

## LETTERS

To the Editor:

Would it be possible to inform the reader of the factual inaccuracies in Professor Maurice Friedberg's article "Socialist Realism: Twenty-Five Years Later," published in the April, 1960 issue of *The American Slavic and East European Review*?

Professor Friedberg asserts that the statement

the Party and the Government gave the Soviet writer absolutely everything and took away from him only one thing—the right to write badly (p. 287)

had been made by Isaac Babel at the First Congress of Soviet Writers and not, as Khrushchev indicated, by Leonid Sobolev in his speech at the same Congress.

The fact is that Khrushchev did give the correct source. The statement was first made by Sobolev in his speech of August 22, 1934, which appeared in *Literaturnaja gazeta* of August 23, 1934. Sobolev's words were repeated and acclaimed in speeches by Gorky and Babel (*Lit. gazeta* of August 23 and 24, respectively) as well as in the August 26 editorial of *Lit. Gazeta*. Babel stated:

In accord with Gorky I would like to say that on our banner should be inscribed the words of Sobolev that the Party and Government have given us everything and have taken from us only one right—that of writing badly. Comrades, let's be honest, this was a very important right and not a little is being taken from us. [Laughter] This was a privilege of which we widely availed ourselves.

And so, comrades, let us give up this privilege at this Writers' Congress, and God help us! But then, there is no God; we shall help ourselves. [Applause]

It must be pointed out that Mr. Friedberg's version of this passage suffers from an incomplete and inaccurate translation to the extent that the real meaning of Babel's words is distorted. This stems from the fact that his version was based upon a third hand source, an oral translation of Babel's speech made by Professor Rufus Mathewson for Lionel Trilling's introduction to Isaac Babel's *The Collected Stories*, edited and translated by Walter Morison (New York, Criterion Books, 1955). Mr. Friedberg quotes Babel as follows:

Comrades, let us not fool ourselves. This [the right to write badly, to write incorrectly] is a very important thing, and to take it away from us is no small thing. Let us give up this right, and may God help us. And if there is no God, let us help ourselves. . . . (p. 287)

It is obvious that Babel's unreserved endorsement of Sobolev's views becomes, in Mr. Friedberg's version, a somber observation on the curtailment of creative freedom and loses its original humorous tone.

HERMAN ERMOLAEV  
Assistant Professor of Russian

Very sincerely yours,  
ALEX SHANE  
Instructor in Russian  
Princeton University

To the Editor:

Mr. Fred Warner Neal in his review of D. A. Tomasic: *National Communism and Soviet Strategy* (*The American Slavic and East European Review*, October, 1959, pp. 451-52) stated that this kind of writing, perhaps, illustrated "again . . . the difficulties

which many of Eastern European origin have fitting treatment of Eastern European affairs into the requirements of American scholarship." In order to prove this point he has misrepresented the materials in the book and has contended that there are many "inaccuracies" in this work, as well as "excessive straining to bring out points that are sometimes dubious and occasionally demonstrably just not so," and "rather extreme statements unsupported by any kind of evidence."

To illustrate what he meant Mr. Neal brought out four examples of what he considered gross inaccuracies. In his first example, he quoted from the book (p. 91): "... these [Partisan] mass liquidations ... far exceeded the massacres perpetrated by the Ustaši and Chetniks together" and then asserted that the above statement has not been supported by any evidence. To prove this assertion, Mr. Neal has himself resorted to "straining", as evidenced in the following verbatim quotation of the paragraph to which he referred above:

Already in the course of the civil war a planned mass extermination of Partisan adversaries, particularly Croatian Ustasi, Serb Chetniks and Slovene White Guards (also known as Domobrants), as well as those who collaborated with these groups, had taken place. Tito was quoted as saying: "Who is not with us is against us and who is against us will be smashed like mud" (Footnote 3: K.D., *The Party and the People*, op. cit., p. 120). As the extent of Partisan controlled territory grew, these mass liquidations reached great proportions and far exceeded the massacres perpetrated by the Ustasi and Chetniks together. People who themselves took part in these mass killings or witnessed them, estimate the total number of people exterminated by the Partisans, together with the number of those who died in Communist concentration camps, at between two and three hundred thousand. According to a witness of these massacres, a Russian officer who served as advisor in such Partisan activities, said to him: "Never waver if there is some doubt if a person is guilty or not. This is revolution and, therefore, this is your best chance to liquidate most of your adversaries. Later it might be too late." (Footnote 4: *Ibid.*, p. 120).

All the statements made in the above paragraph has based on the work quoted twice in the paragraph. Lack of space did not permit repetition of the same source for each sentence.

Example number two concerns again the alleged lack of evidence:

Mr. Neal: (2) p. 118. Mr. Tomasic, who feels that Tito conceived of himself as the potential leader of "world Communism", states here that Yugoslav circulated rumors that Stalin wanted Tito to succeed him "had some real basis in a discussion which Stalin had once in an intimate circle of Russian and Yugoslav leaders." If there was "real basis", it certainly is not revealed in Dedijer's *Tito*, p. 275, which is cited to support the assertion.

Here Mr. Neal seems to strain himself again to prove his point. Let us compare the two texts in question:

Tomasic: p. 118: ... therefore such popularity led many Communist leaders of Yugoslavia toward a gross overestimation of their importance and of their distinct role in the World Revolution. Some of these leaders, for instance, were heard to say that the Russian Communists had become too bureaucratized and, therefore, had lost the revolutionary impetus and vigor ... The implication of such talk was that the leadership of the World Revolution should pass into the hands of real revolutionaries and not to be left to stale in the desks of Moscow bureaucrats. Rumors were spread by these Yugoslav conspirators to the effect that Stalin wanted Tito to succeed him as the head of the world revolutionary

movement. These rumors had some real basis in a discussion which Stalin had once in an intimate circle of Russian and Yugoslav leaders. (Footnote 10: V. Dedijer, *Tito*, *op. cit.* p. 275). This was however only a bait which Stalin had thrown to Tito but which Tito and his aides now used to their own advantages.

Dedijer: p. 275, quoting Koča Popović: "Much later in the night Stalin rose from his chair, went to a corner where a gramophone stood and began to play record after record. He selected the records himself, mostly Russian folk music. Singing softly he began to dance to the gramophone music. Molotov and others shouted out to him, 'Tovarish Josif Vissarionovich, how strong you are'. But Stalin's mood suddenly changed. 'Oh, no, no, I won't live long', he said. 'The physiological laws are having their way.' Molotov and the others got to their feet: 'Nyet, nyet, Tovarish Josif Vissarionovich, we need you, you still have a long life ahead of you.' Stalin shook his head in denial. 'No, no, the physiological laws are having their way', he repeated. Then he looked at Tito, and continued. 'Tito should take care of himself lest anything happen to him. Because I won't live long, and he will remain for Europe. . . . He turned toward Molotov. 'Vyacheslav Mikhailovich will remain here.' Stalin then raised his small glass of pertsovka and invited Tito to drink *Brüderschaft* with him. They clinked glasses and embraced.

Even though Stalin intimated that Tito would succeed him as leader for Europe, that was sufficient for Yugoslav Communists to spread rumors, to exaggerate them and claim that Stalin had designated Tito as his successor in the whole world Communist movement.

In his third example, Mr. Neal did not correctly represent the material in the text in an effort to prove his point. Let us, therefore, compare Mr. Neal's statement with the text in the book:

Mr. Neal: (3) p. 132. Mr. Tomasic is convinced that the reforms in Yugoslavia "in the years between 1948 and 1955" were conceived of only as "a temporary tactical retreat." To bolster this conclusion, he first states that the Yugoslav Party undertook "a path of reforms and concessions to the non-proletarian classes" in order "to recuperate and prepare the conditions for a new offensive" when the situation changes again in favor of revolutionary action." Maybe so, but the quotations he uses, as indicated in the footnotes, are not from the Yugoslav Communists, as one might think, but from Stalin's *Foundations of Leninism*. His other evidence to support this is from *Collection of Interviews* in the Library of Indiana University. It is the remark of an unnamed diplomat in 1949, before there were any real reforms in Yugoslavia.

Tomasic: p. 132: Having entered into an open conflict with the Kremlin, while depending on Western anti-Communist powers for economic and military support, the leadership of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia was faced with a fateful dilemma. Should the Party give up its conspiratorial methods and evolve into a reformist socialism of Western type, or should the Party remain faithful to the cause of World Revolution? Following Lenin-Stalin doctrines, the Party proceeded to undertake a temporary retreat by taking a "path of reforms and concessions to the non-proletarian classes" in order to "recuperate and prepare the conditions for a new offensive," when the situation changes in favor of revolutionary action. (Footnote 55: See Lenin-Stalin doctrines in "tactics" and on "reformism and revolution" in Stalin, *Foundations of Leninism*, *op. cit.*, pp. 92, 93, 99-106.) Party documents in the years between 1948 and 1955, as well as interviews with some Party leaders during that period, confirm that the overwhelming majority of the "leading core" on various levels of the Party hierarchy were inclined to think in terms of a temporary tactical retreat, and not of any radical change in Party ideology or objectives. As one of the high ranking

Yugoslav diplomats, an old Party member, put it in 1949: "We need help from the capitalist West to strengthen our position vis-a-vis the Kremlin until such a time as the balance of forces in the Soviet Politburo is changed in our favor." (Footnote 56: From an interview with a Yugoslav diplomat, see *Collection of Interviews* in the Library of Indiana University).

It seems obvious that first quotations in the above statement are from *Foundations of Leninism* concerning the Lenin-Stalin theory of "tactics." In the same manner it seems obvious in the above statement that the "unnamed Yugoslav diplomat" was quoted in support of the general thesis that the Party already in 1949 had made up its mind to revert to Lenin-Stalin "tactics". Other evidence for the above statement are "Party documents in the years between 1948 and 1955, as well as interviews with some Party leaders during that period." As to these "documents, interviews and leaders", the following was stated in the *Acknowledgements* in the book:

In the course of my research I found it very profitable to have prolonged interviews with a number of present and former Communist leaders. Even though I cannot mention their names for reasons of their personal security, I do want to express my sincere thanks to them for the information and documents I was able to collect with their help and cooperation. (p. VII).

In his last example, example number four, Mr. Neal has apparently attempted to show that in addition to "inaccuracies," "lack of evidence", "straining", etc., the author of the book has also distorted the original sources in order to "bolster the general thesis of the book." This is how Mr. Neal put it:

Mr. Neal: (4) p. 155. "Tito now asserted (like Stalin before him) that there could not be any withering away of the state and the Party before the last class enemy had been rendered powerless. . . ." A reading of the citation shows that Tito did not mention the withering away of the state here (or any other place in this connection), only the Party. Thus the general thesis of the book is bolstered at the expense of accuracy. In terms of the Yugoslav development, the difference between what Tito really said and what Mr. Tomasic indicates he said is not unimportant.

The fact is that Tito *did* talk about the withering of the state as well as of the Party in this connection. Let Tito speak for himself in the quoted document, "Treci (Vanredni) Plenum Centralnog Komiteta Saveza Komunisti Jugoslavije, 16-7 januar 1954: Stenographic notes, *Komunist*, 1-2, 1954 (Cyrilic edition), pp. 1-164:

Josip Broz Tito: I was the first one to talk about the withering away of the Party, withering away of the League, but I did not say that this should take place in six months, or in a year or two, but that this was a prolonged process. Before the last class enemy had been rendered powerless, before the socialist consciousness had spread into the broadest masses of our citizens, there cannot be withering away or liquidation of the League of communists, because the League of communists is responsible for the realization of the achievements of the Revolution, as it had been responsible during the Revolution for its victory. It [the Party] must exist, and not only exist but it must grow stronger ideologically, it must be conscious of the colossal role which it performs (p. 5) . . . . I agree that we had spoken about it, but when we spoke about the withering away of the League, that is, the Party and the state—we never said that this was going to take place tomorrow, after tomorrow or in a year or two, but that this was a prolonged process which is going to develop with difficulty and pain (p. 11).

Thus in all four examples which Mr. Neal selected, he has wrongly presented materials in the book in an effort to show how the author "like many of Eastern European origin" has failed to come up to the "requirements of American scholarship."

D. A. TOMASIC  
Indiana University

To the Editor:

In his review of my book, *Titoism in Action*, Mr. Ivan Avakumovic states "His claim about 'the more liberal and humanized psychology of the Yugoslav leaders which sets them apart from their erstwhile comrades across the Danube' would have been more convincing but for the death sentences passed in post-Cominform Yugoslavia on workers and employees accused of theft and embezzlement."

It is true that there have been death sentences *passed* for theft and embezzlement, but I know of no instances in recent years in which these sentences have been *actually carried out*. I am now engaged in completing another book about Yugoslavia. If Mr. Avakumovic has any contrary information, either from his own observations in Yugoslavia since 1951 or from a source of acceptable reliability, I shall be more than happy to include it.

Mr. Avakumovic also states that rather than the tax burden on private peasants being eased after abandonment of collectivization, just the opposite was the case. I should also be happy to include in the new book any facts that he may have which would bear out this contention.

Sincerely yours,

FRED WARNER NEAL  
Claremont Graduate School

To the Editor:

May I be allowed to make one or two comments on some of Professor Ferrell's criticisms of our book *Russian Syntax* contained in his review in your February, 1960, issue?

Point 4, p. 127: Your reviewer attributes to us a much more categorical statement than we in fact make. I would have thought that in the examples given the imperfect imperative definitely conveys a request or invitation.

Point 7, p. 141: We do not in fact translate "pokachalsya" as "gave a shudder or two" but as "shuddered once or twice." I would agree that "gave a shudder or two" would be odd if it in fact appeared in the text. Perhaps "lurched once or twice" would be better. Ushakov defines "pokachatsya" as "povesti nekotorye vermya, kachayas." Our method of translating this seems to me to be good, natural English.

Point 9, p. 144: I do not think exaggerated our statement that the use of the present participle passive is restricted by the fact that it can be formed from a comparatively small number of verbs. This seems to me no more than a statement of fact.

Point 10, p. 147: "Kolykhnut" is not a very good example. Ushakov states that its use as a synonym of "kolykhnutsya" is rare. I readily concede "povernut"—could Professor Ferrell give further good examples?

Point 11, p. 152: The use of "xotet" with the infinitive provided both verbs have the same subject is an elementary fact of Russian grammar and we were not concerned with such facts.

Point 13, p. 182: I wonder if Professor Ferrell has heard Russians now resident in the Soviet Union use past imperfective gerunds. Galkina-Fedoruk is quite definite on this point. "V proizvedeniyakh pisateley XIX veka vstrechaayutsya deeprichastiya nesover-