

Why Is a Communist?

by Graham Patterson

The "cold war" with Russia is said to be an ideological war. But battles of ideas are usually waged by propaganda, so the Kremlin's use of brutal force is in itself an admission of the weakness of its ideology. If communism provides the Utopia that Marx, Lenin and Stalin claim, why does Russia have to rule by the bayonet?

Russia's failure to have communism adopted by those free to make a choice is emphasized by the dramatic revelations of Maj. Gen. Walter Schreiber, former German army medical corps officer, who recently escaped from the Russian to the American zone in Germany. Schreiber was one of 2,500 officers captured by the Russians when Field Marshal von Paulus surrendered at Stalingrad in 1943.

Schreiber stated that for six years the Russians worked to convert the 2,500 German officers to communism, with the intention of returning them to Germany in key posts to further the spread of communism in their native land. The Russians started by forming a "Free Germany Committee" whose avowed purpose was to get rid of Hitler and re-make Germany "along the lines of the Western democracies." Many of the captured German officers were won over, especially since no attempt was made immediately at "conversion" to communism.

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Gradually, however, the Russians worked into the picture German Communists who had escaped to Russia when Hitler first took over. By radio and by newspapers scattered behind the German lines, the "Free Germany Committee" pleaded with their countrymen to stop fighting.

But the cat was out of the bag when newly captured German soldiers

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Lenin. Only 23 "converts" from 2,500.

arrived and told of the horrors the Russians were working in Germany, the indiscriminate looting of property, the wanton killing of civilians and the heartless removal of thousands of men and women to Russian slave labor camps. The Germans' interest waned rapidly until last year there were only 41 officers of the original 2,500 who were, the Russians believed, sufficiently convinced of the "merits" of communism to be sent back to Germany. Further tests reduced this number to 24.

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Schreiber, who pretended to be converted to communism, was among the 24. He was made chief of sanitation in the Russian zone. At the first opportunity he escaped.

Converting 23 out of 2,500 is certainly a poor score. Yet it is not surprising. For whatever success communism has achieved has been gained by cold-blooded, ruthless force.