

CURRENT MAGAZINES

AN INTERNATIONAL "NEW DEAL"

America Tomorrow—Vice-President H. A. Wallace, in *Free World*.
Should the British Empire Be Broken Up?—Mr. E. Reeves in *World Review*.
The Round World and the Winning of the War—Sir Halford Mackinder,
in *Foreign Affairs*.
What Shall We Do With Germany?—Mr. L. Fischer, in the *Atlantic*.

WHEN the previous World War was in its fifth year, we became accustomed to the prediction that life would be made very different by the soldiers on their return home to Canada. They would be intolerant, it was said, of much that had passed almost without notice before eyes less critically observant. One heard alternately promises and warnings about a new spirit "born in the comradeship of the trenches", to which our old system of social economy must make haste to adapt itself. Very similar predictions are now being heard. They stir a curious train of thought in those of middle age or older.

Almost twenty-five years have now elapsed since hostilities ceased in the First World War. Can we honestly say that there has been any such improvement as the one in the forecast I have mentioned? Do we notice it in Ministers, in members of parliament, in those anywhere responsible for framing or for executing public policy? He would be an optimist indeed who could answer with confidence in the affirmative. If we cannot say with conviction that there has been any such significant difference, why should we suppose that the wishful thinking of social reformers will prove nearer to truth about the sequel to the present war than about the sequel to the last? Current magazines are strewn with argument and conjecture on this question.

I.

Scarcely had the First World War ended when there began a campaign of propaganda, at first under careful disguise, but soon becoming quite outspoken, against any purpose of a new order either social or international. Its method was the familiar one—of warning, uttered in the name of experience and wisdom, against "rash, though well intended" experiments in change. It was sympathetically explained that at such a time the fever of idealistic zealots had need of a restraint which—however

disagreeable—the more composed must not shrink from applying. So much that one would wish to do must be given up as impracticable, however: it might pain an enthusiast to have his pet scheme for world ending disparaged. It was said to be a most urgent duty to discourage “millennial expectations”. In the first months of 1919 we heard many expressions of concern lest the projects of that sanguine moralist, Woodrow Wilson, might prevail at Versailles over the clear-eyed judgment of Georges Clemenceau, and at one stage of the Conference Mr. Lloyd George had to make a hurried trip back to London that he might quell a revolt by “realist” members of the House of Commons. Harold Begbie’s descriptive phrase for the personnel of that new House became immortal: “Hard-faced men, who looked as if they had done very well out of the war”.

No one can mistake the tokens of such a resistance to world change now being organized again. The odium so diligently stirred after the First World War against the project of a League and its Covenant is being visibly worked up against Federal Union and the Atlantic Charter (especially Point IV). Precisely the same sort of agents are at work, and with less ingenuity than one might have expected in varying the method. Against anything like an international “New Deal” those who held under the old order of things a position of undeserved advantage are mobilizing their strength. A favorite device is to profess extreme horror at diversion of effort from “winning the war” to the planning of a new post-war world. Another is to misread the moral of the League of Nations, finding the cause of its failure not (as Mr. Churchill said at Harvard) in the betrayal of its purpose by certain of its members, but in its inherently impracticable design.

Most important of the real warnings to be derived from recollection of the rise and fall of the League is the warning against indulgence a second time towards the sinister forces by which a national enterprise of security is undermined. United measures of some sort for protection against the risk of a Third World War are essential. No quarter must be shown to those who would prefer to have their country run those risks rather than that they themselves should accept the sacrifice of personal interest needed to provide safeguard against them. Unlike the League of 1919, the new machinery must be equipped with collective force, and it must not be handicapped by absurd stipulations that only a “unanimous” decision shall be binding. Nor must

scruples or sensitiveness on points of national sovereignty bar the way to cooperation. This will be a New Deal indeed in international affairs; those so strangely and yet—in view of their character—so intelligibly in love with the Old Deal aim to frustrate it by a propagandism already begun. Openly or covertly, they rely on recreating alarm about Russian Communism. As these lines are being written, Mr. Anthony Eden and Mr. Cordell Hull are reported to be in Moscow, for conference with Mr. Molotov.

What sort of "Deal" may we hope to see emerge from that?

II.

The Soviet Union is not likely to adopt, or even to take interest in discussing, a project for reestablishment of the old European order with only minor readjustments. It is an open secret that the arrangement called *Amgot* (Allied Military Government of Occupied Territory) in Sicily does not find favor at Moscow. It is likewise understood that Russia has purposes for Poland very different from any which have been countenanced by British or American friends of "the Polish-Government-in-Exile". She is pretty certain to view the reorganization of the Danubian Powers in a light remote from that cast upon the situation there by British or American publicists, so tender towards "the Habsburgs". Mr. Eden and Mr. Hull must meet at Moscow those keen for change far deeper and far sharper than the sort lending itself to the familiar eloquence of either London or Washington. Admonitions about freedom slowly broadening down from precedent to precedent would sound out of place if addressed to Russian leaders who won their leadership in the earthquake of October, 1917.

With vivid memories of 1919 and 1920, those British negotiators must endeavor to realize how the Soviet Union chiefs recall the same period very differently. The way Mr. Stalin, for example, recalls it—thinking of the part he himself then played—may be seen in his address of 23rd. February last to the Red Army. He then reminded those soldiers of the Revolution how for the preceding twenty-four years they had held themselves in readiness for a capitalist attack at any moment, and pointed out that at length their apprehensions had been fulfilled. Incessantly it has been impressed on the Soviet soldier of to-day that the conflict against foreign foes of 1918 to 1920 had not been of the Soviet Union's making, that the counter-revolutionaries at home had been immensely reinforced by another "Holy Alliance"

of capitalist Powers, and that the Revolution had to be defended on a dozen fronts simultaneously by armies which it was needful to improvise. Memory of the skill and success with which this was done ought indeed to have suggested to us all (including Adolf Hitler) how formidable a fight Soviet Russia can make when she has her achievement of 1917 to defend. Mr. Stalin speaks of the fear which had never been far from the minds of Russians that the capitalist Powers might unite again for an effort to re-subjugate their country to the despotism it had escaped. For the measures which he took, for the organization of defence which he achieved long years ahead of the time when it would be needed, above all for the heroic endurance which the Russian people had been inspired to exhibit when the aggressor would come, Britain and the United States may well feel grateful admiration. They understand too, under the discipline and the revealing light of a common peril, much that they missed or misinterpreted in the years gone by. It is no depreciation of either Mr. Churchill or Mr. Stalin to suppose that each thinks very differently now of the side he so fiercely opposed twenty-five years ago.

But if we are to find our way to a practical solution of this old dispute, two sorts of fanatic must be pushed with equal resoluteness aside. A Power making such enormous contribution to the battle effort as Soviet Russia is making must be heard with deference when the time comes to organize a peaceful future. But it is not only the anti-Soviet irreconcilable that must be ignored: not only the man whom even immense service now rendered against the common enemy fails to reconcile to "cooperation with Communists". It is likewise the pro-Soviet enthusiast, who insists that all the censures directed against Moscow policy in recent years should now be recanted and withdrawn as mere products of "capitalist prejudice". Such proposal has the weakness, and therefore the danger, of mere folly. So resolute a realist as Mr. Stalin will respect all the more an unshakable adhesion by others to what, on this matter, they believe to be the truth, leaving to Hitler and his like the "propagandist" adaptations of truth to policy.

What, then, on this matter of the Soviet Union's past is the real conviction of multitudes, British and American, who yield to none in admiration of the Soviet Union's present, and in resolve to achieve such "New Deal" as will make Stalin's Russia a partner on equal terms with Roosevelt's America and Churchill's Britain for reorganizing the world? I shall endeavor

to set this forth by contrast with the argument in a very widely read and in some respects most impressive book, *The Soviet Power*, by the Dean of Canterbury.

III

The widespread alarm of twenty years ago about Moscow designs of World Revolution is by no means yet laid to rest. It has been inflamed and exploited by Nazis and Fascists for their own advantage, but it is active also in not a few with neither Fascist nor Nazi tendencies. Those most sanguine of democratic victory, and prepared for very deep changes to facilitate a better world order, have a haunting fear of "Stalin's hand in the coming settlement". There is a still continuing distrust of "Bolshevists", like the attitude in Britain to "Jacobins" over a century ago, which threatens to postpone indefinitely the real cooperation of Europe.

This historic parallel has a significance more instructive than that which lies on the surface. Widespread precaution against the French revolutionary spirit obstructed wholesome reform in country after country a hundred years ago, as the "anti-Comintern" vigilance serves reactionary interest now. But the social damage is not, as before, only, or chiefly, one of delay. The dictatorial machine, constructed professedly against "Bolshevist contagion", has turned out to bring such dangers of its own that it would have been wise for those countries which made use of it to face the disease rather than to escape it by means of such preventive. In the case of Revolutionary France, it needed about half a century to clear the mist from the eyes of those abroad who at first saw in the rough justice of the Revolution how rough it was, but not how just. Coleridge's early guess, "The Sun was rising though ye hid his light", was to find in Carlyle's *French Revolution* the first retrospective account to confirm it convincingly for the British reader. A like clarifying of our present problem was lately undertaken by the Dean of Canterbury, who so startled many readers with his book *The Soviet Power*.

The Dean's purpose has been helped by the march of events: by disclosure that the real antagonism of Stalin's Russia is far less to capitalist Britain or America than to Nazi Germany or Fascist Italy, and by overwhelming proof of the capacity of the Russian people now, as of the French a century and a half ago, for victorious endurance in the fight for their Revolution. On

the other hand, I must acknowledge grave difficulties in accepting so sanguine an estimate of what we may look for from Josef Stalin as that encouraged in this book, *The Soviet Power*. The prospect, however, may be excellent, as international prospects go, although it falls short of that. At least this most startling book may be taken as a stimulant to critical thought.

Here we have the picture of a country which has solved with amazing speed and effectiveness the major problems of just and at the same time efficient administration. Soviet Russia is shown to us, by Dean Johnson, as having set the example of a "planned economy" to those capitalist Powers whose economy is still the sport of accident or caprice among selfish industrial competitors. There alone, it seems, as yet, are Nature's resources surveyed with scientific thoroughness, so that they may be made to yield their utmost for the needs of man, and there alone is the product applied on principles of real distributive justice. In Soviet Russia the "vested interest", which elsewhere so obstructs social progress, has met with the same summary treatment as other superstitions of the past. No respect, we are told, is paid to any individual demand that conflicts with the public good, and the "monopolist" whom—for example, in the United States—it was found needful elsewhere to restrain by cautiously drawn special "anti-Trust Laws" has automatically disappeared, like some evil growth in a soil or climate gloriously fatal to it. The principle of "service" has been substituted for the motive of "profit".

Thus, in the Dean's account, a transformation assumed elsewhere to require generations or even centuries of gradual development, with many a failure and many a relapse, has been achieved by Soviet Russia with no set-back and in a few short years. Unemployment abolished; a people, twenty-five years ago no less than 80 per cent illiterate, now the most widely and eagerly reading general public in Europe; the discoveries and inventions of science for the first time yielding their true result in increased comfort for everyone, so that here at least Henry George would have found no shocking paradox of deepened poverty as sequel to scientific progress. For the Dean of Canterbury, here is indeed the land from which to learn at once the secret of a more efficient industrialism and the lessons of a more discerning social justice, for capitalistic exploitation has been the denial not only of fair play but also of a management that looks carefully ahead: it has been at once appallingly selfish and appallingly wasteful.

The average reader must rise from perusal of *The Soviet Power* thrilled by the thought of Utopia as thus at length found. He must picture the Christian moralist in company with the industrial expert hastening to Moscow for examination of the great movement which has both fulfilled and reconciled their separate ideals, hitherto so visionary and at times so antagonistic. One thinks of Miss Rose Strunsky's story about Russian revolutionaries in 1917, having made a pilgrimage to the tomb of Leo Tolstoy—"to tell the little Father the good news, that the Kingdom of Heaven had come, and that Reason was established among men". Those pilgrims quickly found that their report had been premature. Unless Tolstoy had very much altered in ways of thought and of speech, his shade must have been impatient of such facile optimism.

I fear there is still excessive optimism in this volume, *The Soviet Power*, published after twenty years of disconcerting trial. Mr. Eugene Lyons has written of the Dean of Canterbury that the goodness of his heart is as notable as the strangeness of his mind, but this is to do much less than justice to a mind so keen in combination of the training of an engineer with the experience of a captain of industry and the spiritual reflections of a theologian. We shall search long and far for quite so compact and telling a critique on how capitalist society, in its organization of labor, sacrifices at once the just rights of the employee and the social serviceability of the enterprise to the one purpose of maximum company profits. I don't wonder that the circulation of the book is in its second million, uninjured—perhaps even stimulated—by denunciation of the author for his report upon the virtues of Republican Spain.

That Dean Johnson is to be followed in his rosy view of coming Soviet leadership to a more efficient and at the same time more Christian social system by no means follows from the merits one must acknowledge in his book on Russia. We have known too long and too sorrowfully the ways of the U.S.S.R. first under Lenin, next under Stalin, and have had too many acknowledgments from those whose desire was to think the best of that system but whom intimate study on the spot had convinced of its monstrous inhumanity. Not merely such American onlookers in Moscow as Mr. W. H. Chamberlin, whose anti-Soviet predisposition has perhaps to be discounted as much as the predisposition of John Reed in the Soviet's favor: but such too as Mr. Eugene Lyons, who was certainly altogether prepared to see capitalism made ridiculous by the Socialist experiment

in Russia on a vast scale, or such as Mr. Max Eastman who had been the Soviet Union's most ardent champion when he edited *The Masses*, and whom years of observation on the spot had driven to painful acknowledgment that he had been entirely wrong. Or, again, Lord Passfield, whom we still know better as Sidney Webb. Explain them away, one by one: you will not readily discredit them all. No one with either knowledge or sense of humor will dismiss the critique by Sidney Webb as the rash judgment of a visitor in a hurry, or as prompted by "capitalist" prejudice.

So one turns again to our so optimistic Dean, and reads his argument again in the light of tragic testimony—about the "Purges" for example, or about the millions who perished through famine in Ukraina that the First Five-Year Plan might be reported successful. One wonders at his power to reconcile the materialistic interpretation of history so dear to Marx and Lenin with a zeal for justice and benevolence. These contradictory moods will surely sooner or later obstruct each other, and if even a fraction of the evidence apparently well attested about the doings of the Red Army in Finland, in Lithuania, in Poland be correct, there is no room for doubt as to which mood in these cases prevailed. One would have expected that a Dean at least would not doubt the moral peril of adopting a theory of life which makes moral differences meaningless, and that he would not be quite content with the recollection of how seldom there is logical coherence—either for good or for evil—between theory and conduct. In this respect the denial of all religion, so far from being an accidental or detachable accompaniment of Communist policy, is, in truth, of its very essence—as Marx and Engels, Lenin and Trotsky so clearly saw and so strongly insisted. On the basis of a materialistic interpretation of history, to be "religious" becomes simply either an absurdity or an imposture, for the contradiction within human nature which all the great religions have taken as their starting-point has been analyzed away. If it reappears, as one is thankful to note that it must and does in many a Communist, this is because—like the Dean himself—the Communist thus nobly inconsistent has either not seen or refused to accept the practical upshot of ideas by which he has been fascinated.

A similar criticism may be passed upon the profession always repeated in Communist manifestoes but never even faintly fulfilled in the practice of Communist States, that government under the system they favor will by the very

excellence of its administration in time render itself superfluous. For nearly a hundred years, ever since Frederick Engels coined the aphorism "The State will not be abolished, it will wither away", readers have been entertained with this self-eliminating quality of the Marxian regime. Dean Johnson is obviously somewhat dissatisfied about it, for he feels that the process must be expected to take at least some hundreds of years. A hope to be fulfilled, as Carlyle said, "one of these centuries" is no very effective dynamic for an Age so uneasy as our own, and the Dean has not made it appear convincing that the process is even—however slowly—on the way. While he was writing about how the rigor of Soviet Russia's first Constitution (July 10, 1918) was softened by its second (1924) and this again by its third (1936) "the most democratic Constitution in the world . . . in a worthy line with our own *Magna Carta*," strange developments of executive autocracy at Moscow were being prepared. 1937 witnessed the vast Purges, in which no one knows how many were "liquidated": they certainly number scores of thousands, one's friends in a Russian city disappearing as unaccountably as victims of the Black Death in mediaeval England, and the survivors waiting each day in terror to find who must go next. *Magna Carta* with *Habeas Corpus* was a distinctly unsuitable similitude for that third Soviet Constitution of 1936.

And what can we seriously make of the argument for an essentially Christian disposition in Soviet management of affairs? There is a like astonishing suggestion in a recent book by Sir Bernard Pares, which bids us remember that Communism was a very conspicuous feature of the early Christian Church. The suggested similitude between the habits of the Christian society set forth in *Acts* ii, 44 and those enjoined in a Soviet Union manual is beyond any play on words one might have thought possible in so reputable a writer. Dean Johnson has, of course, a serious difficulty with Lenin's writings. These are still cherished as the authoritative Scripture of Soviet Russia, and by no reasonable interpretation can they be held to embody the Christian account of human relationship. However large the allowance we make for differences in mere form of statement, however we dismiss as unimportant a denial in theory of what remains inculcated by practice, however we emphasize logical implications in contrast with psychological content, it remains clear that Lenin meant to repudiate much of what is obviously fundamental to the Christian view of life. Not cosmic doctrine

alone, or ritual practice, but also conceptions of duty. It would be a pleasure to find, but unfortunately the text forbids it, that the secularist revolt led by the Bolsheviks was in the main a revolt against an ecclesiastical institution which had been a servile tool of the autocracy, and that the rebels—despite some extravagances of expression—were in truth rescuing the real Faith from its unworthy custodians. But Lenin and Trotsky were quite capable of drawing that distinction, if what it means was really in their minds: the intellectual confusion which the Dean attributes to them as concealing their fundamental nobility of purpose is a conjecture of his own to which their language lends no countenance.

What one must in fairness as well as in hopefulness conclude about Soviet Russia is that the revolution with which she began has now passed the tragic phase which experience has shown to be a mark of all revolutions arising in recoil from such long continued despotism. Her *Ogpu* was the successor of the Tsarist *Cheka*, no better and no worse. She suffered under the mistake of the capitalist Powers—repeating their mistake with a like upheaval in France a century before, and it has taken time to show to her as it took time to show to Republican France the better side of her neighbors' disposition. In this case the disclosure has been enormously facilitated by the tragic experiment in partnership with the Nazis. So there is no ground, at least for those who recognize that not a certainty but only the most convincing probability must be tried, to entertain any peculiar alarms about coming Peace Conference with Soviet Russia at the table.

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For an outcome of which, with the experience of twenty-three years ago in mind, we can feel hopeful, there is a pre-requisite that men of *blasé* familiarity with old ways may not think possible. But the *blasé* diplomatist of the past must give place, if ruin is to be avoided, to another sort of negotiator. Perhaps this time, although not last time, experience of a world war may prompt those in earnest to put him sternly aside.

Reflections and motives very different from those which have commonly prevailed at an international conference must be active on both sides if Russia and the Powers still known unfavorably at Moscow as "capitalist" are to frame the peace in genuine cooperation. They are cooperating genuinely in

the war: is not that in itself a new school of ideas? If the sinister account of all diplomacy popular in too many circles were indeed correct, the making of next peace must have a dark sequel, like the making of the last, for all the factors of another outbreak would be left biding their time. "Power Politics" can but add yet another example to its tragic series, since for national as for individual partnership there is still no answer to Carlyle's problem—"Given a community of rogues, show how to evolve a morality from their combined action". Wishful thinking alone can persuade us that the ingenuities of competitive pillage would at next trial have a result better than before.

But the life of mankind, even in that international relationship which has often presented it at its worst, has never been destitute of impulses which belong to a higher order, and now is the time, beyond all others our Age at least has known, when we might hope for their productive activity. The capitalist Powers distrusted, and still deeply distrust, Soviet Russia's method of government. In like manner, and in at least equal degree, Soviet Russia has distrusted and still distrusts "capitalist intrigue". But does this supply any reason why they should not continue to work together for safeguarding the peace which they will have worked and sacrificed together to establish? They are depending on each other now in the ordeal of battle: must they revert to unconquerable mutual suspicion when, cooperatively, they shall have triumphed?

H. L. S.
