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Letters

ABOUT ALMARIK

TO THE EDITOR:

Albert Parry ("Samizdat Is Russia's Underground Press," March 15) presumably possesses some information to support his innuendo that Andrei Almarik either wrote his essay, "Will the Soviet Union Survive Until 1984?", at the behest of the K.G.B. or that the K.G.B. had a hand in spiriting the work to the Alexander Herzen Foundation for publication. How else could he justify his comment that the foundation may have been "duped by the K.G.B., who may be using Almarik as an unwitting agent"? It would be fair to his readers and to Almarik if he came forward with this information.

Failing this, those who know Andrei Almarik will continue to believe that he is a man of independent and original mind who has set down, uninfluenced by anyone, his own lucid and unsensational analysis of his country, and that such independent scholars as Prof. Karel van het Reve of the Herzen Foundation are more immune to being duped by the K.G.B. than is Mr. Parry to being duped by the suspicious "Russian intellectuals" who are tainting Almarik with whispered slanders of witting or unwitting service on behalf of the Soviet secret police.

It is a Soviet tragedy that Almarik must be a prophet without honor in his own country. It is the West's shame that even beyond the walls of the intellectual prison in which he lives, and which his free spirit has surmounted, those who labor in the arcane and interlocking labyrinths of Soviet studies, rightist émigré groups and intelligence networks cannot conceive that a man of free mind can publish his own free thoughts without somehow owing something to someone's secret police.

The integrity and courage of Andrei Almarik defy the imagination of men of narrow mind, within the Soviet Union and without.

HENRY KAMM.
Bangkok, Thailand.

Professor Parry replies: "Nowhere in my text did I say or imply that Almarik wrote his essay 'at the behest of the K.G.B.' Nor do the Russian intellectuals, whom I interviewed during my researches on *samizdat*, make any such accusation. These sources on Almarik, whose viewpoint I find plausible, are liberals, not 'rightist émigré groups and intelligence networks,' and they do not doubt Almarik's personal integrity.

"The suspicion of my liberal Russian friends that Almarik has unwittingly been used by the K.G.B., and that the Herzen Foundation has been duped into publishing Almarik's essay, is based on the following:

"To the Russian people the Brezhnev-Kosygin regime wants to present the nation's dissidents primarily not as anti-Communists but as Russia-haters who are ready to dishonor their country and their people. Almarik's essay fits into this program perfectly. For he writes that the Russian people have neither morals nor culture, that they are brutal by nature. He predicts a war with China and, as its result, Russia's breakup and perdition. He calls upon America to be friendly with China rather than Russia.

"Despite his dissidence, Almarik is not arrested, while other and rather milder dissidents—not advocating outright treason as he does—not in jails, concentration camps and insane asylums. There is nothing 'narrow-minded' about those intellectuals at home and abroad who question this circumstance: Is Almarik spared because the K.G.B. hopes for more writings from him—spontaneous, not ordered writings?

"Courageous and honest Almarik may be, but erratic, too. A careful reading of his text raises doubts about certain of his facts of history and even geography. Mr. Kamm's personal fondness for Almarik should not mislead him into unreserved applause for his essay, applause that is a bit too hasty, to say the least.

"Finally, with all my longstanding admiration for Mr. Kamm [The New York Times Southeast Asia correspondent, formerly stationed in Moscow] as an able journalist, I must nevertheless protest against his quotation of my text out of context. In his quotation of me he should have completed my sentence about the K.G.B.'s 'using Almarik as an unwitting agent to drive home its lesson that dissidence leads Russia to a national catastrophe.' The italicized part of my sentence is what Mr. Kamm omits. But stopping short of it, as Mr. Kamm does, may make it seem that Almarik is accused of being a K.G.B. agent who unwittingly informs and betrays. And this is not what Russian intellectuals, with whom I talked, filing at Almarik. All they do charge is that Almarik's writings, naively honest or spottily brilliant though they be, are of definite use to the Soviet regime and its secret police."