

COMBAT  
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REDS AND FRIENDS HONOR STAKHANOVITE WORKER: Friends and servants of the Soviet Union gathered Feb. 28 in New York's Roosevelt Hotel to honor Jessica Smith (Mrs. John Abt) on her 75th birthday and on the occasion of her 35th year as editor of New World Review (formerly Soviet Russia Today). A COMBAT correspondent attended: "There were a few more than 700 present at this meeting, a promotion of the National Council of American-Soviet Friendship, which has been named as a Communist front by a couple of Attorneys General and a couple of committees Congressional. Jessica and her husband, John Abt, were deeply embedded in the testimony of Whittaker Chambers and others regarding Soviet espionage and underground CP activities in Washington in the 30's. No one could possibly have misunderstood the nature of this meeting. The national chairman of the CPUSA, Henry Winston, was one of the main speakers. Conspicuously present wearing a fashionable raspberry-colored (Red October?) shirt was Gus Hall, the only non-foreign guest introduced.

"Toastmaster was attorney Joseph Forer, who apologized that his Washington office was 'just two blocks from that haven for war criminals, the White House.' He introduced the special guests up front: the chiefs (ambassadors) or deputy chiefs of the USSR Mission to the UN, the Ukrainian Mission, the Byelorussian Mission (i.e., Moscow's three votes at the UN), the Hungarian, Rumanian and Czechoslovakian missions, and the first secretary of the Cuban UN Mission (wildly enthusiastic standing ovation). Speakers included: Dr. Edward K. Barsky of Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade who talked about fascism, and Constance Berkley who read some of her free verse (previously published in the CP-line magazine Freedomways). The *avant garde* material, with its reference to wombs, membranes, umbilicals and whatnot turned off the aging and essentially bourgeois gathering. Rev. William Morford, the figurehead boss at NCASF, toasted his comrade, Jessica Smith Abt, but ended up burning himself. He tried to be verbally cute, but was simply inept. 'When you reach 75,' he said, 'you are very old' (gasps of astonishment, shouts of 'no, no' and 'how could you?' from audience, most of whom were in 60-70 bracket). Morford plunged on: 'When you look at Jessica the first thing you notice is that she has a very wrinkled face' (more gasps, mutterings, restlessness). Morford went on to personally opine what 'wrinkles are beautiful' but he had irretrievably convinced his audience he was a plain boor. John Abt spoke, mentioning that the USSR is supplying the majority of foreign aid to North Korea and the National Liberation Front (VC), and that he and Jessica and New World Review are a *menage a trois*. Judy Edelman thanked Jessica on behalf of the Young Workers Liberation League, the new CP youth group. Blind Henry Winston, CP chairman, described by Forer as 'a man of vision,' gave an extemporaneous recital of cliches. Corliss Lamont delivered a stemwinder denouncing the United States and praising the Soviet Union. Then Miss Smith spoke, recounted her 49-year love affair with the Soviet Union, and cried a lot (John Abt had said she was a weeper).

"At one point Joe Forer said, 'Will all agents of the FBI, the CIA, military and naval intelligence please stand up and be recognized.' We all laughed at this. I wished he had added: 'And now, all those from the KGB and the GRU.' There'd have been a lot of chairs pushed back. George B. Murphy, Jr., of the Baltimore Afro-American and once a chief aide to Henry Wallace in the old Progressive Party, gave a strong pitch for funds in the middle of this meeting: he raised several thousand dollars with this harangue (which disturbed the Russians, but allowed most everyone else to visit). Corliss Lamont gave \$1,000. Toshi and Pete Seeger sent the group regrets; they'll be at the next meet. Norma Becker of the Fifth Avenue Peace Parade Committee was seated at the head table -- this should answer the question, Where Does Norma Stand? Jane Benedict of Metropolitan Council on Housing was an enthusiastic applauder. Mike Zagarell of YWLL was handling security. Beatrice Rippey sang some songs; accompanied by her husband, Carroll Hollister (they're leaving for East Germany on tour). About my expenses: it was \$6.50 for 'brunch' (one sandwich, one sweet roll, two cups of coffee) plus another \$2 donation to meet the deficit. My prediction: Rev. Morford won't make the Soviet diplomatic service."

MORI/CDF

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