Today in World Affairs

Record Recalls Menshikov As Willing to Starve Poles

By DAVID LAWRENCE

WASHINGTON, Apr. 15.—For several weeks now the American people have been told that the new Soviet Ambassador, Mikhail Menshikov, is a nice fellow and that maybe, if he is a typical example, the Communists aren't such bad folks after all. So the new envoy has been wined and dined, visiting delegations of Americans at the embassy, and he has been invited to sit down with some of the capitalist elite in the Midwest.

But what is the true background of Mikhail Menshikov, and why, it might be asked, hasn't public attention been called to it before? For in the official proceedings of the Congress of the United States there is a record of his willingness to let human beings starve in order to further the Communist cause. This is in the report of a subcommittee of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs printed in 1946 after a study of Eastern Europe from August to October, 1945. The report tells the sad story of what four members of Congress found out about Mr. Menshikov's cruelty to hungry men, women and children in Poland.

The full text of an extract from that report to Congress:

"The committee made some effort to investigate the operations of U. N. R. R. A. (United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration) in Poland but unfortunately was somewhat limited in its efforts due to the fact that U. N. R. A. had not as yet had sufficient opportunity to become organized upon a permanent basis. However, under the temporary arrangements that had been concluded, the committee was deeply disappointed in both its operations and the distribution of its supplies.

Headed by Menshikov

"The temporary head of the U. N. R. R. A. delegation was Mikhail Menshikov, a Soviet citizen, who wielded great control and influence over the distribution of U. N. R. R. A.'s as yet meager supplies. The distribution was limited to recipients who were active supporters of the provisional Polish government. Upon the committee's return to the United States, it lodged a strong protest with the President of the United States and was happy to learn that thereafter Mr. Menshikov was recalled and his place taken by Brig. Gen. C. M. Dury of Canada. Since the committee's return to the United States, it has kept in close and direct contact with U. N. R. R. A. operations in Poland and has noted great improvement both in the operation and in the distribution of relief supplies."


Since Mr. Gordon is temporarily out of the country, this correspondent interviewed Rep. Bolton and Sen. Mundt. Mrs. Bolton said:

"Yes, I remember the experience and what we found. Unless a person was a Communist, he didn't get anything to eat. It was a very bad situation, and the people who needed our food most didn't get it. Mr. Menshikov was to blame."

"That is correct. As stated in the report, Menshikov was distributing U. N. R. R. A. supplies to the Communists and not to the other people—and claiming credit for the Soviets, rather than for this country. The Soviets were contributing very little, if anything, to this relief agency. By getting the leadership echelon partly into the hands of the Russians, they very skillfully maneuvered their people at the top in these countries which even then, I suppose, they had in mind taking over. This was a very handy tool to win friends and influence people—that's what they used it for."

When Ambassador Menshikov came to Washington, he was received with open arms by various persons here. He was given time on television and he was publicized widely as exuding the best of feelings toward the American people. Yet behind the mask of smiles is a cruel streak. Here is a man who abused his trusteeship as the custodian and distributor of food to starving people. He was the agent of an international relief organization, but his first allegiance was to communism—he was willing to see human beings suffer unless they accepted Communist domination, even while he used relief supplies to reward those who were politically on his side.

It is a sorrowful chapter. It is not important alone as a revelation of what one Communist official did, but it's an example of the tyranny and inhumanity which lie behind the whole Communist creed and the Communist government.

One wonders why the Department of State didn't look up the record before giving its approval to Mr. Menshikov as an Ambassador to the United States. For every government has a right to decide whether an individual is "persona grata"—acceptable to it—and certainly the record shows Mr. Menshikov had committed a serious offense against the American people as well as the Polish peoples. With such a record revealed, Mr. Menshikov's usefulness in America can be considered at an end. His own government ought to recall him and, meanwhile, American organizations should hesitate to invite to their rostrums and banquet tables any one who has such a record of foul and flagrant cruelty to human beings. If they do, such functions should be picketed by those who want to register a protest against inhumanity.

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