

SPEAK YOUR PIECE

The Tragedy of Itzik Pfeffer

Editor, Daily Worker:

An elderly woman who is an old friend of mine was lucky in having a nephew who became the foremost Jewish poet of the Russian October Revolution. His name was Itzik Feffer. She raised him and left old Czarist Russia when he was still a boy. She came to the U. S.

The October revolution came and then she heard that Itzik wrote poetry and in later years he became one of the most outstanding and talented poets of the new Russia. How proud she was and joyful. When Pfeffer and Michaels came to the USA during the last war they spoke at the meeting in the Polo Grounds. Itzik said "I will live to dance on Hitler's grave."

He went to visit his old aunt on the coast. Her happiness was overflowing.

Some time later the Anti-fascist Committee in the USSR was dissolved and the Jewish paper published by the Committee was closed. Very little news came from the USSR. Practically nothing was heard about Pfeffer. His aunt became very anxious. She wrote me to find out through different channels whether anything is known about his whereabouts. All we heard were rumors. I buttonholed everybody I knew and nobody around the Freiheit could explain what happened. Some rumors came that he was writing scenarios for the movies in Riga. Then the terrible news came from Warsaw about the destruction of the Jewish writers, the closing of the Jewish press.

The shock was terrific on us all. I was anxious to know how all this affected Itzik Feffer's aunt. I sent her some of the discussion material, also the article by Anna Louise Strong. After a week I received a short letter from her thanking me for the information. "After all the rumors and misinformation now we know the truth."

She concluded that she hoped this will never again happen and that the world will have peace forever. I was glad to know that this progressive person sized the situation up very candidly. Despite her deep heartfelt loss, she has the courage and hope that socialism and peace will finally triumph, not only in the USSR but everywhere.

The enemies of the Soviet Union were happy that under the Stalin cult Jewish culture there, which had bloomed, had a terrible setback. But from what we read new policies are in effect and socialism is being put back on the track. We can now,

at least, look forward to great things. Itzik Feffer did not die in vain. Many have given their lives for socialism for a better world and for a peaceful world. We will live to see what they lived for come true.—MAX SP.

Objects to Quoting 'Trash' from Times

BOSTON.

Editor, Daily Worker:

The Khrushchev secret report does not mean that enemies and calumniators of the Soviet Union, falsifiers, smearers, sneerers, and assorted liars are correct or ever will be.

But I am surprised to see a tendency in the Daily Worker to quote such junk. For example, what is the purpose of a misleading reprint from the N. Y. Times on Soviet literature (June 12)? I am particularly interested in Soviet literature, and it is not modest to say that what little I know about it is far more than Welles Hagen, the N. Y. Times Moscow correspondent you quoted, will ever know. His flippant, derisive approach is no more worthy of space in our paper than it ever was.

He speaks of the first volume of Antonina Kaptayeva's trilogy (the title, which doesn't seem of any importance to him, is "Ivan Ivanovich") being "castigated by critics" in 1952 but not any more. Very interesting, if true, but this didn't prevent the book being translated in Moscow into various languages, including English, and distributed throughout the world. I have a copy at hand. He describes it as "the love affairs of a divorced woman." He should write blurbs for pocket books!

We should not confuse things further by appearing to give credence to sources that will be hostile to the Soviet Union right up to the final edition on the last day they publish. The N. Y. Times has its place and so does the Daily Worker. The time is not yet ripe for a merger. When the Times prints something worthwhile, certainly there is no objection to a quotation, but knowingly to quote trash is beneath the dignity of our paper.

—Boston Public Gardens.

Robeson's Passport Case

Editor, Daily Worker:

May I have space to comment upon the heartening and gratifying manner in which the Daily immediately reacted to the U.S. Appellate Court's decision in the Paul Robeson passport case. That decision was sorely disappointing to lovers of constitutional procedure because it goes

far to undermine our traditional freedom of movement.

With the possible exception of the Post, none of the metropolitan dailies will editorialize upon this case. More reason why your comment should have that clarifying and penetrating quality which places the Robeson passport fight in correct perspective. I think your editorial comment lacking in some facts which will enable Negroes in particular to see this struggle waged by Paul Robeson as a continuation of their own struggle and of his more than a quarter century's fight for their rights and human dignity.

The Robeson passport fight is essentially a struggle to defend the constitutional liberties of all American citizens. Robeson selflessly linked this struggle to the constitutional right to travel of those who disagreed with policies of government, be they labor leaders, Communists, Negro rights fighters, or what have you. It is a free speech fight. He refused to sign an anti-Communist affidavit in order to secure his rights at the expense of others. It is a fight to keep the right to travel free from political entanglements. Robeson refused to say that he would not describe the nature of the struggle of his people against lynch justice in Mississippi and constitutional violations in Montgomery, Ala. to the peoples of the world who are seeking human dignity for all. It is a Negro liberation fight.

Your editorial speaks of the McCarthy iron curtain which locks him in. True, but too vague to bring his stature or the meaning of the passport fight forth. Few Negroes, especially in the South will see in that phrase the relation of Paul Robeson's struggle to their right to vote in Mississippi, or to ride a bus with quiet dignity in Florida and Alabama. They must be shown that it bears that relationship. Because Robeson will not hide the indignities heaped upon them nor conceal the powerful monopolists and bankers behind the White Citizens Council he cannot travel. Those men whose centuries old oppression of the Negro has been so destructive of national morality and damaging to our political prestige are afraid that Robeson in Western Europe and in the East would expose more glaringly their moral bankruptcy and the terrible threats inherent in their H-bomb tests.

The Robeson passport fight is just beginning. The voice of Robeson must be heard throughout the world.

WILLIAM L. PATTERSON.

On a New Mass Party

PHILADELPHIA

Editor, Daily Worker:

We should like to comment on the last sentence of the editorial of June 7 which was reprinted in The Worker of Sunday, June 10. The sentence reads, "We believe that the situation calls for an all-out effort and cooperation of all socialist-minded forces in order to bring about such a new party without unnecessary delay, and as quickly as circumstances will permit."

Without commenting on the rest of the tenor of the editorial, which in our opinion takes on an almost pro-Soviet flavor, because it fails to recognize the great achievements of the Soviet people in spite of the crimes and errors committed, we would like to deal with the way the editors of the paper approach the American party and the American scene.

Since the DW has for long years been an authoritative voice of the Left and since the editor of the paper is part of the National leadership of the Communist Party, we believe that the editorial policy and statements must reflect a careful thinking and formulation. We disagree with the last sentence quoted above for the following reasons:

1—The paper speaks of a new socialist party with a finality which it has no right to when this point has as yet not been discussed by the party membership and adopted by a party national convention. Is it not about time that some sections of our party leadership learn the necessity of careful consultation with the membership and full discussion with the membership before finalizing policy.

2—We feel that the editorial will tend to encourage liquidationist tendencies within the party.

3—The almost "guilt complex" that characterizes the whole editorial negates the important contribution that the party has made in the last 10 years in spite of the serious errors which we have committed both in policy and tactics.

4—The editorial indicates an impatience with the level of development of the American working class, particularly as it relates to socialist currents within the working class.

5—Lastly, the editorial fails to deal with how to effect this development to a new party of socialism based upon the working class. We support the outlook for a "new mass party of socialism in our country," but such a development, we feel, can only take place if the party membership is mobilized to the job of building socialist currents within the ranks of the working class.

ANN and JACK.

Miss Strong's Lecture

Editor, Daily Worker:

I came away from the Anna Louise Strong lecture on Tuesday night with a number of misgivings. Unfortunately, I don't think my feelings are shared by most of her audience.

First of all her lecture was advertised as a discussion of the recent developments inside the Soviet Union. However, I found myself listening impatiently to a long dissertation on international geopolitics.

Finally, she got to the purpose of the meeting. And I was dismayed. Not one word of criticism of herself did she offer, but defended her action in not crying out about the horrible things that happened in the Soviet Union in the past number of years. Her comment was merely that she felt these "excesses" were not terribly important, or rather they were not of prime importance since this great nation was on the path of socialism.

The feeling one got from Miss Strong's remarks were that these atrocities (and that is what they were) were really not so bad. In addition, she said that she didn't know all of the things that were happening. Of course she didn't. Nobody did, I think. But she knew enough to raise her voice in protest.

She told a story about one of her close friends being exiled, completely unjustly, and yet she says she didn't know. She spoke of the murder of the Jewish writers, and yet she says she didn't know. She saw the decimation of Jewish culture, and yet she says she didn't know.

Not only did she justify her actions, but she said that it was not right to evaluate the situation there because we did not yet have the correct historical perspective. In other words, we must wait 10 or 15 or 240 years before we may subject the USSR to close scrutiny on these sore points. This, to me, is a real opportunist position.

A question was asked during the discussion period which said in effect: How can we say that the Soviet Union is a truly socialist state, as Miss Strong did, if there was absolutely no manifestation of socialist democracy, a prerequisite of socialism? Miss Strong didn't really answer the question. She equated the Soviet situation with a lack of democracy in the United States. Do we then, she asked, say that this country is not a democracy? I think the analogy is very poorly drawn. And besides, the discussion was around the Soviet Union, not the U.S.

—P.D.A.