capital, the Communist-dominated factory militia were armed, mob demonstrations were arranged in the streets of Prague, the secretariats of the non-Communist parties and government ministries headed by non-Communists were invaded, and "action committees" terrorized all existing political, administrative, and economic institutions.

The ailing President, Dr. Eduard Benes, was under severe pressure from all sides. The National Assembly was prevented from meeting. Finally, on February 25, 1948, Benes was "allowed" to accept the resignation of the twelve ministers but was forced to appoint a new Communist-dominated Cabinet, in which the only non-Communists were avowed fellow-travelers. By the time the National Assembly finally met on March 10, 1948 (the day of Jan Masaryk's mysterious death), many of its members had been arrested or threatened with arrest, and others had fled the country. Between March 11 and May 6, while the Assembly was in session, a number of deputies were deprived of their parliamentary immunity, arrested and prosecuted.

The "stable parliamentary majority" formed in this manner adopted a new election law and approved the new Constitution of May 9, 1948, which was specifically modelled on the Soviet Constitution. (Benes categorically refused to sign the Constitution and resigned on June 7, 1948.) New National Assembly elections were held on May 30, 1948, after the organization of a "regenerated" National Front including the Communists and the pro-Communist wing of the Social Democratic Party. The electorate was presented with a single list of National Front candidates, who naturally won 80 percent of the seats in the New Assembly. Such was the transformation of that body into an "instrument of genuinely popular will."

In May 1954 a new election law was passed allowing only candidates of the Communist-dominated National Front to run in local election districts. Furthermore, there was to be only one candidate in each district. When the November 1954 elections were held, the voters were herded into the election booths and given open lists of candidates. No envelopes were provided, and the voters were expected to insert their marked lists into the ballot boxes under the watchful eyes of members of the Communist-controlled election commissions. This is the manner in which the "organ of genuine democracy" presently in office in Czechoslovakia was elected!

A detailed study of these developments should be a chastening lesson to any member of parliament in a free country where the Communists are today making overtures to other leftist parties for a common front. May they profit from such study and avoid the pitfalls hidden in Comrade Khrushchev's "new" theories of the "peaceful transition to socialism."

Washington, D. C.

Peter Zenkl

[Mr. Zenkl was Deputy-Premier in the Czechoslovak Cabinet from 1946-48.]

THE USSR AND CHINA: FUTURE RIVALS

In his review of Dr. Wilhelm Starlinger's *Grenzen der Sowjetmacht* (Limits of Soviet Power, Holzner-Verlag, Kitzingen am Main, 1954) in *Problems of Communism* (Vol. IV, No. 6, p. 48 ff.), Mr. Erik Willenz subjected the book to some rather severe critical judgments. In this writer's opinion, Mr. Willenz' criticisms themselves need re-examination in the light of world developments since the fall of 1955.

Starlinger's central thesis is that Soviet Russia must eventually find itself threatened on the east by expansionist pressures from the overpopulated colossus of China and, unable to resist these pressures alone, will have to seek realignment with the West for its own protection. The author views this prospect as strengthening the West's bargaining position in negotiating with the USSR for the liberation of Soviet-enslaved East-Central Europe, which he believes can be achieved without the dread catastrophe of atomic war.

Mr. Willenz voices great skepticism concerning the whole Starlinger thesis, terming the author's alleged "invocation of the myth of racial brotherhood" weak, unconvincing, and "even dangerous." This writer, however, does not agree that Starlinger makes this the main potential keystone of a future Soviet understanding with the West. Rather, he sees the key force in the practical danger arising from the natural expansive tendencies of the Chinese human sea, which in his view will invoke a common Soviet-Western front against Chinese imperialism. This is admittedly a highly speculative peek into the future; it is *not* just a pipe-dream inspired by outmoded racist doctrines.

Fairness also demands recognition that two specific predictions made by Starlinger as corollaries to his general thesis have proven remarkably prescient. The first was that Communist China, because of unwillingness to depend wholly on the USSR for aid in carrying out industrialization, would try to "hunger through alone," squeezing the necessary surplus capital out of agriculture. Hence, predicted Starlinger in 1954, Communist China would *soon* abandon gradualism in favor of rapid, forcible collectivization. A year later, in October 1955, the Mao regime announced the first of a series of decisions successively stepping up the pace of collectivization.

Starlinger's second prediction was that the USSR, in the event that West German Chancellor Adenauer stood firm on the Western alliance, would eventually shift its tactics and negotiate with the very statesman whom, at the time Starlinger wrote, it was denouncing in terms of uncompromising hatred. This seemingly incredible prophecy likewise came true with Adenauer's visit to Moscow at Soviet invitation less than two years later.

Speaking at Aachen on May 10, Winston Churchill also discerned new hope of eventual Soviet rapprochement with the West should the present Moscow leadership's all-out repudiation of Stalin prove genuine. It seems improbable, however, that the Kremlin will be

willing to pay the price of such a rapprochement—involving the liberation of East Germany and the other satellites—until *forced* to do so by imperative considerations of self-protection. The most significant and heartening aspect of Starlinger's book is that it foresees such considerations as inevitably coming into play in Soviet-Chinese relations.

Munich, Germany

Dr. Stefan Marinoff

Mr. Willenz replies: Dr. Marinoff takes me to task for criticizing Wilhelm Starlinger's speculations on the inevitability of conflict between Communist China and the Soviet Union arising out of the former's "natural expansive tendencies." He appears to believe that Starlinger's thesis has received significant corroboration from recent developments on the international scene.

I find it difficult to accept Dr. Marinoff's reservations about my original review, and even more so his claim that certain events have bolstered the Starlinger thesis. Neither China's decision to industrialize by "squeezing the necessary surplus capital out of agriculture" nor Chancellor Adenauer's trip to Moscow last year testifies to Starlinger's "remarkable prescience" or analytical acumen. Indeed, the author's reasoning on Chinese industrialization was characteristic of the fuzziness of many of the speculations in his book.

To hold that Communist China's industrialization-via-collectivization policy was decided upon to avoid dependence upon Soviet Russia is tantamount to implying that collectivization in the Communist-bloc countries is a way of achieving ultimate freedom from Soviet domination. Nothing could be further from the case. Communist China's torturous path to industrialization was necessitated by isolation from the West and by Soviet inability to furnish the necessary capital resources, not Chinese reluctance to receive them. It is more than likely that the next several years will find Mao more rather than less dependent upon Soviet Russia, though Dr. Marinoff seems to imply the opposite.

As for Chancellor Adenauer's trip to Moscow, opinions may differ as to what was achieved there, but no one has yet suggested that it spelled the kind of Soviet move toward rapprochement with the West which would fit in with Starlinger's broad terms of reference.

I still feel, therefore, that this much-discussed book, enlightening as it was as a chronicle of the author's experiences and observations in the Soviet Union, failed utterly as a sound analysis of the USSR and the future of Soviet world relations.

SOVIET LITERATURE

Mr. Walter Z. Laqueur, in his very interesting and informative article, "The 'Thaw' and After" (*Problems of Communism*, No. 1, 1956), makes a few regrettable errors of fact which I would like to see corrected.

Mr. Laqueur writes that during World War II "novels by Dostoevsky and Leskov were freely published." This is not entirely accurate with respect to Dostoevsky, and is quite incorrect with respect to Leskov. Although some selections of Dostoevsky's writings appeared, there was no separate edition of *The Brothers Karamazov*, *Possessed* or *The Idiot*; and certainly Mr. Laqueur would count these among Dostoevsky's more important works. As a matter of fact, *The Idiot* and *Possessed* have never been published under separate cover in the Soviet Union.

In the postwar years there have been several editions of Dostoevsky's novels, among them *The Raw Youth*, *Poor Folk*, and *Crime and Punishment*. The July 1955 edition of *Crime and Punishment*, which Mr. Laqueur mentions as "the first in many years," was actually not the first postwar printing of that novel.

As for Leskov, not one of his novels has ever been published in the Soviet Union, even during the last war. Only his short stories have appeared, and Mr. Laqueur may be surprised to learn that these have been published, since the war, in more than one million copies, in Russian alone.

The Aksakov brothers, whom Mr. Laqueur also mentions, are indeed "news" in Soviet publishing, for their works had been left out of print for many years. Readers may be interested to know that one of them, Sergei, has become a very popular author in the Soviet Union, his fairy tales appearing in millions of copies.

New York City

Maurice Friedberg

[Mr. Friedberg is a Lecturer in Russian literature and language at Hunter College.]

ACCOLADES

I wish to tell you at once that your review is notable in every respect, and that I follow it with the greatest interest. . . . I can only encourage you to continue the publication of a magazine which, on the ideological plane as well as in the sphere of economic and political studies, constitutes a work of the very highest order.

Paris, France

Henri Noilhan

Member, French Academy of Agriculture

I find your magazine most informative and educative in every meaning of the two concepts. . . . The data presented in it have proved, to my experience, of inestimable value. I lecture to the miners of the Mansfield district as a tutor for the National Council of Labor Colleges (Midland Division), and your magazine has enabled me to keep them up to date in East-West sociological problems.

Nottingham, England

Edmund Taylor

IN FUTURE ISSUES:

Moscow and Peiping—A New Stage, *by G. F. Hudson*

Is Russia Going Titoist?, *by Ernst Halpern*

The Marxist View of History, *by Hugh Trevor-Roper*

Post-Stalin Historiography, *by Alexander Dallin*

ALSO: articles by William Petersen on Soviet population policy, by Mark Field on The Soviet doctor's dilemma, by Kasimierz Grzybowski on trade unions in Communist Poland.