

# The Washington Scene

## The Critical Question

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Washington

One of the most critical questions of these days, no doubt, is whether the stir and change under way in the Soviet Union will humanize and individualize and deindoctrinate Soviet thought processes. Indeed, whether the Soviet mentality can accept some of that mental liberation which the centuries of Hebrew-Greek-Roman reformation history have brought to the West.

And thus whether the Communist ideology and the Czarist aggressive instincts will be tempered and this colossus known as the U.S.S.R. will join more cooperatively and temperately in humanity's global partnership.

A good deal depends on Soviet youth and the impact of the Soviet educational process on Soviet youth. Latest reports from Moscow say that by 1960 virtually all young people will be in school through the age of 17—a larger showing than in the United States certainly. The Soviet curriculum will permit no elective subjects. All will receive the same education to that point, and it will include indoctrination on the superiority of the Soviet-Communist system. Soviet history books examined recently give little credit to the Western armies in the defeat of Hitler, for instance.

When a group of Washington newsmen discussed this spreading of Soviet education with former Senator William Benton of Connecticut, who has served Washington extensively in the field of psychological warfare, he expressed some doubt about the liberalizing impact of this training.

On the other hand, Allen W. Dulles, director of the Central Intelligence Agency, finds a measure of genuine hope in this spread or intensification of Soviet educational, thinking processes. Succinctly he says: "Education educates." He believes the newer Soviet generations will have expanded critical faculties and more independence of mind, particularly in the more favored "managerial class."

The theory, of course, is that more independent thinking its rulers cannot undertake

desperate stratagems and tary systems in India, Burma, sneak attacks, checks and balances develop, and the popular will must be consulted.

Will this freeing of the thought processes happen in the Soviet Union and make the U.S.S.R. a better neighbor eventually? Or will the U.S.S.R. continue to be menacing and aggressive anyway because of chauvinism and demagogic tendencies in the popular mind even when slightly democratized?

Perhaps we can get at the basic answer here if we see the world struggle through the centuries—largely in terms of the gradual attain-

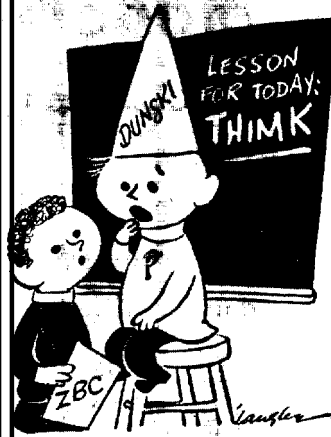
and elsewhere has brought higher concepts of the value of the individual. He has new rights, including the crucial right of self-government.

What about the Soviet Union? It is encouraging that the members of the new Soviet rulership, unlike Stalin and unlike Adolf Hitler, have shown themselves susceptible to the human process of reasoning things out. Any normal amount of reasoning would have shown Hitler that his dream of world conquest was impossible. Stalin rejected reason to maintain that atomic war would destroy only the capitalist system. The new Soviet hierarchy accepts reason sufficiently to admit that atomic war could destroy all civilization, communistic included. To a degree, then, reason has tempered the impact of Communist dogma on their thinking.

Reason, we may understand, is a very active, indeed the most active, human faculty. A great deal undoubtedly will depend on the amount of reasoning the Soviet educational system permits. Allen Dulles undoubtedly would hold that if questioning and discussion are permitted in realms of chemistry and electronics, these thought processes will spill over into social and political theory eventually.

The other argument is that education can be sufficiently blindered and compartmentalized and the human mind sufficiently indoctrinated so that the individual does not use his natural reasoning processes to the full. Nor have sufficient facts from which to reason. In short, that people can be reared and made to go about in a state of semiindividuality, their true selves partially obliterated, their critical and reasoning faculties in a state of partially suspended animation.

Whether the Soviet rulership wishes to or can maintain this state of semiindividuality among its subjects is perhaps the \$64,000 question. Perhaps it will try. Or perhaps Soviet youth and Soviet thought will be caught up in the questing, humanistic, individualistic drive to know and to strive and to improve ones for which surges today through the world's mental currents.



Teacher Said My Thoughts Have Been Straying in a Westerly Direction'

ment of an improved concept of man's inviolable individuality as the child of God. Through struggle and progress, the true concept of individual man is gradually dawning on humanity.

President Eisenhower has not hold of this concept, as when in his 1955 State of the Union message he defined the true nature of the struggle now taking place in the world." He said: "At issue is the true nature of man. Either man is the creature whom the Psalmist described as 'a little lower than the angels,' crowned with glory and honor, holding 'dominion over the works' of his Creator: or man is a soulless, animated machine to be enslaved, used, and consumed by the state for its own glorification."

This gradual unveiling of man's true nature has not always come through formal religion. Though in the Asian religions individual worth is not always glorified, acceptance of Western parliamen-