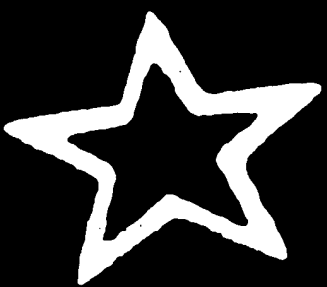


ARTICLE APPEARED  
ON PAGE 1-D

WASHINGTON TIMES  
11 October 1985

**ARNOLD BEICHMAN**

# SOVIET



# UTOPIA?



Continued

**T**here exists today a utopian land where rarely is heard a discouraging word, the kind of word you can hear and read day and night in the other 160 countries in the world.

Day after day, we hear and see tragic events in South Africa. Television cameramen and foreign correspondents are there night and day to record the war between Afrikaner and Bantu.

Day after day, we hear and see reports of unhappy events from all over the United States. And we berate ourselves for our failures.

Day after day, we hear and see reports of Britain's failures under Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, how her government is about to impose a fascist regime over a brave labor leader, Arthur Scargill.

Day after day, we hear and see reports of terror bombings in Christian and Moslem areas of Lebanon, kidnappings, airplane hijackings. And we remember the U.S. Marines.

Day after day, we hear the awful reports of the unending war between Iran and Iraq and the battlefield slaughter of pubescent Iranian martyrs.

Day after day we see the pinched faces of the starving children of Africa, and the overcrowded Southeast Asian refugee camps in Thailand.

Day after day, we hear and see reports of awful happenings in the Philippines; in Chile and the rest of Latin America; in El Salvador and the rest of Central America; and in Asia, Africa, Western Europe, the Americas, Australia, and New Zealand. We look at the events and then at the crumbling of our lofty humanitarian standards. The relentless nightly exposure of our characterological deficiencies by the Holy Three — Dan Rather, Peter Jennings, and Tom Brokaw — persuades us of our failure to live up to those standards.

We are embarrassed when our adversaries scoff at the pride we take in our politico-economic system. We bow our heads when our adversaries cite as documentation for the contemptible deficiencies of our democracy the Op-Ed writings of our Marxist academics and the editorial pages of our most powerful journals. We question whether our life-support systems are durable enough to survive so many blows against the legitimacy of our democracy, so many questions about its honor and decency. We study opinion polls about ourselves closely and worry about the "confidence gap."

There is only one country in the world today that has no problems, no confrontations, no confidence gap, no inner systematic contradictions, no questions about its legitimacy. That country is the Soviet Union. Rarely do you read or hear anything unpleasant in the Western media about the Soviet Union. If something nasty is said about the Soviet Union, it's usually some embarrassingly strident rhetoric by President Reagan and his unpardonable bellicosity.

And if the Soviet Union occasionally does do something that looks bad like, say, shooting down an unarmed passenger plane, then there is *The New York Times's* Tom Wicker to explain that the United States was really responsible for the

destruction of KAL 007. And so once more the Soviet Union becomes a haven of peace.

**N**ow and then one reads something about Afghanistan, but since free journalists are forbidden entry to the battlefield on the Soviet side and there are too few editors encouraging journalists to cover the war on the Afghan mujahideen side, the Afghanistan story will soon disappear as a news event worthy of nightly reporting on television, such as hunger in America, tax loopholes for the rich, police brutality in the Midwest, and

outhouses for enslaved Southern sharecroppers.

Mikhail Gorbachev, unlike our president, never affords our journalists what are called "photo opportunities." So there are no awful photos of napalmed Afghan children, as in the good old days of Vietnam.

Think hard: when was the last time you read or saw a story dealing with the lack of decent housing in the U.S.S.R.? How could you, when

obviously there is no housing problem in the Soviet Union?

When was the last time you read or saw a story dealing with the inferior quality of Soviet medical care for infants, children, and grown-ups? How could you, when the public health problems which did exist a few years ago have by now disappeared into a statistical limbo?

**W**hen was the last time you read or saw a story dealing with KGB torture of Soviet dissidents, with Soviet punitive psychiatry and pharmacology? How could you, when there seem to be no such cases reported in the Western media?

When was the last time you read

coverage of a trial in Moscow, say, of a corrupt official about to be sentenced to death for "economic crimes"? Or read an interview with him in which he exposed fellow officials as corrupt? Or in which he defended himself against the Soviet system?

**W**hen was the last time you read or saw an interview in the Soviet Union with a dissident, a refusenik who spoke about life in the U.S.S.R. with the same freedom as Angela Davis, that heroine of the left, recently spoke in the Soviet press about the collapse of civil liberties in America?

When last did you read or see a story with a Moscow dateline about KGB barbarities and, in compari-

son, how many stories with Washington, London, or Paris datelines have you read about the awful violations of law and custom by the CIA, MI-5 and MI-6, and the French DST?

When was the last time you heard of "assorted bravos of the media," in Norman Mailer's phrase, asking the same put-'em-on-the-spot questions of Soviet leaders which their fellow Washington correspondents ask of President Reagan and his aides?

Where, oh, where is the Sam Donaldson of the Moscow press corps? Why doesn't Sam Donaldson try out his driving passion for truth in Moscow? Sam worried himself silly about President Reagan's nose pimple. Is he ever going to get a chance to ask Mr. Gorbachev about the Soviet leader's cranial birthmark?

Will Pravda ever publish as glowing and doting an interview with President Reagan as *Time* magazine did with Mikhail Gorbachev?

Perhaps it's time to say aloud what has been a secret for too long:

The Western world has for almost seven decades been victimized by the Snow Job of the Century, one in which our own media have participated, unwillingly perhaps, but participated nevertheless. They and media management have partici-

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pated not as gullible fellow-travelers, which they are not, but as willing victims of the most successful censorship and news management system the world is rarely told about.

The Soviet Union declines to allow foreign correspondents access to Andrei Sakharov? Then Andrei Sakharov no longer exists, unlike Nelson Mandela, who does exist. If the Soviet Union bars access to dissidents like Shcharansky, then there are no other sources.

If the Soviet Union bars access to "whistle-blowers," then there are no "whistle-blowers." If the Soviet Union bars Western correspondents access to Afghan battlefields, while Western correspondents have access to battlefields in Central America, then there are no confirmed atrocities in Soviet Afghanistan, while other reported atrocities are fairy tales, like beehive feces raining down from the desert air.

But there are lots of atrocities by "contras" in Nicaragua and government troops in El Salvador in the news, and with film clips.

**T**he result? A Soviet utopia, led by *un chevalier sans peur et sans reproche*, who goes out to the Soviet masses in person and talks to them about their problems just like the Little White Father back a century ago used to do. And that's the story from the Soviet Utopia, the Little White Father chatting amiably with liberated workers and peasants.

Is there another side to the story? Are there liberated workers and peasants, say, in the Ukraine? Are there forced labor camps? What foreign correspondent would dare ask that question or go off to seek the answer in Kiev, or Minsk, or Siberia without permission from the KGB?

As Jean-Francois Revel has written:

"The distinctive mark of our century is the humility with which democratic civilization agrees to disappear and works to legitimize the victory of its mortal enemy."

*Arnold Beichman, a former foreign correspondent, is a visiting scholar at the Hoover Institution.*