

A Statement to Our Readers

by JESSICA SMITH

AS THE editor of this magazine for many years, I feel deeply that I owe our readers an explanation of our editorial position on many matters now revealed in quite a different light than we formerly presented them. The recent revelations of excesses resulting from Stalin's one-man leadership make this imperative.

It is a painful experience not only to face certain terrible realities unrecognized before, but to realize that in some matters, one has not only convinced one's self but others that true was false and false true. How convincingly we did this job is apparent from the fact that many of the letters we have received have been in defense of Stalin.

I can only express the deepest regret that through my own too unquestioning faith I have misled so many others in certain respects. The important thing is not to become disillusioned or cynical, but to face with utter clarity all that has been wrong in the Soviet Union, and at the same time to hold fast to all that is good and true and enduring.

However greatly we have erred in gilding reality, in glossing over mistakes and shortcomings we *did* know about, we stand by the record we have set down of the great and breathtaking achievements of Soviet society, advancing more rapidly than ever now that the infection which was poisoning and retarding its growth is in process of being cured.

These achievements show the

steady onward march toward the great goal of Soviet socialist society—to provide the maximum satisfaction of the growing cultural and material needs of all the people. Joined with the Soviet people in this march are 700,000,000 more of the world's people, who have learned from the mistakes as well as the successes of the USSR and are receiving from her mighty economic and other aid. These and millions of other peoples throughout the world love and honor the Soviet Union for its pioneer role in building socialism, and above all for its great and consistent leadership for peace.

We proudly maintain that we have never erred in proclaiming the Soviet policy of peace as an unchanging one, in exposing the myth that our country is or ever was threatened with aggression by the USSR, in ceaselessly calling for negotiations and peaceful coexistence. On this record we stand. This position was in fact confirmed by our own government at the Geneva Summit conference, where the great historic decision was reached that atomic war between the Soviet Union and our country is inadmissible.

The basis of our faith that many of the things charged by the enemies of the Soviet Union could not be true, was that such things could not happen in a socialist society. We were right to the extent that it was no part of the nature of socialism that they happened. The repressions, the excesses, the death of many in-

nocent victims were all in violation of socialist principles and practice, and cannot be condoned. The great achievements of the Soviet Union were due to the fact that the economic basis of socialism had been firmly established. Stalin's methods retarded rather than advanced socialist development.

In the pages that follow, we have tried to set down those of the excesses so far reported that we feel can be accepted as reliable and to show something of the sweeping corrective process under way. With so many shocking facts already known, people here and around the world who have supported Soviet policies for many years, are naturally asking for the whole story. The Soviet leaders apparently feel that it can be unfolded only gradually. The main explanation for this, it seems to me, is to be found in the *Pravda* editorial of March 28. Here the intention seems first of all to make crystal clear that Stalin's one-man leadership and the "monstrous forms" it took were in every way a violation of socialist principles and the teachings of Lenin. If the "monstrous forms" had been detailed at the outset, this basic truth would have been obscured and in the minds of many people equated with socialist methods.

As *Pravda* made clear, Stalin contributed great services in the early years to the revolution and socialist construction and at that time fought for correct policies. It was absolutely necessary to defeat Trotsky's concept of permanent revolution—that socialism could succeed nowhere until it succeeded everywhere. That policy would have plunged the world into unending bloodshed and would have long postponed the development of socialism anywhere. The Lenin concept of building socialism in one

country and showing it could succeed, and the corollary need for peace, which Stalin followed, was the only possible way. It was Stalin's commitment to this policy and his great contributions to the building of socialism, that in the early years won him the support and prestige he later misused.

At what point the inevitable violence accompanying a revolution occurring in a country where no democratic road to socialism was open merged into needless violence, we do not know. It will take a long time to unravel all the details. What is clear is that among the errors of Stalin was his theory that with the continuing success of socialist construction the class struggle would be sharpened. He used this as the basis for suppressing those he considered "enemies of the people" and for maintaining a repressive apparatus that became a law unto itself. This was in complete contradiction to the teaching of Lenin that force should be used only in the measure that there was forceful resistance by the exploiting classes, when they were still strong. Lenin held that as soon as the economic and political foundations of the capitalist forces were removed and socialism firmly established, the need for repressive measures no longer existed. It had been Lenin's position, too, that the death penalty for crimes against the state would then no longer be needed.

Again, the point at which what Stalin considered revolutionary necessity turned into pathological repressions, we also do not know.

We can rejoice in the great new turn toward the ending of repressions, the development of civil liberties and the restoration of the essence of socialist democracy and humanism. For a full knowledge of

the steps that are being taken we must await the publication of the new legal code. Meantime, we know that great practical steps forward have been taken in ending lawlessness, reviewing the cases of all political prisoners and the emptying of the jails, in the new wind of freedom blowing into all corners of the land.

We must always keep in mind is that there have been real plots and efforts to destroy the Soviet Union from the first days of its existence, and an unending flood of slander from all those who have not wished to see a socialist society succeed. It is not the excesses that these people really oppose, but the successes of the Soviet Union. Witness the numerous statements being made today that the USSR represents "a greater danger than ever" now that the great turn has been made away from all these things the enemies of socialism used to their own advantage, and when the great economic, scientific and cultural advances of the USSR cannot be denied!

Finally, and above all, we repeat, the commitment of the Soviet state to a policy of peace, passionately supported by the whole people, was not and could not ever be changed.

This has remained true in spite of all the actual invasions and threats of war directed against the Soviet state since its inception, It was this actuality, this danger, that also played a great contributing part in the development of Stalin's methods and his obsessions. And this, too, must be understood as one element in the yet unanswered question as to why the other leaders were unable to prevent these developments.

Without the ever-present war danger Stalin would not have been able to equate dissent with treason.

It is not easy to support those who in the eyes of the people have been branded as traitors to their country. Who knows what seemingly incontrovertible proofs may have been presented, in one or another case, that victims of the purges were indeed guilty? With Stalin acting alone, the security apparatus under his control, it was no doubt difficult if not impossible to know the real facts. Moreover, Stalin had managed to gather so much power into his hands that it is possible no effective opposition could have acted without bringing on a bloody civil war, opening the way for new foreign intervention, which a divided country would have been in no position to withstand.

Well known are the efforts of our government to stir up subversion and unrest in the USSR and Eastern Europe, and the big Congressional appropriations for this purpose, which meant the searching out of individuals within these countries as its instruments. C. L. Sulzberger wrote in the *N. Y. Times*, April 18, 1956, after a tour of Eastern Europe, that the Dulles "liberation" policy had implied "that our country was prepared to support with force any counter-revolution in Eastern Europe." He spoke of the torrents of propaganda "from our radio stations," many of them manned by emigres dreaming of returning to power in their countries through war. Sulzberger concluded that whether we like it or not, the revolution is a reality in Eastern Europe, and it is necessary to adjust U.S. policies to this reality.

To the policies described by Sulzberger must be attributed some of the responsibility for creating an atmosphere in which the Rajk and other trials could happen, as well as many of the deeply tragic events

What happened in the Soviet Union. Does not all this give added urgency for unprecedented new efforts for peace? Treason, espionage, plots and counter-plots, real or imagined, frame-ups, executions, repressions and thought control—all these ugly concomitants of war and the arms race are to one degree or another poisoning the wellsprings of human society everywhere in the world, as well as relations between nations.

The Soviet Union, the whole camp of socialist and neutral nations, are putting forth strong new efforts for peace. As we go to press, the Soviet and other European Communists parties have announced the dissolution of the Communist Information Bureau as a step toward bringing peoples closer together. The Soviet leaders have called on both the Arab states and Israel to avoid any further provocations, and offered complete support to United Nations efforts to achieve peace in the Middle East. This means, now that the Arab-Israeli truce has been agreed upon as a result of Secretary General Hammarskjöld's efforts, that the way is open to a permanent solution through the United Nations.

A further constructive step was the agreement of the USSR to join with eleven other UN nations in accepting the draft of the international statute setting up an agency for the peaceful uses of atomic energy along lines originally proposed by President Eisenhower.

It is expected that further disarmament proposals will be made by Soviet leaders to open the way to some measure of agreement towards arms reduction, mutual inspection and the eventual banning of A- and H-bombs.

The complete revelation of past wrongs before the whole Soviet people is the best guarantee that what-

ever new mistakes may still be made, the excesses of the Stalin regime will not be repeated, and that a great process of moral regeneration is under way. It is deeply heartening that such a sweeping process of reevaluation and correction is under way.

The Soviet leaders and people are taking care of their problems.

What will our country do about the reevaluation of its internal and foreign policies being called for on all sides?

Heavy on the conscience of America is the unleashing of the first atom bomb, killing hundreds of thousands of Japanese civilians; military policies which, in Dulles' words, led us to the "brink of war"; economic policies which draw wealth from other lands leaving their people in impoverishment; unheard of repressions at home in violation of America's democratic traditions, and especially the long agony of our Negro citizens. Our own mistakes, not those of others, must be our deepest concern.

We look to our own government for a new peace initiative which will mean a new moral rebirth in our own country.

In our April issue we reviewed the positive contributions to strengthening peace in Khrushchev's public report at the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, and those aspects of the negative aspects of Stalin's policies known at the time. Space does not permit repeating these points, but for a better understanding of what follows, it should be considered in connection with this previously published material, as well as the article by Maurice Dobb on the great Soviet economic achievements which opens this issue.