

# ***U. S. Red Theorist Breaks With Soviet On Hungarian Issue***

**By A. H. RASKIN**

The threat of the Soviet puppet regime in Hungary to execute strikers has caused one of the top theoreticians in the American Communist labor movement to break with Moscow.

He is John Steuben, a former union organizer in steel mills, hotels and metal factories, whose books and articles on labor have been widely translated in Iron Curtain lands. For the last four years the Department of Justice has been seeking to cancel his citizenship, but a combination of heart disease and hypertension has made it impossible for the Ukraine-born unionist to participate in denaturalization hearings.

In an interview in his modest home in a rural area of central New Jersey, the 50-year-old Mr. Steuben told how recent events in the nations ruled by the Kremlin had shattered the faith in the Soviet experiment that had been virtually his religion for thirty-five years.

He said the excesses of Stalinism were not only being continued by the present Soviet leaders, but were taking on worse forms and dimensions. He said that any government that decreed death for strikers was "morally bankrupt."

He urged American Communists to "repudiate everything that smacks of Stalinism and

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chart a course on the basis of the true interests of American workers and the American people as a whole."

The interview was conducted under conditions of acute pain, both physical and spiritual, for Mr. Steuben, a frail, wispy man with ashen face and a shock of iron-gray hair. Four times during a two-hour talk he took nitroglycerine pills to relieve spasms of angina pectoris.

## Would Refuse to Inform

His breath failed him repeatedly, and he had to pause for thirty or forty seconds at a time, clutching his breast, before he was able to go on. He reported that he had been hospitalized for thirteen weeks last year and was still required to have a comprehensive heart examination each week.

Mr. Steuben's mental disquiet in renouncing the beliefs of a lifetime was almost as palpable as his physical suffering. He expressed certainty that his public declaration would impel a host of Congressional committees to subpoena him as a witness against his former colleagues, but he emphasized that he would "under no circumstances become an informer."

"Fortunately or unfortunate-

ly," he declared, "I am physically unable to appear before a group of angels, much less a Congressional investigating committee. But even if this were not so, I would not be an informer.

"What this country needs is not more informers but room for more debate and discussion in the market of great ideas. If the Soviet Union had been fortunate enough to have a constitution which included a Fifth Amendment, many, many thousands of lives would have been saved."

He said he had been upset about Soviet trends since Nikita S. Khrushchev began the downgrading of Stalin at the twentieth congress of the Russian Communist party last February. But he made a private resolve to "live out my few remaining years in agony and silence."

"Now," he declared, "the announcement of the death penalty for Hungarian strikers makes me feel I must cry out against such a crime, particularly when it is done in the name of the 'dictatorship of the proletariat.'"

## Calls Kadar Foe of Proletariat

He asserted that the government of Premier Janos Kadar in Hungary was "a dictatorship not of the proletariat, but over it and against it." He noted that the death decree was issued shortly after Mr. Khrushchev had visited Hungary and that there had been no statement from the Russian Communist chief disassociating himself from the order.

"During the past couple of years," Mr. Steuben observed, "there have been a number of strikes in Spain, and even the

Fascist dictator, Franco, did not dare to do what Kadar did in Hungary."

He said the heads of the Communist-controlled World Federation of Trade Unions had a "tremendous and urgent responsibility to demand that this death decree be annulled." He recalled that his own book, "Strike Strategy," which described the right to strike as the hallmark of democracy, had been acclaimed by union leaders in the Soviet Union and its satellites seven years ago.

Mr. Steuben declared that the thing that shocked him most in the Khrushchev speech on post-Stalin policy last year was his revelation that "more Communists were killed in the Soviet Union than in the whole capitalist world put together."

The writer-unionist added that the failure of the Soviet high command to permit publication of the speech in Russia, even though it was circulated everywhere else, indicated a "contemptuous attitude toward the Soviet people."

If the Communist party is to become a force in this country, Mr. Steuben said, it will have to declare its independence of the Soviet party and make it clear that it will "reject and resent" any interference from that source. Otherwise, he declared, it will be doomed to remain "a native auxiliary of a foreign party."

Asked whether he retained confidence in the principles of Karl Marx and Lenin, he replied that, even without the disrepute into which these principles had been brought by Stalinist abuses, they could not be accepted as dogmatic guides to be applied inflexibly in a fast-changing world.