

Soviet Aggression:
Myth OR Reality?

Corliss Lamont

3¢

Soviet Aggression: Myth or Reality?

IN APRIL, 1951, the conservative *Wall Street Journal* declared: "Unfortunately, the tactic of the manufactured crisis has been used so often that neither Congress nor the people know what they can believe." The fact is, of course, that the Truman Administration, in order to push its enormous armaments program through Congress and to justify the continuation of the cold war and the Far Eastern crisis, feels compelled to resort to the device of keeping the American people stirred up and fearful over some alleged menace of Soviet or Communist origin.

The manufactured crisis depends on the manufactured myth. And of all the myths conjured up by the anti-Soviet forces of the United States and

the Western World, the most far-fetched and far-reaching is that the Soviet Union is bent on military aggression. The underlying premise of the North Atlantic Pact is that Soviet armies will invade and over-run Western Europe if they get the opportunity. The same premise lies behind the colossal expenditures on armaments of the American Government and was an integral part of President Truman's recent message calling for an armaments budget of more than 60 billion dollars for 1951-52.

Building up the bogey of Soviet aggression has been a remarkably convenient and successful means of producing in America an atmosphere of hysteria and fear. I am convinced that this anti-Soviet propaganda is false and dangerous, and as harmful to the establishment of world peace as to the maintenance of American democracy. Assuming the Soviet Government realizes that a third world war would in all probability follow if it attacked any country anywhere, I see at least twenty reasons why Soviet military aggression is most unlikely, either now or in the future:

First, the Soviet Russians, remembering poignantly their terrible losses in property and human

life during the First and Second World Wars, and especially in Hitler's cruel and destructive invasion, are utterly opposed, from the viewpoint of simple self-preservation and national well-being, to undergoing a third and perhaps even worse ordeal in an international conflict involving use of the atom bomb.

Second, the Soviet Russians wish above all to go on with their reconstruction of the devastated areas and the building of Socialism, and not to have this program set back for years through an all-out war.

Third, repeated and reliable reports from Soviet Russia during the period of the Fourth Five-Year Plan, 1946-50, indicate that the Soviet people are in fact preoccupied with tremendous projects of peaceful economic construction and that their minds are not dwelling upon dreams of military conquest. The Five-Year Plan recently completed attained most of its main social and economic goals. Instead of a serious inflation due to disproportionate war preparations, as in the United States, the Soviet Union has put through four general price reductions of a sweeping nature since the close of the war. The last of these occurred in March, 1951, and lowered

prices on a multitude of consumer goods from ten to thirty percent.

Fourth, the Soviet Union, stretching over two continents and larger than all North America, possesses within its vast domains practically all the raw materials necessary for its economy. It needs no new territories to provide it with natural resources. The U.S.S.R., however, is glad to supplement its own basic wealth through doing business with other countries and at present has particularly active trade relations with the People's Republic of China and the nations of Eastern Europe.

Fifth, the huge size of Soviet Russia, together with its material riches and economic development, means that it has plenty of room for its expanding population. Over-population, which has often been a spur to military conquest, is not a problem in the Soviet Union.

Sixth, the public ownership of the main means of production and distribution in the U.S.S.R. prevents private individuals and groups from profiting financially from armaments or any other war activity.

Seventh, although in the current disordered and threatening state of the world the Soviet Republic

must maintain an army and armaments for defense, it stands as always for disarmament agreements between the different nations and has repeatedly made concrete proposals towards this end, both in the United Nations and elsewhere. The Soviet people regard armaments as a necessary evil during the transition to enduring peace; and they do not in the slightest require them as a stimulus to economic prosperity.

Eighth, the Soviet plan calling for the destruction of all atom bombs, manufactured by whatever country, and for effective international supervision of atomic energy demonstrates its own wish and intention to use its atomic resources for peaceful purposes and the further economic upbuilding of the nation.

Ninth, Soviet Russia's economic system of socialist planning, having overcome the great economic depressions, famines and periods of mass unemployment so characteristic of the past, makes altogether needless and irrelevant the classic method of military adventure as a way of temporarily submerging internal crises and sidetracking the revolutionary discontent of the population. Furthermore, since

the Soviet people always have the purchasing power to buy back the goods which they produce, there is no overwhelming pressure to acquire foreign markets and spheres of influence for getting rid of surplus products. In brief, what I am suggesting here is that the Soviet Russians have eliminated, so far as their own country is concerned, the chief economic roots of war-making and war-mongering.

Tenth, the Soviet Union, despite its relative self-sufficiency in an economic sense, desires normal international trade with the other nations of the earth. It has ever sought to establish good business relations with the United States and Western Europe, exchanging raw materials for machinery and finished goods. The Soviet Russians infinitely prefer peaceful and mutually advantageous commerce with the West to war.

Eleventh, in line with the last point, the Soviet Government has repeatedly stressed the possibility and the common sense of the capitalist and socialist nations of the world peacefully co-existing and cooperating on limited but important international ends. The Soviet Russians remain militantly opposed to the capitalist economic system and mili-

tantly in favor of their own; but they believe that war between the capitalist and socialist systems, especially in this era of atom bombs and other weapons of fearful destructiveness, may well prove ruinous to both. Although some Marxist and Soviet theoreticians have occasionally talked loosely and grandiloquently about the "inevitability" of war as long as capitalism exists, Soviet foreign policy actually rejects this idea. Premier Stalin himself denied the inevitability of a new world war only as recently as February, 1951.

Twelfth, while the Soviet Russians clearly wish to see world socialism established, they do not favor trying to extend Communist principles to other lands through the means of armed invasion. The Soviets support the thesis that "Revolution cannot be exported," but must be the outcome of indigenous radical movements in whatever country is concerned. They gave moral encouragement, to be sure, to the recently successful Communist revolution in China, but neither material nor military aid. Marxist theory claims that capitalism will eventually collapse in every nation through its own inner contradictions and the pressure of the working class.

The Soviet Russians take this theory very seriously and find it pointless to assume the terrific burdens and dangers of war in order to spread socialism when they are convinced that this new system is bound to come in due course anyway.

Thirteenth, the idea of military aggression and international war, except in legitimate self-defense, is contrary to the mainstream of Marxist and Soviet doctrine, from Karl Marx down to the present time. In the tense days of 1939, when the Second World War had already broken out, the Soviet Union went to war against Finland in order to re-adjust the frontiers for better defense against the Nazi menace. I think this was a mistake, but at least it was understandable in view of the critical international situation and of Hitler's later invasion of the U.S.S.R. hand in hand with the Finns.

Whatever opinions one may hold concerning the origin of the struggle in Korea in the summer of 1950, there is no evidence that Soviet Russia was responsible. Certainly it has not intervened in the conflict to offset the cruel and devastating intervention of the United States and the United Nations. Undoubtedly the Communists of the East consid-

ered the North Korean action justified as part of an inevitable civil war and as a defensive measure to eliminate the American military bridgehead on the continent of Asia.

Fourteenth, despite the fact that the Soviet Union possesses mighty armies and air fleets, no responsible leader in its governmental, military, economic, journalistic or cultural affairs has once made the suggestion during the troubled years since World War II that it should initiate a preventive war or bomb a foreign country. This record compares very favorably with the statements by many leading public figures in the United States, some of them government officials, that America should launch an atom-bomb assault on Soviet Russia; and with the frequent publication in the American press of detailed blueprints for such an attack, pointing out on maps the precise cities and industrial areas in the U.S.S.R. which are to be knocked out.

Fifteenth, indicating the basic Soviet attitude toward war, the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R., corresponding in its political functions to the United States Congress, passed in March, 1951, a law making any kind of war propaganda illegal in the Soviet

Republic. The maximum penalty under this new law is twenty-five years in jail.

Sixteenth, the Soviet Government has made no concrete military moves in any part of the world indicating aggressive intentions against any country. On the other hand, the Soviet Union carried out extensive demobilization of its armies during 1945, 1946 and 1947. The continual rumors of threatening Soviet troop movements have never turned out to have a basis in fact. A recent dispatch in the *Chicago Daily News* from William Stoneman in Paris stated: "A wave of resentment swept Paris as the result of what newspapers hint is a deliberate attempt by the American Government to alarm the public on Soviet troop concentrations." Of course, regular army maneuvers take place from time to time in the U.S.S.R., as in other nations.

Seventeenth, if the Soviet Government were really plotting military aggression against, for example, Western Europe, it would presumably have started the war before the rearmament of the Atlantic Powers had made such headway and at a time, such as the fall of 1950, when the American military forces were preoccupied in the Far East.

Eighteenth, Joseph Stalin, Premier of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, having successfully seen his country through to the establishment of the first socialist commonwealth in history and having led the Soviet people to victory in the Second World War, would in all likelihood prefer to enhance his reputation as a statesman by helping to ensure an era of peace for the U.S.S.R. and mankind. Surely he has no desire to go down in history, like Adolf Hitler, as a notorious leader of military aggression and as one of the most infamous war criminals of all time.

Nineteenth, if we review the history of Soviet foreign policy from the birth of the Soviet Republic in 1917 down to the outbreak of World War II, we find a continuous and consistent record on behalf of international peace and understanding. In the early years Lenin as head of the Soviet state did his best to achieve peaceful relations with the other countries of the earth, a number of which attempted to effect the downfall of the Communist regime through armed intervention. In the later period the Soviet Union, with Maxim Litvinov as its able and eloquent Foreign Minister, joined the League

of Nations and tried to the utmost to build an effective system of collective security with the Western democracies against Fascist aggression. Clearly, it was not Soviet Russia's fault that the League failed to follow out the commitments of its own Covenant and thus stop Hitler and Mussolini.

Twentieth, during the period of current history since the triumph of the allied nations over the Axis Powers, Soviet Russia, in consonance with its past record, has steadfastly striven for international peace and reasonable agreements with the United States. Since 1945 the Soviet Union has made its own share of serious mistakes in foreign policy, mostly of a tactical nature, and has at times acted in an arbitrary, brusque and obdurate manner. But on the whole over the past six years it has shown a willingness to compromise for the sake of world amity and a desire to make the United Nations a successfully functioning organization. Soviet leaders have given voice again and again to the theme of peaceful co-existence between the socialist and capitalist blocs; and have repeatedly proposed a top-level conference between the U.S.S.R. and the U.S.A. for the purpose of ironing out the main dif-

facilities between these two great countries and reaching some sort of over-all settlement.

The Truman Administration has frowned upon such a conference and settlement, having built up a spurious identification between peace and appeasement. This untenable position is, again, based on the assumption that Soviet Russia harbors aggressive military designs. I believe that the United States can and should reach a peaceful agreement with the Soviet Government on honorable and mutually advantageous terms.

In these twenty points I have sought to sum up briefly the chief reasons why I think Soviet military aggression will not take place. Of course the Soviet Union will fight back if attacked and could be forced into some sort of defensive action if it felt directly menaced, for instance, by a rearmed, neo-Nazi Germany or if it were convinced that a general war was about to be unleashed against it. I could be wrong, but this is the way the international picture looks to me.

Additional copies of this pamphlet may be obtained at 3c per copy from the author at 450 Riverside Drive, New York 27, N. Y.



PRINTED
IN
U.S.A.