

The Khrushchev Report

by JESSICA SMITH

THE secret Khrushchev report is surely one of the most tragic documents in history. The tragedy lies in the needless suffering and sacrifices imposed on the Soviet people from within, in violation of the very socialist principles for which they willingly sacrificed so much. All who care for socialism and human progress must join in sorrow that this terrible shadow has fallen over what has in so many ways been the most glorious chapter in humanity's advance toward the good life, a shadow which is now seen to have retarded that advance. But our deepest sorrow must be for the wanton and needless shedding of the blood and stifling of the liberty of many of the finest of the earlier leaders who could have contributed so much to the full flowering of the new society, and of the many thousands of ordinary people who should have shared in its building and its benefits.

We cannot reconcile ourselves with what has happened. This system of terror need not and should not have been. Nothing could justify such wasteful and wanton cost in human life and liberty. We must recognize that these things were alien to the principles of a socialist society.

At the same time, the world will be forever in the debt of the Soviet Union for its pioneer role as the world's first socialist state, for the

new forms of human association it has established, for the strength and creative genius of its people, for the matchless heroism with which they fought and died to turn back the tides of fascism, for the consistent struggle of the Soviet Government and people for peace. We cannot lose sight of the great economic and social advances they have made despite all obstacles, the aid they are giving to other socialist countries and the underdeveloped nations of the world today, their readiness to share even with countries which are hostile to them in the interests of universal peace and well-being.

While much must be done to correct the wrongs of the past, we can take heart from the fullness of the exposure that is being made that in this process a moral regeneration is taking place that will prevent the recurrence of these evils. We have already reported on a number of aspects of the corrective process now under way. Most hopeful of all is the release from the pall of dogmatism and fear that stifled free discussion and criticism within the Soviet Union and other socialist countries, and the new independence of judgment being displayed among friends of the Soviet Union everywhere.

The Khrushchev speech was released by the State Department, and published in the *New York Times* of June 5 and the *Sunday Worker* of June 10, and shorter versions have

been carried widely in the press throughout the country. While this is not the official Soviet version of the speech, is admittedly not complete, and may contain errors in translation, we believe it can be taken in the main as authentic. Since this version of the document is now available we shall not attempt to review it in detail. While all of us have our own deep thinking and reevaluating to do, and we have no wish to evade this, the main things that remain to be said in supplement and explanation, must come from the Soviet leaders themselves.

The Khrushchev text makes clear, in addition to what has been previously reported, that the reviews of injustices, going back to the trials of the '30s, revealed that many thousands of persons were unjustly accused of being "enemies of the people" and executed or imprisoned. Beginning in 1934, these repressions decimated practically everyone in the leadership of the Party who had formerly been in opposition to policies adopted, affected many leaders who dared to express differences with Stalin, many who were simply suspected of differences, and then reached out to thousands of ordinary rank and file people. Through an extra-legal apparatus of terror and torture, controlled by Stalin, many thousands of innocent people were framed, and "confessions" extracted through the most brutal physical methods, on Stalin's own instructions. His suspicions reached such pathological proportions that innocent people were doomed by the merest rumors. Hundreds of thousands of lives were needlessly lost during the war because of Stalin's refusal to heed the warnings of Hitler's impending attack and his later insistence on making all military decisions himself,

disregarding the advice of commanding officers on the spot. Whole populations of several minority peoples were deported from their native areas during the war because some among them had collaborated with the Nazi invaders.

These are only a few of the revelations. In addition to sections missing from the State Department version, there are other matters of a most serious nature that as far as we know were not touched on in the Khrushchev speech, such as the execution of Jewish leaders and suppression of Jewish culture, made public by the Polish press, and about which no word has yet come from the Soviet Union.

We cannot agree that the contents of the Khrushchev report are only an internal matter for the Soviet Union. They concern us all. It is therefore deeply to be hoped that the Soviet leaders will themselves provide a complete and accurate text of the report as well as the facts about the Jewish leaders and other grave matters of universal import not yet revealed.

The establishment and growth of the world's first socialist state has from the beginning been a matter of the deepest concern to the people of the whole world. It can be said that no one anywhere has been unaffected by its achievements and by its failures.

Not only members of Communist Parties, but large sections of the whole left, socialist and labor movement everywhere have looked to the Soviet Union since its inception as the main bearer of the hopes of humanity for a happier and more abundant life on this earth. For this reason these groups defended the Soviet Union with all their strength in the days when it needed such de-

fense in the face of civil war, intervention, blockade and threats of destruction.

This defense was carried on into the period when the Soviet Union became strong and stable, to a blind support of everything the USSR did, when clear sighted understanding would have been more useful to all.

That uncritical defense of policies and actions now revealed as indefensible led to denunciation of all those who disagreed with one aspect or another of Soviet policy. It separated brother from brother, increased the division in the left throughout the world, here in the United States did great damage to the whole progressive movement, isolating it from the mainstream of American life.

We must answer before our own consciences and before the American people for our own mistakes in insisting that the Soviet Union, as the first socialist state, must always be right. But is there not also a responsibility for fuller explanations on the part of those who during the two decades when Stalin's mania grew to such monstrous proportions, not only failed to denounce or criticize him, but praised him in such exaggerated and all-embracing terms? There were the official records of the trials and confessions, the writing and speeches of all the Soviet leaders. Whatever doubts we might have had about this or that repressive measure, those who were the closest friends and supporters of the Soviet Union could not easily have rejected the words of all its responsible leaders.

The facts are now made public about the warnings issued by Lenin in his long-suppressed "testament" and other documents, against certain characteristics of rudeness and

arbitrariness early displayed by Stalin which raised grave questions as to whether leadership should remain in his hands, and against the dangers of the almost unlimited powers he had even before Lenin's death arrogated to himself.

With the other leaders alerted from the beginning against these dangers, seeing them develop later into such disastrous proportions, friends of socialism and the Soviet Union everywhere now have the right to ask them, as they are asking, how it was possible for this situation to continue for more than twenty years, with only the death of Stalin opening the way for the corrective process now going on. We can see that it was one-man rule and an extra-legal police and terror apparatus that were responsible for the many crimes that are now coming to light. But we must also ask how it came about that such a system could have been imposed on a socialist society, how one man's will could have become the determining factor?

One of our readers, trying to think through the significance of this troubled period, has written me that the new life created in the Soviet Union "has never lost its strength, despite the heavy burden of terrorism at the top." She goes on: "To me, the point is that the social-economic plan was, and is, so basically sound as to be able to meet increasingly the people's needs, and even to develop their social understanding, so that a corrupt police system which gave opportunity to a mentally ill political leader, could all be discarded like a worn-out garment."

Add to the socialist economic system the incomparable educational system which, while hampered in some respects by dogmatic methods

has none-the-less reached first place in the world today and is teaching a whole people to think for themselves. Add the unparalleled system of child care, the love and tenderness displayed for children, for the future, for whom the best of everything is reserved. Add the matchless system of public health, free to all, social security, its inequalities now being remedied, the great spread of culture to all the people, a culture which, however stultified in the past, is now breaking its bonds and finding a new creativity and freedom on a higher level than before, a policy toward national minorities which apart from later glaring lapses, has been a model for the world, a science blazing new paths to peace and abundance for mankind.

What must be resolved is the contradiction in the establishment of these new social forms which must have full freedom and democracy if they are to endure and flourish, and the imposition of an all-powerful police system which negated their basic purpose. What must be answered is how to insure that all vestiges of that system will be eradicated so that it can never rise again—in the USSR or anywhere else.

The fact of the establishment of new economic and social forms and the wide participation of the people in their building, the new situation that exists in the world today, the full, free discussion of past mistakes and encouragement of criticism that has now been inaugurated, the corrective measures under way, the new steps to insure the civil liberties that must accompany the basic economic liberties of a socialist order—in all this we see the hope of the actual realization of those socialist-humanist goals we shall not cease to believe in.

In the light of the Khrushchev report, we must say again to our readers how deeply we regret whatever we have published that has been misleading or untrue in the past. Yet, while we were unaware of the crimes and inhumanities taking place in a socialist society which we believed in its very essence must be a humane society, while we failed to give the complete picture, nevertheless the healthy, inspiring aspects of Soviet life we have reported remain true and lasting and the main design for its future growth.

And we believe that unceasing struggle for increased cultural and trade ties, for mutual understanding between the peoples of these two great countries, for peaceful co-existence with each other and all nations, is more than ever essential.

Soviet foreign policy, whatever defects there may have been in its implementation, is and always has been undeviatingly a policy of peace. Today the Soviet leaders are giving ever new evidences of their determination to keep the peace. This is evident in their new relations with socialist countries, their recognition of the many and different roads of peaceful transition to socialism, their friendly negotiations with the leaders of many lands, their aid without conditions to neutral and underdeveloped countries. Of the greatest significance is the unilateral reduction of their armed forces by 1,200,000 men. Premier Bulganin's latest letter to President Eisenhower proposes that other great powers follow suit in reducing their armies and that all foreign troops be withdrawn from German soil as preliminary steps to new efforts to reach agreement on an all-round disarmament program and the banning of nuclear weapons.

Meantime, American scientists

visiting the Soviet Union report tremendous strides being made in the direction of peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

Disarmament and full cooperation among nations for peaceful application of the atom were also stressed in the Soviet-Yugoslav communique of June 20. The results of President Tito's visit to Moscow, completing the reconciliation between the governments and Communist Parties of the two countries, is further evidence of the determination of the USSR to lessen tensions. With the leaders of both nations stressing the need for friendship with the United States, this reconciliation can in no way be considered a threat to our country. Both governments emphasized the positive role of the United Nations for peace and urged further progress toward universality, especially through recognizing the right to membership of the People's Republic of China. Both governments also stressed the need of negotiations for unification between the two German governments, and the ending of the division of Europe into military blocs.

Throughout Europe this solution is being increasingly demanded, rather than continued reliance on Adenauer's terms for a reunited and rearmed Germany remaining within the NATO military system, recently reaffirmed with Mr. Dulles in Washington. Within West Germany both Social Democrats and Free Democrats have proposed that the way be paved for reunification by West Germany withdrawing from NATO and East Germany from the Warsaw Pact, which is essentially the proposal of the Soviet Government.

While French foreign minister Pineau during his recent visit to Washington reaffirmed support of

the Atlantic Alliance, in his National Press Club speech June 20 he spoke of the necessity of expanding it "into new fields," made no mention of its military aspects, and dwelt at length on the need for friendly relations with the USSR, whose new policies he termed "irreversible."

Commenting on the sterility of Western leadership, Walter Lippmann said in the *New York Herald Tribune*, June 19: "The challenge put forth by post-Stalinist Russia is immense, and the Western world is in desperate need of statesmen to show the way and lead it on."

The great need of the moment is statesmanship for peace, which requires above all concrete measures for disarmament, on ending tests of nuclear weapons, already threatening humanity with a dangerous amount of radioactivity, and the banning forever of all atomic and hydrogen weapons. Then a great coming together of the scientists of the world to pool their knowledge and experience, a great concentration of efforts and resources to develop peaceful uses of atomic energy.

With the breathtaking potentialities for unlimited power development offered by the atom, for making mankind healthy and life easier, for creating an abundance of food and goods for all the people of the earth, the basic causes of war and hostility between nations and of all repressions within nations, can be eliminated forever. Why cannot all agree on this simple truth?

Perhaps the greatest hope of all to be drawn from the process of re-evaluation and correction now going on in the Soviet Union and its counterpart in bold new initiatives in friendly relations, is the new opportunities it offers for the establishment of a lasting peace.