

Anniversary Thoughts

by JESSICA SMITH

THE 39TH anniversary of the Russian Revolution takes place in a new atmosphere and under new conditions of no less significance to the rest of the world than to the Soviet Union itself.

Great changes have swept through Soviet society, great advances have been made in many fields, due to the freeing of the creative initiative of the Soviet people, stultified in so many ways under the Stalin cult.

Yet it cannot be forgotten that these new advances were only possible on the basis of what had gone before. The forward movement launched November 7, 1917, has never ceased. The great contribution of the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union was to clear the main roadblocks that had retarded even greater progress, and to open the way to new possibilities for enduring peace.

We cannot agree with those who believe that the harsh measures of the Stalin era were necessary because the Soviet Union was in the beginning a backward peasant country beset by enemies, or with those who believe they can be justified by the magnitude of Soviet achievements.

The question of the discipline, severity and centralized authority under Lenin's leadership in the early years is another matter. To those who forget what the Soviet people and their leaders faced in those days, we commend Alexey Tolstoy's *The Road to Calvary*.

The vast canvas of this epic novel, which brings to mind the other Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, covers the turbulent years 1914-20, the disintegration of the old Russia, the bloody travail of the new in birth, the vast upheaval in the lives of all its people. Their Calvary was the tormented road leading through world war, revolution, civil war, armed intervention by fourteen nations—to final victory; truly a crucifixion and resurrection. In the book the agony and rebirth of the people is interwoven with the agony and rebirth of their native land. It shows the young Soviet Republic and its Red Army facing not only White generals and Allied armies on more than a dozen fronts, but also the inner demoralization wrought by bandit armies covering naked aims of robbery and pillage with revolutionary slogans, and by corrupt and evil adventures.

Lenin and the other leaders did not choose these violent and terrible beginnings. They were the result of historic forces, the crumbling of a rotten old order, the efforts of outside enemies to strangle socialism at its birth. Of all the forces in Russia, only Lenin and the Bolsheviks were able to lead the people to victory, to bring order out of chaos, to consolidate and build the world's first socialist state, leading the way to the extension of socialism to a third of the world's people.

Of course there were mistakes in those days. Who can judge now what

harshness and cruelties might have been avoided? Although Lenin in the most difficult days never lost sight of human relationships, there was no time to select the best and kindest way, for careful balancing of moral issues.

Later there was time. The beginning of Stalin's errors was in carrying over the harsh measures of the early days into the period of comparative peace, on the false theory that the class struggle would sharpen as socialism succeeded.

It is not our purpose here to review again the monstrous consequences to which Stalin's excesses led. What we do want to emphasize is that the great and glowing achievements of the Soviet people cannot be obscured by what we now know of the dark side of the picture; that their successes were won *in spite of* repressions and crimes alien to socialism, and would have been far greater without them. It is to the Soviet people and no single leader that the glory must go for what has been achieved against great odds.

The process of correction—while much remains to be done and it will take a long time—is, we are deeply convinced, an irreversible one, and whatever errors and shortcomings there may be, there can be no return to the police terror and imposed conformity of the past. The guarantee of this, we believe, is in the awakened vigilance of the people, their restored initiative and increasing democratic rights and civil liberties, the new freedom of discussion, the growing economic security, the ever deepening and expanding educational system and all that it means in freeing the limitless forward thrust of the human mind and spirit.

Another guarantee, which we believe will strengthen as time goes

on, is in the new attention to questions of morality, human relations and standards of conduct. Our own Moscow correspondent, Ralph Parker, has written on some aspects of this. Articles are appearing in the Soviet press calling for a new consideration of questions of Communist ethics. The need of high moral qualities in Party leaders is stressed, and of sensitive attention to the needs of individual human beings. Recent Soviet literature reflects growing concern for such questions. There is increasing awareness in the USSR and in the newer socialist states as well that the building of a socialist society requires not only new economic foundations, but must encompass the whole range of human relationships.

What we would like to emphasize especially on this anniversary occasion is the process of reevaluation that has been taking place outside as well as within the Soviet Union. The clear position taken at the 20th Congress that war can be avoided, contrary to Stalin's thesis that war is inevitable as long as imperialism exists, carried further the easing of world tensions resulting from the Geneva Summit Conference, gave new strength to Soviet peace initiatives. The declaration on the possibility of peaceful transition and of various roads to socialism destroyed the main arguments of those who base war policies on charges that the USSR engages in stirring revolution in other lands. It pointed the way to ending the divisions among those who believe in socialism but differ in the methods of bringing it about.

Thus we consider it a privilege to publish the article written for us by the famous British Socialist, G. D. H. Cole, who has always advocated



Dmitri Shepilov Soviet Foreign Minister, makes his maiden appearance at the UN to participate in the Security Council debate on the Suez Canal issue. At the right is Georgi Zarubin, Soviet Ambassador to the United States.

a very different road to socialism than that followed by the Soviet Union. As a Guild Socialist, he has opposed the idea of centralized authority. Frankly critical of many aspects of Soviet policy, he yet feels that recent changes in the USSR have made it possible for Socialists of varying views and Communists to begin discussing their differences and look for points of agreement. We do not agree with Mr. Cole's viewpoint on the Soviet-German Non-aggression Pact, and certain other questions. But the all-important point is that despite such differences, Mr. Cole holds that the total effect of the Russian Revolution "has been an enormous enlargement of human liberty and happiness both in Russia itself and in the world as a whole," and that the Soviet Union "brings hope and encouragement to every people that is striving to emancipate itself from colonialism and imperialist domination."

Similarly, the British pacifist and long-time Labor M.P., Fenner Brockway, (whose statement we reprint by courtesy of the British-Soviet Friendship Bulletin), for twenty years one of the severest critics of

the Soviet Union, declares that as a result of the repudiation by the 20th Congress of the "inhuman course" of the Stalin regime, "It is now the duty of those of us who were estranged from the regime by those actions to revise our attitude drastically toward the Soviet Government."

In this country, as a result of the reevaluation proceeding in the ranks of the U.S. Communist Party, a series of meetings is being held in several cities in which Communists and Socialists, representatives of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, the Quakers, the American Civil Liberties Union and others, are engaging in friendly discussion and seeking areas of agreement.

Another result is the growing recognition of the falsity of the charge that the Soviet Union heads a worldwide conspiracy to overthrow all capitalist governments including our own. This has been the premise for the destruction of constitutional liberties through the Smith and McCarran Acts, the persecution of the Communists, Congressional Committee witch hunts and the evil inflexible system whereby the reputa-

tion and liberty of so many Americans have been placed at the mercy of professional perjurers. The questioning of the premise has been intensified by the exposure of informers whose lies have condemned innocent men and women to imprisonment. The action of the Supreme Court in reviewing a number of Smith Act cases, ordering a new trial for Steve Nelson and his fellow defendants and sending the S.A.C.B. proceeding against the Communist Party back for further hearings, evidences a healthy trend.

A new and skeptical look at the myth of Soviet "aggression" as the pretext for encroachment on American freedom is also apparent in the Friend of the Court briefs by the ACLU and others in the Smith and McCarran Act cases, the growing opposition to these laws in the ranks of labor, and the joining of prominent educators, clergymen and public figures, in the petition to amnesty Smith Act victims initiated last December by Eleanor Roosevelt, Norman Thomas, Henry Steele Commager and others.

In the sphere of diplomacy, our government has had largely to abandon the myth of Soviet aggression by direct or indirect means on which the whole cold war policy has been based, and to acknowledge, however grudgingly, that no military threat exists, and that the conflict has moved over into the field of economic and ideological competition. This acknowledgment has led to the abandonment of certain positions that had become untenable. But, as Walter Lippmann has pointed out repeatedly, the Administration has taken no initiative in formulating new policies to meet the needs of the new situation. It has left all these initiatives to the Soviet Union, and

has failed to take advantage of the numerous opportunities offered to strike out on a bold new course.

During the past year the Soviet Union has been engaged in cementing its relations with all nations, East and West, and especially the great neutral nations like India. It pursues this peaceful purpose through every possible avenue of trade and cultural exchange, through individual negotiations with heads of governments, parliamentary delegations and through the United Nations. In the current Suez crisis the USSR has supported the viewpoint held by the majority of the world's people that the old colonial policies must end, that a peaceful solution is possible through negotiations among the powers concerned and the machinery of the United Nations, that any threat of force must be abandoned and full consideration given both to Egyptian sovereignty and the legitimate interests of the users of the canal.

In particular, the USSR has persistently sought an improvement in American-Soviet relations as the key to all others, laying special emphasis on the necessity of reaching agreement on ending the arms race and the threat to the world of atomic annihilation. In the UN Subcommittee on Disarmament, the Soviet Union has made repeated concessions to the viewpoint of the Western nations, only to find the latter withdrawing from their own positions when agreement seemed near.

In view of this stalemate, Premier Bulganin over a year ago inaugurated a series of personal exchanges with President Eisenhower. He proposed an American-Soviet treaty of friendship and cooperation which was rejected. Keeping always to the fore the question of the threat of nuclear

warfare, Premier Bulganin offered a whole series of proposals on inspection and control, but has insisted that President Eisenhower's "Open Skies" plan could be effective only if part of an over-all disarmament program. The USSR has reduced its own armed forces and suggested that the other big powers do likewise. It has repeatedly called for the banning of tests of nuclear weapons as a first step toward their ultimate prohibition. Bulganin renewed this proposal in his letters of September 11 and October 17. (See page 53 for text of latest exchange).

Adlai Stevenson has performed an important service in making the ending of H-bomb tests, as an immediate and realistic step, a main issue of the campaign. He is backed in this by growing national and world opinion, and the generally recognized fact that there is no danger to national security in such a step, and no need of preliminary agreement on control and inspection since any tests anywhere can be immediately detected.

Mr. Stevenson has expressed his belief that our country should take the initiative in this because the Soviet Union and the other great powers are ready for agreement on the ending of tests.

President Eisenhower has failed to understand the contradiction between his refusal to take this first step on the banning of nuclear weapons and the atoms for peace program which he himself initiated through his proposal to the United Nations. The Soviet Union has supported this program, while continuing to hold that only through prohibition of nuclear weapons could it be fully realized.

The current 82-nation Atoms for Peace Conference at United Nations

headquarters points the way to what real American-Soviet cooperation could mean. The USSR has held that membership in the world atomic agency should be open to all nations, and especially to the representatives of the Chinese People's Republic. It has reservations on the nature of the inspection and control provisions put forward by the United States which, as India and some of the smaller nations have objected, discriminate against the smaller nations. Yet, to make possible progress in a desired direction, the USSR agreed to tentative acceptance of the U.S. principles for the international agency.

On these and other grounds, we are convinced that American-Soviet relations, however slowly and tortuously, are moving into a new phase in this month which marks the anniversary of those relations.

On November 16, 1933, Franklin D. Roosevelt and Maxim Litvinov together expressed the hope that "the relations now established between our peoples may forever remain normal and friendly, and that our Nations henceforth may cooperate for their mutual benefit and for the preservation of the peace of the world."

The victory over Hitler brightened that hope. The cold war dimmed it. May it be enkindled anew by whatever Administration the American people vote into office this November, and made reality by a new course ending the cold war, opening a new era of fruitful, friendly relations, trade and cultural cooperation. And above all, may progress be made toward disarmament and transforming atomic energy from a menace to mankind to a shared blessing that can bring well-being and abundance to all the people of the earth. (October 18)