

THE NEW LOOK AT THE SOVIET UNION

As though to atone for past sins, some American Marxists have begun to project all the woes and tribulations of the American Communist Party on a wrong attitude toward the Soviet Union.

"The blind and uncritical attitude of the *Daily Worker* during the past years to the Soviet Union only did grave damage to our goal of promoting a Socialist movement in this country," wrote Joseph Clark in the *Daily Worker* (June 10, 1956).

"In the early days of the USSR," commented Max Gordon, "when its existence was extremely precarious, one could argue that this system (of brooking no criticism of the Soviet Union) might have had a measure of justification. But beyond this it reflected a profoundly false relationship."

These assertions have little foundation in historical fact.

Is it not naive and even immodest to suppose that a more critical attitude toward the Soviet Union on the part of the *Daily Worker* or of the Communist Party would have made a difference in promoting a socialist movement in this country? Did other American Socialists who were critical of the Soviet Union achieve greater success? On the other hand, did not the American Communist Party derive considerable prestige, sympathy and support as a result of the admiration of many Americans for the achievements of the Soviet people?

Uncritical support of the Soviet Union was an attitude which characterized not only Communists. The victory of the October Revolution electrified millions. The spec-

tacle of workers and peasants rising out of the depths of poverty and oppression and defying the entire capitalist world evoked pride and joy among the oppressed everywhere.

Indeed, it was in great part because of the unqualified support of its sympathizers throughout the world during the early days of famine and civil war that the Soviet Union was able to crush the interventionists. But the danger to the continued existence of the first socialist state remained after this initial victory. The threats between 1940 and 1945 were no less perilous than those between 1918 and 1924. The threat of an A-bomb war between 1945 and 1954 represented a grave danger to socialism. And how long is it since a majority of Americans have ceased regarding the Soviet Union as an aggressor and a third world war as inevitable?

What necessitated the unqualified defense of the Soviet Union was the real threat to the existence and consolidation of the new society. The fear that the Soviet revolution might be overthrown through intervention was based on historical experience with previous revolutions: Central Europe, 1848; France, 1871; Germany, Italy and Hungary, 1918; and China, 1927.

The *Daily Worker* was supporting a Communist movement whose principle task was the defense of the vital interests of the American people through strengthening international friendship. Could the *Daily Worker* fulfill this task without combatting anti-Soviet slanders intensifying war tensions? Furthermore, it was in this country that the Soviet Union needed the staunchest defense, for it was this country which was the spearhead of the new anti-Soviet war crusade.

Those who like Abner Berry of the *Daily Worker* assert

that unqualified support of the Soviet Union opened the way to the charge of being foreign agents simply ignore the fact that this charge has been made of every group in American history which advocated international working-class solidarity and basic social change. It is hardly likely that the adoption of a hypercritical attitude toward the Soviet Union or the advocacy of some specifically national form of socialism will induce the bourgeoisie to drop this potent epithet.

Workingclass victories are not won by equivocal supporters but by the fierce and unremitting struggle of dedicated partisans. As long as the balance of power was in favor of world capitalism and plans for smashing or bleeding socialism still seemed feasible, the October Revolution could survive only by being defended singlemindedly and as a whole.

Roman Spartacists, French Jacobins and Communards, British Chartists, American Abolitionists, Russian Bolsheviks and Chinese "Reds"—all have exhibited a similar singlemindedness. Yet it was they who were historically correct and not their detractors who pointed to errors but remained blind to that which was in the process of becoming. Revolutionaries may err "in thinking that two times two makes five," as Lenin noted, but for the critical objectivist "two times two is a bushel of apples."

Freedom of criticism is one thing under conditions of peace and security and quite another when the revolution is under enemy attack, when violations of discipline may lead to demoralization and defeat.

In the past, moreover, as Togliatti has pointed out "in almost every case, those (Communists) who had begun by criticising this or that aspect of Communist policy in the Soviet Union ended up in a very short time by joining

the flock of official slanderers of the whole Communist movement, eventually becoming open or masked agents of the most reactionary political forces." (*Toward A Socialist Democracy*, June, 1956)

The reason uncritical support of the Soviet Union now may appear erroneous is that the old garment no longer fits the new conditions. The historically superfluous often appears ridiculous, especially when out of inertia, the attitudes of one period are imperceptibly carried into another.

Critical and qualified support of the Soviet Union has become possible because world imperialism is being compelled to turn from an unqualified determination to destroy socialism to a position of qualified hostility and peaceful competition.

THE OVERESTIMATION OF THE WAR DANGER

Most leaders of the U. S. Communist Party are in agreement that the party overestimated the danger of war in the last decade and that this constituted a grave, left-sectarian error. "While we asserted that World War III was not inevitable," declared Eugene Dennis, general