

The World. "Why," asks Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., in reviewing Julien Steinberg's *Verdict of Three Decades*, "has it taken the West so long to acknowledge the facts about Soviet Russia? . . . Many of the things we now denounce in the USSR have been reported to us regularly for over a generation." There is some fodder for speculation on that subject in Mr. Steinberg's book, even more in Richard H. S. Crossman's *The God That Failed* (SRL Jan. 7, March 25). In the last few years facts about Soviet Russia have grown harder and harder to come by. There is evidence of this on every page of Alex Inkeles's valiant attempt to study *Public Opinion in Soviet Russia* (see page 26). L. S. Berg's *Natural Regions of the U.S.S.R.* is a scholarly, fact-crammed tome that should prove useful to geographers, economists, and, of course, military intelligence. Many startling similarities between Ivan the Terrible and Joseph Stalin are revealed in George Backer's *The Deadly Parallel* (reviewed on page 28).

Obituary on a Revolutionary Dream

VERDICT OF THREE DECADES.
Edited by Julien Steinberg. New
York: Duell, Sloan & Pearce. 634
pp. \$5.

By ARTHUR SCHLESINGER, JR.

THE WORLD lives today amidst the death agonies of a great dream. That dream was the vision of liberation stirred by the Russian Revolution of 1917—the hope that the common man was at last capturing control of his own destiny and that he would now reorder society in the interests of humanity, abolishing exploitation and cruelty and servitude. Today, three decades later, part of the world is made up of the fanatics of that dream, while to the rest it has become clearer and clearer that the dream is a terrible delusion. In the name of the Revolution of 1917, exploitation and cruelty and servitude, far from having been abolished, have been fastened more tightly on the people of Russia and are being threatened as never before for the people of the world.

Julien Steinberg's *Verdict of Three Decades* is an obituary on the dream; it is an anatomy of the betrayal. Mr. Steinberg has gone in the main to those who accepted the radiant hope of 1917, and from their testimony he has put together a series of texts illuminating the disintegration of that hope. The book which results is, in a sense, a history of the Soviet Union or, rather, a historical anthology of the crises in Soviet development, as Communist Russia has moved steadily from liberation into tyranny. It is in part the accounts of eye-witnesses and participants, in part the theoretical reflections of people trying to explain to

themselves why things went wrong, in part illustrative documents from the Soviet Union itself.

Mr. Steinberg begins by reprinting the searching predictions of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Kautsky, both made in 1918—an important reminder that the democratic Socialists, whether of the revolutionary or the parliamentary wing, were among the first to see the implications of Leninism. Alexander Berkman, the American anarchist, describes the Kronstadt rebellion, where the last hope of political freedom in the new Russia was mercilessly extinguished, and Emma Goldman reports an early meeting of the Comintern. Victor Serge, in brilliant, livid flashes, sketches unforgettably the ambiguous days of the New Economic Policy. And a gallery of political portraits—Souvarine on Lenin,



Julien Steinberg—"an anatomy of the betrayal."

Eastman on Trotsky, and, appropriately, Stalin on Stalin—concludes the first decade.

The second decade covers the transition from dictatorship to totalitarianism. These are the years of the final triumph of Stalin, of the famine, of the expansion of the slave-labor camps, of the Moscow trials, and of the pact with Hitler. Each event is matched by a suitable text. Mr. Steinberg, for example, has somewhere unearthed a forgotten book of 1933 called *"Out of the Deep,"* made up of letters from the Soviet timber camps; he uses these moving and pathetic documents with great effect to supplement Tchernavin on slave labor. He provides, in addition, Chamberlin and Lyons on the famine, Gide on his disillusionment, Louis Fischer on the trials, Krivitsky on the pact, and Granville Hicks's thoughtful inquiry into the appeal of Communism for the American intellectual.

The third decade confronts us with the end-product of this evolution. Rudolf Hilferding's remarkable analysis defines the nature of economic society as it has developed in the Soviet Union, while Peter Meyer describes the new stratification of classes, Solomon M. Schwarz the role of the trade union, and H. J. Muller (in his notable essay first printed in *SRL*) the fate of science. Silone and Koestler, in their contrasting styles, comment on the moral cretinism of the fellow traveler. Other essays develop themes touched on earlier in the book; but perhaps as revealing as any single document is the humiliating confession of error by Sergei Eisenstein, the film director, with its unconditional prostration before the artistic insights of the Central Committee of the Communist Party.

Mr. Steinberg's notes are useful and sensible. They reach moderate conclusions on such tangled issues as whether Stalin is the heir of Lenin, and they impart a considerable amount of supplementary information about Soviet developments. I wish he had touched more on one question which will inevitably arise in the minds of many readers: why has it taken the West so long to acknowledge the facts about Soviet Russia? The book itself reminds us powerfully that many of the things we now denounce in the USSR have been reported to us regularly for over a generation. One reason for the resistance to the facts undoubtedly goes to the pervading sense of guilt in Western society—a sense of guilt which, by itself, is understandable and, indeed, necessary, but which, when it blinds men to the true nature of the moral choices they are making,

(Continued on page 26)

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Our Conscience & the War

WHEN the clouds of approaching war darken the world horizon and men and their machines for destruction are sent into preliminary battles or to man distant ramparts, the time has come to survey, not only the forces at our command if worst should come, but our sense of justice, the private doubts and scruples of conscience. Today we do not have to deal with pacifism; there have been no young men, as there were twelve years ago, marching around our universities crying for peace because war is evil. As never before we dread and hate war, but no one in his right senses, except those who are deluded by Communist propaganda, wants a peace that would only be temporary at the price of appeasement and surrender. At the end of June when the Korean Republic was invaded the immediate decision to engage in what we hoped would be a minor conflict was approved by the country and by the squabbling legislators on Capitol Hill with a unanimity that astonished our own people and our allies abroad.

We have made frightful mistakes in the past five years. It is futile to catalogue them in anger, and dangerous to use them to partisan advantage in an election year, though it is wise to analyze them calmly so that people can understand the weaknesses of democracy in peacetime and our leaders can sense the force of public indignation. There are many questions for which thoughtful men and women are demanding answers, and some of

them go back to decisions made at the end of the last war.

We want to know, for example, why we were so deluded by our correspondents and by the Government about Russian designs on Czechoslovakia, why we did not realize the power of Chinese Communist armies and the increasingly hopeless situation of the Nationalist forces. We knew that revolution in China was inevitable, but why were we told it would be an agrarian revolution led by men who would refuse to take orders from the Kremlin? Why did we not know that it was a major victory in the Russian Communist plan for the conquest of the world? Why were we so hesitant to come to the conclusion that a line must be drawn across Eastern Europe from the Baltic to the Adriatic, to cross which would mean war? And, finally, why were our experts on foreign affairs apparently ignorant of the ominous menace of North Korea to world peace? What were our Government and Army intelligence services doing while Russian advisers and military men were training and assembling a powerful army and giving it modern weapons?

We do not seek the answers to these questions so that we may punish the men who were responsible; we want only to be assured that these obvious mistakes and miscalculations will not be made again. These errors lie heavily on our conscience. Through them we have sacrificed the democratic peoples of Czechoslovakia and

have led their great leaders to disgrace and death; we have surrendered to exile and liquidation the democratic and stalwart peoples of Esthonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. We have not been entirely negligent and callous; we have saved Greece and Iran and perhaps Turkey from the Russian Communist menace. Wherever the line has been unmistakably laid down, as we have drawn it through the heart of Berlin, we have, up to the present day, managed to keep the peace. It is safe to say that an extension of that line to Iran, to Yugoslavia, to the Arab kingdoms of the Near East, to Malaya, Burma, the Indonesian Republic, and Indo-China, however great a commitment and present danger this might infer, would be welcomed by the people of this country and half the world. It would be a heroically courageous action, but the world needs courage today. If the line were breached anywhere, it would mean war; but it might bring to an end the erosion that is casting, one after another, nations and their peoples into the Communist sea.

IT IS absurd to imagine that in the immediate future the democratic nations could come to the aid of half or a quarter of these perilously situated countries if a mass attack were made on them. It is the piecemeal surrender of democratic institutions, however weak or even corrupt their governments may be, that is dangerous. It may not be wise to argue that we can

Litany for Americans

By Charles W. Ferguson

The United States arranged today to buy remaining stocks of Cuban sugar to assure the nation of ample supplies. In announcing the deal, the Agriculture Department said Cuba has slightly more than 600,000 short tons above current commitments. . . . —Associated Press dispatch, July 28, 1950.

O PIONEERS! From out thy shrunken graves we hear thee speak,
And the sound of noble bones in travail stirs us now.
The dust of history chokes our throats, the wagons groan,
The torch is handed, the spirit will not quench.

Pass the sugar, please.

Trachoma, yaws and scurvy; bellies swollen shut with hunger,
Hearts rubbed raw with fear and nerves drawn taut from hoping.
We stretch out our white unstained helping hand,
Onward and upward with Point Four!

Pass the sugar, please.

Fight to the death! No retreat! The line must hold!
Our cause demands our youth's sweet blood and sacrifice.
Angels attend these young men's efforts and their wounds!
And now: the next voice you hear . . .

Pass the sugar, please.

Let some scalpel excise the fatty layers of our soul,
Some sharp event prick our cushioned conscience.
Let nations reel in drunken Armageddon,
But save us from consumer panic here.

Pass the sugar, please.