

YOUTH

Based on Time Magazine's press release to the Gazette on "The Younger Generation".

It was Longfellow who wrote "the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts" to describe the younger generation in a world we never knew. Today's Canadian youth, though sad and thoughtful, have not these "long, long thoughts" the poet referred to. He meant dreams, ideals and idle wonderment. In 1950 we are realistic, un fanciful and resigned. To look at ourselves as Time looked at America's youth, we see many of the symptoms, as can be expected of people living in the same sphere of culture, geography and language.

It is said that we are silent and are old before our time. This is more true in conservative-minded Canada than in the U.S.A. There are no loud cries from our

youth not because it is not our nature but because we live in a world that has turned sour and dangerous and we realize there is no escape. We therefore are forced to accept, but it is not a resignation of despair but rather a quiet expectancy of everything and a careless subjection to destiny. We do not care to aspire to dizzy heights; we don't want fame; we just want peace and security and reasonable means to live on—and few of us expect to get it.

It was just such a philosophy in 1919 that sponsored the Flaming Youth Era, the Charleston frenzies, the neurotic escapades. But today we are instead moderate in view, tolerant in desires and passive in our lust. We take all we can get but only if convenient.

We don't live each moment as if it were the last. We seem tired of life before it has begun and refuse to get excited. In Canada we do not expect our dreams to be lost, but we won't be surprised if they are.

We too have lost individuality in the intricate social classifications and vogues. Few ideas are original; few national idols exist. We in Canada, perhaps, never had any, nor do we want them. We have no yearning for the sensationalism of the '20s, the lust for life of the '30s. We seem lulled by the sedative of war; fatalism and calousness. And any one who calls this yielding to the cries of "prostituted trumpets" is the dreamer escaping into a world of unrealities and blind to the signs of the times.

With nothing beyond our comprehension, nothing beyond the horizon, we retreat, to find solace

in religion. It is the only truth, and hope we can depend on. The percentage of believers is high in Canada, where materialism never reached unbounded fervor. Yet ever here too many of us are agnostics, a few are atheists, more are as impassive to a God who seems to have forsaken us, as they are to the sordid and infirm world. Thus to this loose era where youth has won its freedom and at once discarded it, what is sacred is elusive; and what is valueless is everywhere. We have accepted all this with remembered ideals and wind up with a mixture which, if it was thought important enough to classify, would be totally incompatible. So, the Montreal teenagers 'neck' immodestly in a public bus; or a young man on a moonlit Nova Scotia beach goes further with a girl he hardly knows. This amorality, so casual, so much a part of today's 'pass-times' is mixed

with a sincere faith in God as if it were non-sinful pleasure. It is an irrational mixture. A cold, unexcitable, illogical acceptance of an evil state of affairs which is neither to be blessed or condemned.

As "Time" suggests, we are the lost generation but we are not crying about it. We know that man is fallacious; we know our fate lies with a few men who don't have humanity's interests at heart, but this too is a fact of life to accept. Our philosophy seems to be, expect nothing and you won't be disappointed. Our youth is not desirous of taking the torch of reform from our fathers for we seem to feel a general futility and indifferent contempt for man's efforts for brotherhood; and history bears us out. In brief, in God we trust, all others bring the change.

DEATH OF A COUNTRY-

Meanwhile the government of Czechoslovakia was ready in its exile. The larger group of exiles in London represented all shades of political opinion and was headed by Dr. Benes, who had been the president from 1935-38.

The smaller group composed only of Czech communist was in Moscow. Its influence in the country was very, very small. Throughout the war its broadcast were far less popular than those from London. Nonetheless, the London group invited them to take a share in the first post war government. This was perhaps, a natural consequence of the visit of Dr. Benes in Moscow, in 1943, where he concluded on December 12 a treaty of friendship and mutual assistance with the USSR. The visit was made against the advice of some of the Czech and English friends (as he confesses in the Czech edition of his memoirs) but, with the memory of Munich fresh in his mind he believed that the protection of the Soviet Union was necessary for the safety of his country. The assurance he had from Stalin on that occasion, that the Soviet Union would respect Czechoslovakia's independence was confirmed when he passed through Moscow again in 1945.

III-Reds get strategic posts

It was on his later visit that the first post-war government, later to be proclaimed in Kosice, was formed. The fatal mistake for Czechoslovakia's future had happened already at that time. The ministers of the Interior, national Defence, Education and of Agriculture went to the communists, and the Prime Minister, Fierlinger, though nominally social democrat was in fact a Communist. Communist ministers operated, had been drawn up in Moscow under the orders of the Kremlin. As was later revealed at the congress of the Communist Party, by the party secretary, Peter Slansky, the London group had merely been asked to sign on the dotted line. "The program of Kosice" was at once implemented, the first step being the nationalization of Trade unions, the creation of the

"Central Council of Trade Unions" and the formation of the factory militia led by the Communists.

The exiles who composed the new government did not appreciate the conditions in which the people had lived under the Germans and were not all together equal to the gigantic task of administration. They tended to yield to the Russian influence which was openly at work as long as Russian troops remained in the country. Thanks to the energetic diplomacy of the late Lawrence A. Steihardt, American Ambassador in Prague, Soviet troops left Czechoslovakia at the same time the U.S. army left. But the key positions in the cabinet were already occupied by Communists, Soviet influence remained unimpaired.

The social tactics of the Communists in Czechoslovakia were the same as in all satellite states—to sow dissension among their enemies, with a view to destroy separately those who were together too strong for them. They were the first to forment hatred against the Sudeten Germans and recommended the deportation of all Germans from Czechoslovakia. German property was seized at communistic instigation and distributed to members or sympathizers of the party. Many of those whose moral fibre had been weakened under the Nazi occupation were bribed by these occupiers into the Communistic ranks. At the same time, the Communists engineered a division between the "patriots" and the "collaborators" a task in which they were supported by certain ill-advised Nationalists. This discrimination was held against the men whose position in the National economy and public life had obliged them to deal with the Germans. Many of them who have earned the highest honors for their defence of Czech interests received instead

savage sentences from the "Peoples Courts" or were driven to suicide. Shortly before the general election of May 26, 1947, many, many thousands of people were deprived of their votes on being denounced as "collaborators".

IV-Forment class hatred

Later the Communists began to forment hatred against the "Capitalists" and "Kulaks" so that the guarantees under the new constitution in 1948 which exempted from Nationalization, estates of less than 150 acres and concerns with less than 50 employees have not been observed. Nationalization was carried on at the dictates of the local and district "national committees" or "factory committees". Appeals to the Supreme Court were useless, even when, in flagrant cases, it gave judgment for the plaintiff.

Against the violence and disorder excited by Communists, their divided opponents could offer no resistance. It was clear that some "coup" was being prepared. It came in February, 1948. The non-Communists majority in the cabinet decided to withhold assent from proposal of the Communist minister of the Interior to appoint Communists to the last few senior posts in the Police force which they did not already hold. The Communist minister refused to comply with the decision of the majority, and was supported in his refusal by his communist colleagues.

On February 20, 1948, ten of 16 noncommunist ministers tendered their resignations, which President Benes, at first had refused to accept. Premier Gottwald, however, insisted on his doing so and filling the resulting vacancies with his nominees. He backed his insistence with a threat of Civil War and Soviet intervention,—a threat all the more color-

able, in view of the presence in Prague at that time of a special envoy from Moscow, one Zorin, formerly Soviet Ambassador in Prague, now Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs in Moscow. After a long struggle President Benes yielded. He signed the new appointments, but refused to sign the new constitution of May 9 and resigned his office. He was succeeded by Clement Gottwald on March 14, 1948, and died shortly afterwards on September 3.

V-Red economics

Results in the economic front are about as tough as they have been on the political front. The economy was switched from production of consumer goods to capital goods. High wages were offered in heavy engineering industries as an incentive to the change-over; but in the absence of consumer goods, "absenteeism came to a point where it became a menace to production."

As a counter measure, the government established a free market, selling goods at exorbitant prices. This inflated income was then pumped out of the pockets of the workers on the free market and the whole cycle developed into a system of forced labour, less apparent but not less real, than forced labour, in a concentration camp.

The standard of living of the Czech people is well below the pre-war level. The whole pressure in Czechoslovakia shows that Russia has one interest—to build famous heavy industry of Czechoslovakia represented by Skoda works and Bren gun industry, to strengthen the Russian war machinery.

The Soviet Union drives a hard bargain with the Czechoslovakian industries. It sometimes happens that its agents learn of an order placed in Czechoslovakia by a hard currency customer. At that

point, the Russians step in and demand delivery of the goods to themselves at a much lower price.

The condition of agriculture is not less serious. Troubled by an acute labour shortage, delivery quotas were set high, prices low, expropriations under a land reform were carried out without any compensation. Land was at first given to small farmers; then these were forced by various pressures into collective farms.

The new educational system is deplorable. The Charles University in Prague is only a vestige of her former importance. The lectures are held in Russian and Czech. They are dictated in the "new sense" and a free discussion about any aspects is unthinkable. The present day Czechoslovakia doesn't need thinking men, but good partisans of Marxist and Leninist ideas. The communist academic staff including the student body admits for further studying only students accredited by the national committee and possessing the "certificate of national confidence".

The present day economy and political system in Czechoslovakia as in all other dictatorships, is built on lies. It is impossible to get the truth. Communistic terror, exercised against the people terrifies them also, for they know what vengeance it will bring down on them. Their fear leads them to intensify their terror and this again to an increase in fear, and so the whole ominous process provides its own momentum, till the day of the inevitable breakdown.

In the class war, which is the basis of all Communistic thoughts. Lenin himself said that "any dishonest trick or method is permissible." The unscrupulous trick by which Dr. Benes was outmanoeuvred is a typical example. It is typical of the methods which the communists use in their class war. And since it is a war to them they do not acknowledge any obligation arising out of any treaty or agreement made with their enemies. What is more, no agreement could be more than a truce, for any lasting peace with the Bolsheviks is impossible.

Halifax, October, 1951.

Falling Leaves

The years have fallen . . . silently but sure . . .
 . . . like falling leaves.
 Before some autumn wind
 —they fall
 . . . and die in damp decay
 —O Falling leaves O Fading years.
 . . . Let me not forget.

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