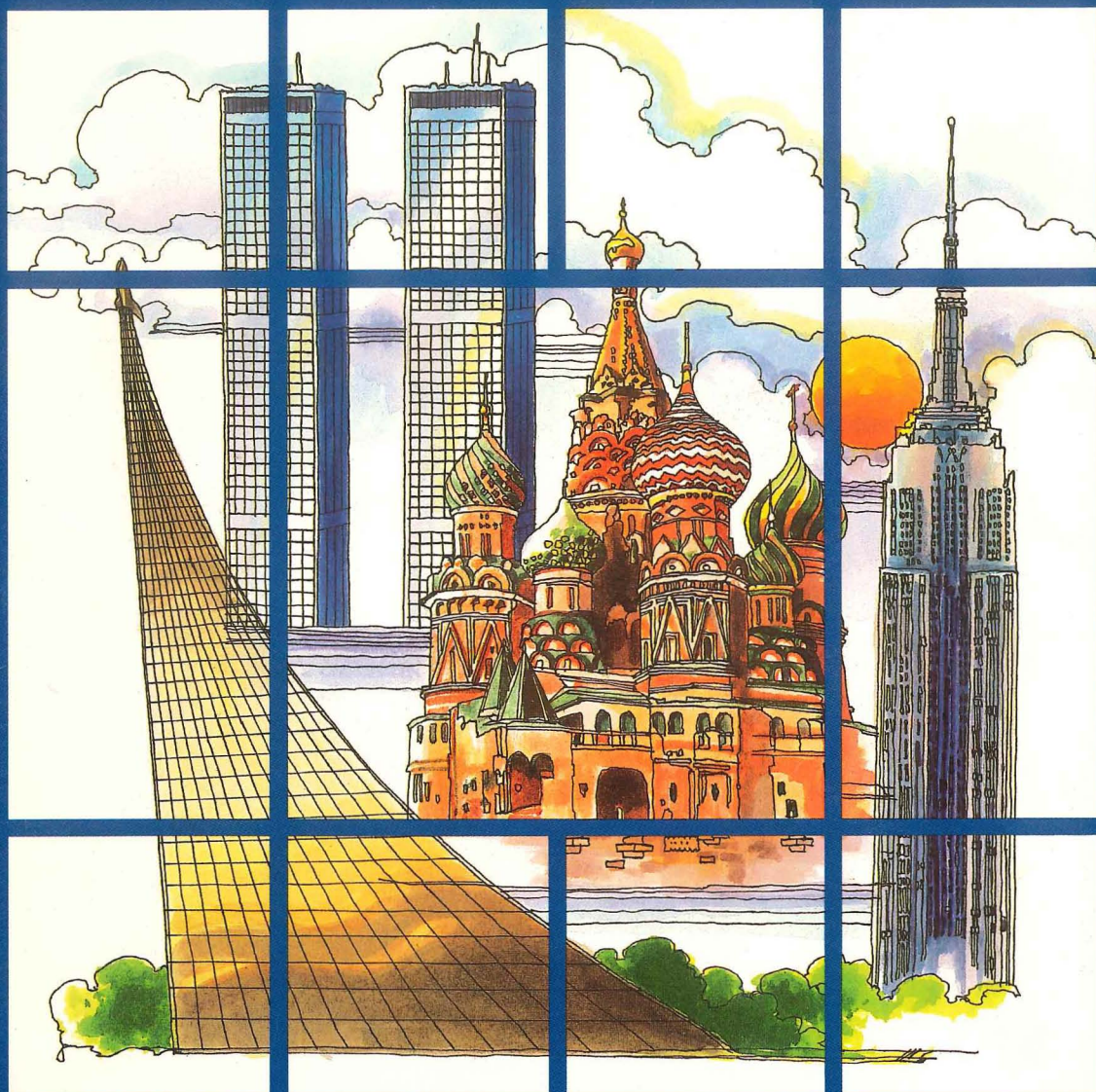


Fall 1986 \$3.50

KETTERING REVIEW



A journal of ideas and activities dedicated
to improving the quality of public life in
the American democracy

Proving the Experts Wrong



A Profile of Norman Cousins

by
*Gale
Warner*

On October 22, 1962, a dozen Americans and a dozen Soviets gathered around a television set in the lounge of a New England preparatory school. Some stood quietly, their arms folded; some sat; some paced back and forth. Everyone's face wore the same expression of somber concern. Forgotten were the high-spirited jokes and first steps toward friendship during their ride to Andover; forgotten were the shopping sprees in New York City and the visit to a restored colonial village. All that mattered at that moment were President Kennedy's words as he announced to the world that he had ordered the U.S. Navy to block all Soviet military shipments to Cuba in order to force the Soviet Union to remove nuclear missiles from Cuban soil.

The Americans and Soviets in the room — government advisers, journalists, diplomatic scholars, and influential private citizens — did not need to be told that nuclear war was now an imminent possibility. Events that were out of their control, that indeed seemed to be out of even President Kennedy's and Chairman Khrushchev's control, could at any moment convert their friendly, informal meeting into a divided camp of official enemies. Never had the terrifying absurdity of the enmity they had gathered to address seemed so painfully clear. Never had the importance of what they were trying to do become so poignantly vivid.

After President Kennedy's address had concluded, the chairman of the Soviet delegation, scientist Evgeny Fedorov, rose slowly from his chair and asked the chairman of the American delegation, Norman Cousins, if he would excuse the

Soviet group for a few minutes. Cousins readily agreed, mindful that the Cuban ultimatum had placed the Soviets attending the informal citizens' conference in a bizarre position. If war were to break out, the Soviets were on enemy soil and would probably be imprisoned — if, that is, the war lasted long enough to make this an issue. Cousins decided that if the Soviets wished to call off the conference and head for home while they could, the Americans would agree. But he hoped that they would want to stay. As the only group of private citizens from the two countries meeting during the crisis, perhaps they could contribute to its resolution.

A half-hour later, Fedorov returned with the worried-looking Soviets. He had called the Soviet embassy in Washington, he said, and received encouragement to continue with the conference. "Gentlemen, we are in your hands," he said, extending his arms. "If you wish to proceed with the conference, we will stay. If not, we will leave."

Norman Cousins turned to the American delegates and asked for a show of hands of those who wished to continue. Every hand went up. "Very well," said Fedorov, "we will stay." He asked Cousins for the floor. For the next 30 minutes Fedorov meticulously defended the Soviet emplacement of missiles in Cuba, arguing that they were a necessary deterrent to the United States' imminent military invasion of Cuba. The Americans asked questions and made their own points no less candidly. The discussions became heated but never acrimonious — everyone understood that the stakes were too high for mere point-scoring. Everyone struggled to see the other's point of view. Everyone

realized that what was needed was resolution and agreement, not a hollow "victory" in debate.

Citizens in World Affairs

Cousins remembers that even as the crisis deepened and the ideological gulf between the delegates widened, the personal rapport between the Soviets and Americans grew stronger. The conference was no longer a polite and gentlemanly tete-a-tete on long-term problems; it was a round-the-clock attempt to grapple with immediate life-and-death issues. "The effect was not one of intensified hostility; quite the contrary, a mood of heightened awareness and responsibility predominated," wrote Cousins afterwards. By the end of the week, "it was possible to be forthright without being caustic, impassioned without being abusive, severe without being cutting." The Andover conference was a dramatic confirmation of Cousins' notion that private citizens, working face-to-face in off-the-road settings, might be able to resolve some of the issues that persistently become stymied in official diplomatic negotiations.

For most of his adult life, Norman Cousins, author, editor, humanist, lecturer, activist, and private ambassador for three U.S. Presidents, has been advocating by word and by deed an enlarged role for citizens in foreign affairs. He initiated and has since served as chairman for a series of private, off-the-record, informal bilateral talks between prominent Soviet and American citizens known as the Dartmouth Conferences. Beginning in 1960, the Dartmouth Conferences have spanned the entire gamut of recent Soviet-Ameri-

can relations, including the warming trend of the late 1950s, the U-2 crisis, the Berlin crisis, the Cuban missile crisis, Vietnam, Czechoslovakia, the era of detente, the Middle East wars, Afghanistan, Poland, the neo-Cold War of the early 1980s, and

The effect was not one of intensified hostility; quite the contrary, a mood of heightened awareness and responsibility predominated. It was possible to be forthright without being caustic, impassioned without being abusive, severe without being cutting.

the 1985 Geneva Summit. Among the American participants have been prominent leaders in the business, academic, diplomatic, scientific, and artistic fields, including George Kennan, Donald Kendall, James Michener, Patricia Harris, David Rockefeller, Paul Dudley White, John Kenneth Galbraith, Zbigniew Brzezinski, Margaret Mead, and Paul Warnke.

Although it is inherently tricky to try to assess the impact of off-the-road events, the Dartmouth Conferences have, according to Cousins, "scouted the ground" for agreement on questions such as a ban on nuclear testing, an enlarged cultural exchange, airline connections, broadening of trade, a copyright agreement, and details of arms control treaties. But perhaps their most important accomplishment is that they have been held at all. When official negotiations have broken down or been reduced to shouting matches, the Dartmouth Conferences have kept a "back

channel" alive for Americans and Soviets to seek common ground, understand fully the reasoning behind the other's position, and avoid the misassessments and miscalculations that lead to crises.

As the editor of the influential magazine *Saturday Review* for 35 years, Cousins wrote hundreds of editorials and essays calling for public support for moves toward a strengthened United Nations and the creation of a world order and world law which would allow nations to resolve their disputes in some way other than war. His message has been updated, rephrased and refined, but it has not, in essence, changed in nearly 40 years. Through his writings comes a crisp, strong, yet moderated and reasonable voice, pitched in a consistent tone of rationality and compassion. He never shouts. He never whispers.

Curing Body and Mind

In recent years Norman Cousins has also become a prophet for a different kind of citizens' movement. In 1964 he was stricken with a serious collagen disease, a form of rheumatoid arthritis, that left him bedridden and in great pain. The experts said his chances of recovery were only about 1 in 500. Cousins did not argue with the diagnosis, but he refused to accept the verdict. In partnership with his physician, who was willing to try innovative approaches, Cousins began a self-treatment plan that included massive intravenous injections of Vitamin C and a steady diet of Marx Brothers movies and "Candid Camera" episodes. "I made the astounding discovery," he relates, "that ten solid minutes of belly laughter gave me two hours of pain-free sleep."



Cousins recovered completely, and more than a decade later wrote about his experiences in a book, *Anatomy of an Illness*, which quickly became a bestseller and established Cousins as a familiar figure on the talk-show and lecture circuit, expounding his beliefs that attitudes and emotions can affect the healing process. In 1981, he again managed to recover from a serious disease, a severe heart attack, and he refined his notions and principles of healing in a second book, *The Healing Heart*. His message that patients can take control of their own health and enter into a more active relationship with their physicians has gained far more popular attention than his message about citizens taking control of their own survival and entering into a more active relationship with their governmental leaders, an irony which has not been lost on him. "I take note of the fact that I have written a dozen or so books over the years on the ills of nations," he wrote recently. "All of them combined did not get the response that the account of a

personal bout with illness received."

Norman Cousins left the *Saturday Review* in 1978 to become an adjunct professor of medical humanities at the medical school of the University of California at Los Angeles, a post that allows him to lecture widely, write, and cooperate with UCLA scientists in attempting to establish a scientific basis for the theory that positive emotions — laughter, determination, hope — create physiological changes in the body that aid in the healing process. His present office is on the fifth floor of a huge, sterile building in the modern UCLA medical complex in Westwood. It seems an odd place to find a distinguished literary figure and political activist. Forty-five minutes after our appointment time, Cousins opens the door, grinning apologetically. "You've come to talk with me. I'm so sorry I've kept you waiting." His handshake is firm; his face very, very kind.

It's apparent that everything is behind schedule this morning. His secretary beseeches him to send a telegram to Soviet

Ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin about some urgent matter regarding the next Dartmouth Conference, the fifteenth in the series. Jet lagged from a long speaking tour on the East Coast, Cousins is moving

Far from banishing war, the atomic bomb will in itself constitute a cause of war. The slightest suspicion may start all the push buttons going.

slowly and tiredly. His voice is gravelly, and there are long pauses between his words; some are so soft and indistinct that the tape recorder does not pick them up. His eyes are red, and he rubs them often. We talk for perhaps 40 minutes about the Dartmouth Conferences and the current arms situation before another appointment calls him away, and we agree to speak again later.

The next day he is supposed to lead a day-long seminar called "Health Is How We Live Our Lives," at the nearby Veterans Administration Hospital. "Now don't you snitch on me," he confides as he leaves the office, "but I'm taking off between sessions to play tennis. I don't see any point in sitting *indoors* all day through a workshop on healthy living." As he leaves I wonder how this obviously feeble 70-year-old man will survive a grueling all-day seminar, much less hit a tennis ball.

Mind over Matter

The next day he has metamorphosed. Now I am the one rubbing my eyes, wondering if the agile, sprightly man who takes the podium is the same person I met

the day before. He leads off with a couple of jokes that send his 1,000-member audience into giggles, and then launches, without any notes, into an emphatic, superbly organized hour-and-a-half discourse on how patients can contribute to their own recoveries and how all of us have the power to program ourselves to greater health. His voice has changed timbre, lost all of its roughness, and at times becomes forceful, almost thundering. He speaks twice as quickly as he had the day before. A friend sitting next to me pokes me in disbelief, whispering, "He's 70?" I suddenly have no doubts that he will play five sets of tennis between this session and the next one, and that he will probably win.

An anecdote he tells about a visit to the cellist Pablo Casals sheds some light on his own transformation. He describes how the nearly 90-year-old Casals first entered his living room, bent, stiff, wheezing, with his fingers pitifully bent in clawlike shapes created by severe arthritis. When he reached the piano, Casals paused, sat down at the keyboard, and his deformed hands slowly "opened like beautiful morning glories." A moment later and Casals was playing a Brahms concerto with all the nuance and skill it required. When he finished he looked up at Cousins, who is himself an accomplished pianist and organist. Casals smiled and said, "Brahms for exercise; now Bach for the spirit," and launched into the Toccata and Fugue in D Minor. After playing this piece, Casals stood up straight, walked gracefully to the breakfast table, and for several hours seemed to be completely free of infirmities.

What playing a Bach fugue did for Casals, interacting with a thousand people

does for Cousins. For several hours he holds the audience's rapt attention, his hands making precise, confident gestures, his oval, impish face and alert brown eyes full of animation. He describes volunteering himself as a guinea pig for a pilot experiment to see if mental attitudes could, in the short term, affect the population of various blood cells that are important parts of the immune system. After the first blood sample was taken, he says, he spent five minutes "attempting to imagine what a wonderful world we would have if the United States and the Soviet Union had rational foreign policies." The audience interrupts with delighted applause and laughter.

"I tried to imagine all of the changes that could be brought about on our planet, and how it could be made safe and fit for human habitation, if we could just use a fraction of the \$750 billion a year that are now going to make the planet unsafe and unfit, release those resources for human good, and try to create a situation for genuine peace in the world — " he pauses and cracks a cherubic grin. "That was a very heady thought!" The doctors took a second blood sample, and the measurements showed that there was an average increase of 53 percent in the population of blood cells during those five minutes. "Now this has no standing in medical research; it's just a single case," Cousins went on, "but I don't come from Mars."

The vision that quickened his blood so effectively has been energizing him for most of his life. When as a 29-year-old magazine editor he first heard about the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima, he "couldn't have been hit harder than if a

report had just been flashed that an interstellar collision involving the earth was possible and likely," he later said. That night he began working on one of the most famous essays of the post-Atomic age, published in the *Saturday Review* a week later under the title "Modern Man Is Obsolete." Long before most had caught on, Cousins realized that the atomic bomb signified "the violent death of one age and the birth of another. . . . Man stumbles fitfully into a new age of atomic energy for which he is as ill equipped to accept its potential blessings as he is to counteract or control its present dangers."

His predictions are eerie to read in retrospect, considering that in August 1945 the overwhelming majority of Americans believed that the atomic bomb was the technological savior that would not only end the current war, but all wars. "Far from banishing war, the atomic bomb will in itself constitute a cause of war," Cousins warned. "In the absence of world control as part of world government, it will create universal fear and suspicion. Each nation will live nervously from one moment to the next, not knowing whether the designs or ambitions of other nations might prompt them to attempt a lightning blow of obliteration. . . . Since the science of warfare will no longer be dependent upon armies but will be waged by push buttons, . . . the slightest suspicion may start all the push buttons going."

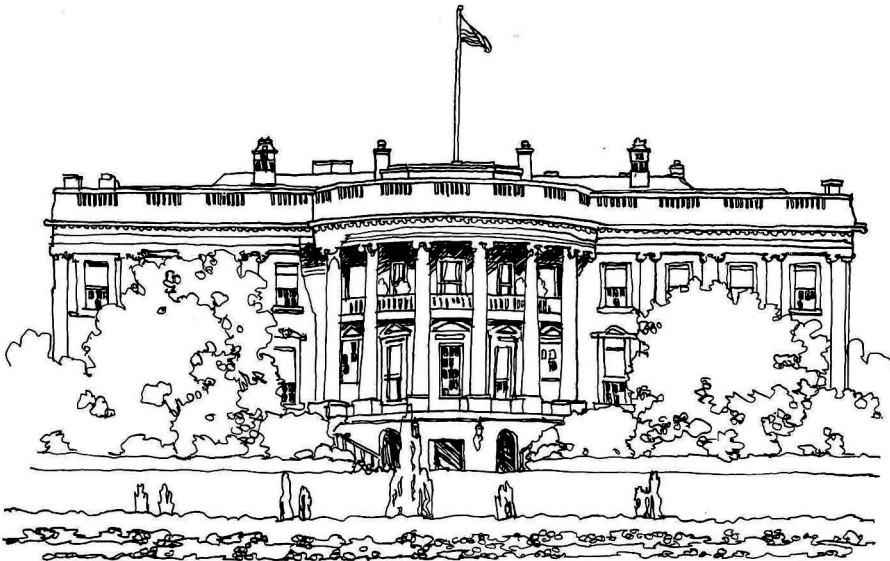
War against Life

The actions of ordinary individual citizens, he believed, were the main hope. In a brilliant, pointed essay called "Checklist of Enemies" in 1957, Cousins wrote that "The

enemy is a man who not only believes in his own helplessness but actually worships it. His main article of faith is that there are mammoth forces at work which the individual cannot possibly comprehend, much less alter or direct.... The enemy is a man who has a total willingness to delegate his worries about the world to officialdom. He assumes that only the people in authority are in a position to know and act."

In 1956, Cousins was first shown data on the health effects of radioactive fallout by scientists at Washington University in St. Louis. He soon launched a campaign for a halt to nuclear testing in the pages of the *Saturday Review*, and went to the West African jungle clinic of Dr. Albert Schweitzer, the Nobel Peace Prize winner and revered humanitarian, to persuade him to speak out on the testing issue. Several months later, on April 24, 1957, Schweitzer issued his historic "Declaration of Conscience" calling on the nuclear powers to cease atmospheric nuclear testing.

"The danger facing us is unlike any danger that has ever existed," Cousins wrote in November 1957. "In our possession and in the possession of the Russians are more than enough nuclear explosives to put an end to the life of man on earth. Our approach to the danger is unequal to the danger.... The slogans and arguments that are part of a world of competitive national sovereignties, a world of plot and counterplot, no longer fit the world of today or tomorrow. The main need today is to find some way of making the planet safe for human life. Man has natural rights that transcend the rights of nations. He has a right to live and to grow, to breathe unpoisoned air, to work uncontaminated soil.... If what nations are doing has the effect of upsetting the delicate balances on which life depends, fouling the air, devitalizing the foods, and tampering with the genetic integrity of man himself — then it becomes necessary for people to restrain and tame the nations."



In 1958 the Soviet Union proposed an informal moratorium on nuclear weapons tests, and the United States followed suit. Negotiations for a comprehensive test ban treaty were soon under way. But Cousins was impatient at the slow progress of the negotiations. He insisted that "there is no point in talking about the possibility of war breaking out. The war is already being fought. It is being waged by national sovereignties against human life. . . . What the world needs today are two billion angry men who will make it clear to their national leaders that the earth does not exist for the purpose of being a stage for the total destruction of man. . . . Our security depends on control of force rather than on the pursuit of force. It is not enough for the governments to recognize this. The citizen must recognize it, give it priority over his personal affairs, and create the kind of mandate that can give leadership to leaders."

It was at this point that President Dwight Eisenhower, who had signed a cultural exchange agreement with Chairman Khrushchev in 1958, wondered aloud to Cousins whether "people-to-people" contacts aimed at generally improving Soviet-American understanding could also have a direct impact on negotiations on a governmental level.

Eisenhower was all too aware of how easy it was for official negotiations to become stymied over trivial details, because of the tendency for each side to view any retreat from an initial position as a sign of weakness. This was clearly happening in the case of the nuclear test ban negotiations. Would it be possible, Cousins and Eisenhower mused, for a small group

of private citizens who had the confidence and ear of their respective governments, but who could act freely as individuals in exploring areas for agreement without commitment or publicity, to succeed where the official diplomats were failing?

What the world needs today are two billion angry men who will make it clear to their national leaders that the earth does not exist for the purpose of being a stage for the total destruction of man.

As it happened, Cousins had been asked by the State Department to accept a Soviet invitation to lecture in the Soviet Union in 1959 under the terms of the fledgling exchange agreement. Cousins informed the Soviet government that he was only interested in coming if he could speak his mind, and that they ought to know that he had actively protested the Soviet suppression of the Hungarian revolt in 1956 and been a loud spokesman for "distinguishing between a true campaign for peace and propagandist activities designed to advance the interests of the Soviet Union." He also specified that he be allowed to speak about the problems in U.S.-Soviet relations and the concept of the "natural rights of man" as reflected in the U.S. Constitution. The Soviets replied that the invitation still stood. Cousins went on a five-week tour and, with Eisenhower's unofficial blessing, proposed to the Presidium of the Soviet Peace Committee the notion of holding a small citizen's conference to "see whether, on a nonpolitical basis, we might

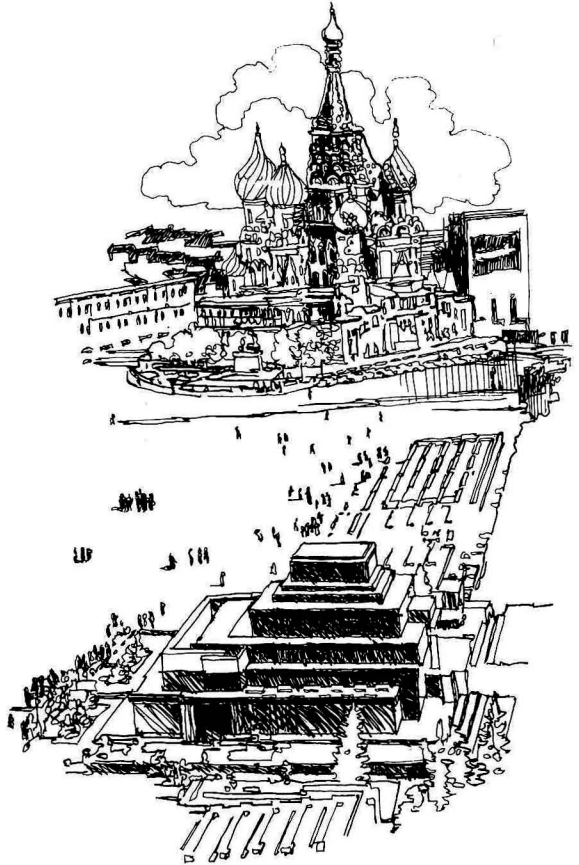
indicate some approaches to meaningful agreement.”

A Warmer World

Cousins told the Peace Committee that, a few days before, a Moscow traffic policeman, discovering that he was an American, had given him a warm bear hug on the street. “This incident made a strong impression on me,” he remarked. “I have been in many countries of the world, but never before have I been embraced, affectionately or otherwise, by a policeman.” The policeman had been one of the Soviet soldiers who had met the American soldiers at the Elbe River at the end of World War II, and Cousins became, as he put it, “the beneficiary of his warm recollections.”

Cousins was also surprised by many aspects of Soviet society, such as savings accounts, private produce markets, well-attended churches, and apartments that could be owned rather than simply rented, which he had not expected to find in a Communist system. Most of all, he told the committee, he was impressed by the genuine attitude of friendliness and the desire for peace that he encountered among the people that he met. He asked them to believe that the same goodwill and desire for peace was prevalent in the United States. Yet, he said, “this has not been enough to create peace. Why?”

Cousins then candidly told the Peace Committee why the American people are fearful and suspicious of the Soviet government, asking them not “necessarily to agree that those feelings are correct, but merely to consider that those feelings exist, and what are the reasons and causes behind them.”



The question-and-answer period was polite, and the Soviets’ response to his idea of a private citizens’ conference was muted — perhaps because they were still a little in shock from his candor. Several months went by. Then, in November 1959, the leaders of the Soviet Peace Committee, author Nikolai Tikhonov and journalist Mikhail Kotov, sent him a detailed three-page letter that is marked in Cousins’s files with a red star. “It has become warmer in the world. The ice of the cold war is melting,” wrote the Soviets, who mentioned

Khrushchev's American visit in the fall of 1959, the Camp David talks, and the impending visit of Eisenhower to the Soviet Union. "Direct friendly contacts should be established between public representatives of our countries in the interest of rapprochement between the USA and the Soviet Union, in the interest of universal peace. . . . Aware of your prestige and the influence you enjoy in the U.S. public circles, we would like to make a counter-proposal: Why not arrange a Soviet-American meeting as soon as possible?" Cousins, elated, scribbled two exclamation points in red pencil next to the question.

While the Soviet Peace Committee originally envisioned a meeting between their members and directors of various U.S. peace organizations, Cousins successfully persuaded them that the conference would have more impact if organizational ties were de-emphasized and the individual stature of the participants highlighted instead. Within a few months Cousins had put together a blue-ribbon collection of eminent American businessmen, lawyers, artists, and former diplomats. The Soviets responded with a similar collection of *who's who*. The president of Dartmouth College, John Dickey, offered his campus as a secluded, quiet environment where the delegates could avoid publicity and reporters; hence the name "Dartmouth Conference," which not only stuck to this original gathering but also to all subsequent ones wherever they were held — in the U.S. or Soviet Union. After numerous last-minute delays, the conferees gathered at Dartmouth on October 29, 1960.

Forty years of nearly complete isolation between Soviets and Americans and fifteen years of the Cold War had taken its toll; it took several days, wrote Cousins later, for the "strangeness" to wear off and for the participants to look at each other as human beings rather than stereotypes. "Inadvertently, almost instinctively, the participants found themselves arranged in two 'lineups' confronting each other across a chasm of xenophobia and ideological estrangement," he wrote.

Cousins later characterized the overall tone of the meetings as nonaccusative and nonpolemical, and as the days went by, the participants "worked out a syntax, a grammar, even a rhetoric of communication on otherwise inflammatory issues." George Kennan remarked that in two decades of diplomatic service in the Soviet Union he had not had as many frank, freewheeling discussions with intelligent and well-informed Soviet citizens as he had had during those few days at Dartmouth. Both sides agreed that this unique dialogue should be continued and strengthened, and the Soviet delegation invited the Americans to come to the Crimea the following spring for a second conference. "Major positions were not altered — there were no expectations in that direction," wrote Cousins, "but human relationships were established. Each position had the name of a man attached to it — someone who would sit next to you at the breakfast table, enjoy a stroll with you on the campus."

A Pope, Premier, and President

Following the dramatic third Dartmouth Conference at Andover in 1962, Cousins became swept up in a dizzying

series of private international diplomatic missions, all lucidly recorded in his book, *The Improbable Triumvirate*. Through an odd combination of circumstances, he found himself shuttling critical messages between President John F. Kennedy, Pope John XXIII, and Premier Nikita Khrushchev during a six-month period.

Cousins flew to Rome on December 1, 1962, and was briefed by Vatican officials, who recommended that he discuss steps that the Soviets could take to improve conditions for religious worship within the country. They also suggested that the release of Archbishop Josef Slipyi, who had been imprisoned for 17 years under charges of cooperating with the Nazis, would be an appropriate gesture of Soviet goodwill toward the Church. Cousins then flew to Moscow and met privately with Khrushchev for more than three hours.

They spoke of the Cuban missile crisis and the pressures Khrushchev was under within the Communist world for appearing to have “appeased” the “paper tiger” of

about what could happen to my country — or your country and all the other countries that would be devastated by a nuclear war. If being frightened meant that I helped avert such insanity, then I’m glad I was frightened. One of the problems in the world today is that not enough people are sufficiently frightened by the danger of nuclear war.”

He had been grateful, said Khrushchev, for Pope John’s appeal during the crisis — “it was a real ray of light.” Khrushchev asked if there was something that he could do to express his gratitude to Pope John. Cousins suggested the release of Archbishop Slipyi. Khrushchev stiffened and launched into a detailed history of the Ukrainian Church’s behavior during the Nazi occupation. Cousins replied that there was no intention of rearguing the merits of the original case — the release would simply be on humanitarian grounds so that the archbishop could live out his few remaining years peacefully in a seminary.

Khrushchev said that he wanted to improve relations with the Vatican, but this was not the way to do it. The release would be exploited for propaganda purposes in the West, he said; headlines would scream: “BISHOP REVEALS RED TORTURE” or something similar. Cousins assured him that the Vatican intended to keep the matter quiet. Finally, after listing more reasons for why it was impossible, Khrushchev looked at Cousins and asked in some exasperation, “Why should I release this man?” Cousins leaned forward and said quietly, “I think it’s the right thing to do.” Pause. Khrushchev leaned back and said something to the effect of “Oh, I see,” in a bemused voice.

Don't blame me if your capitalist system is doomed. I am not going to kill you. I have no intention of murdering 200 million Americans. The workers in your society will bury the system.

the West by pulling out the Cuban missiles. Cousins noticed that Khrushchev’s eyes glazed over as he spoke about that terrible week. “The Chinese say I was scared. Of course I was scared,” Khrushchev told Cousins. “It would have been insane not to have been scared. I was frightened

Cousins then told him that, in his opinion, President Kennedy was sincerely interested in improving relations with the Soviet Union and reaching an agreement to halt nuclear tests. At that time, Khrushchev was on the defensive within the Communist world to prove that he was right in assuming that the Americans were interested in coexistence, and that he was not guilty, as the Chinese accused him, of "bourgeois revisionism." Failure to achieve a test ban treaty would be gleefully interpreted by the Chinese as failure of Khrushchev's entire policy toward the United States. Khrushchev told Cousins to assure the President that he, too, genuinely wanted a nuclear test ban treaty and that there was "no reason why it shouldn't be possible for both our countries to agree on the kind of inspection that will satisfy you that we're not cheating and that will satisfy us that you're not spying." Before Cousins left, Khrushchev wrote Christmas greetings to both Pope John and President Kennedy on Kremlin stationery and gave them to Cousins to deliver.

Meanwhile, the mood of optimism following the Cuban crisis was waning. Test ban negotiations were deadlocked. The United States insisted on a minimum of eight annual on-site inspections. The Soviet Union insisted on no more than three. To make matters worse, a misunderstanding between the negotiators at Geneva had left the Soviets with the impression that the United States had offered three inspections and then reneged on their offer when the Soviets agreed to three inspections. Those within the Soviet Union and other Communist countries

who opposed the test ban seized upon this as evidence that the United States was not negotiating in good faith.

Encouraged by the success of his first mission, the Vatican asked Cousins to meet with Khrushchev a second time and ask for the release of Archbishop Josyf Beran of Prague. On April 12, 1963, Cousins flew to Sochi and was driven to Khrushchev's country retreat in Gagra on the Black Sea.

Their remarkable seven-hour meeting began after a gourmet luncheon well lubricated with vodka, a tour of the Chairman's indoor swimming pool, and an

Also clear is the existence in each nation of powerful forces that have a stake in the failure of detente.

energetic game of badminton. Cousins thanked Khrushchev for releasing Archbishop Slipyi, apologized for the news leak, and said that Pope John was also concerned about the health of Archbishop Beran in Prague. Khrushchev said that he was unfamiliar with Archbishop Beran's case and that his release would be up to the Czechoslovak government, but after Cousins pressed the matter, he agreed to look into it. (Archbishop Beran was released several weeks later.)

Letting Bygones Be Bygones

Cousins then brought up the test ban treaty and said that President Kennedy had asked him, as a private citizen, to clarify the American position and reiterate Kennedy's desire to reach an agreement. Khrushchev told Cousins that after the

Cuban missile crisis, based on what he had heard from his ambassador at the Geneva negotiations, he had gone before his own Council of Ministers and told them that a test ban treaty could be achieved if the Soviet Union would agree to three on-site inspections. Recognizing that President Kennedy would not be able to get a treaty with no inspections ratified by the U.S. Senate, Khrushchev said, he had argued that the Soviets should accommodate the President and give him three inspections. "The Council asked me if I was certain that we could have a treaty if we agreed to three inspections, and I told them yes. Finally, I persuaded them."

Now it appeared to the Soviets that the United States had backed down from its previous offer, and Khrushchev believed that he had been made to look foolish in the eyes of his Council of Ministers. "People in the United States seem to think I am a dictator who can put into practice any

Human relationships were established. Each position had the name of a man attached to it — someone who would sit next to you at the breakfast table, enjoy a stroll with you on the campus.

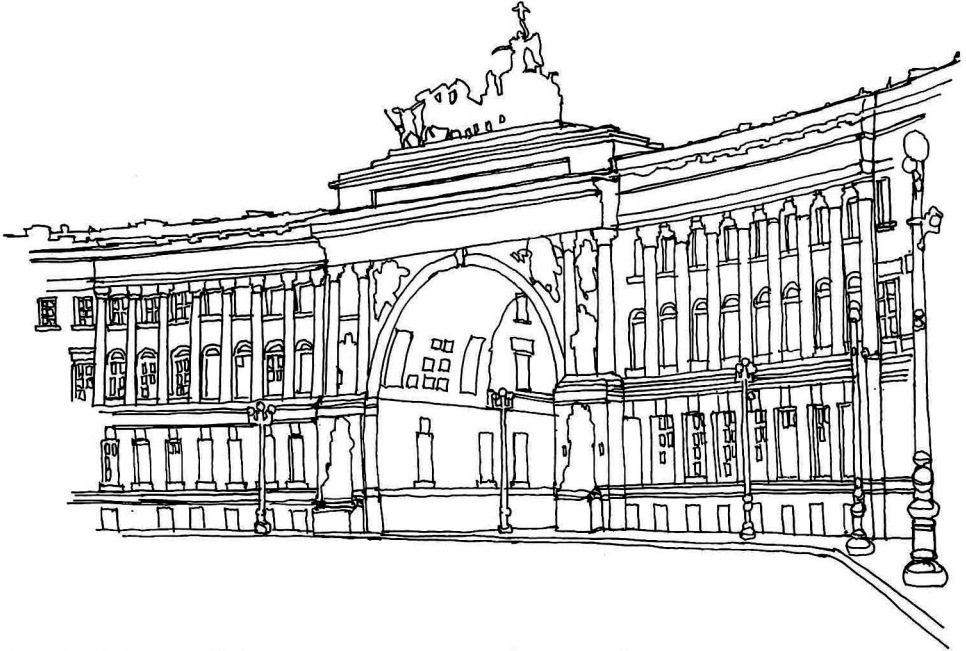
policy I wish," Khrushchev told Cousins. "Not so. I've got to persuade before I can govern. I cannot go back to the Council. It is now up to the United States. Frankly, we feel we were misled." He then told Cousins that his generals and nuclear scientists were clamoring to be allowed to test some new devices they had designed.

Given the current deadlock, he was tempted to tell them to go ahead.

Cousins insisted that this would only damage both Soviet and American security. He repeated his request from President Kennedy that the misunderstandings be set aside, and a new approach taken. "Very well," said Khrushchev testily. "Let us forget everything that happened before. The Soviet Union now proposes to the United States a treaty to outlaw nuclear testing — underground, overground, in water, in space, every place. And we will give you something you don't really need. We will give you inspections inside our country to convince you we aren't really cheating." Khrushchev did not say how many inspections. Cousins repeated that President Kennedy did not believe he could get the Senate to accept a treaty that contained only three inspections. "I cannot and will not go back to the Council of Ministers and ask them to change our position in order to accommodate the United States again," Khrushchev repeated.

Then Khrushchev sighed and leaned back in his chair. He said nothing for a moment. "You can tell the President that I accept his explanation of an honest misunderstanding and suggest that we get moving," he said at last to Cousins. "But the next move is up to him."

Changing the subject, Cousins asked him to explain his shoe-banging statement at the United Nations that "we will bury you." Khrushchev replied that the Soviet Union will not force socialism upon the United States; rather, it will be demanded internally by the American workers as capitalism collapses of its own accord. "What I meant was not that I will bury



you but that history will bury you," he told Cousins. "Don't blame me if your capitalist system is doomed. I am not going to kill you. I have no intention of murdering 200 million Americans. In fact, I will not even take part in the burial. The workers in your society will bury the system." When Cousins suggested that perhaps Karl Marx could not have foreseen the development of the United States and that Marx's historical determinism was fallible, Khrushchev cheerily answered that he had a tremendous admiration for the American people and that "when they become a socialist society, they will have the finest socialist society in the world."

Cousins asked him what he thought his principle achievement in office had been. "Telling the people the truth about Stalin," Khrushchev replied. "There was a chance, I thought, that if we understood what really happened, it might not happen again. Anyway, we could not go forward

as a nation unless we got the poison of Stalin out of our system. He did some good things, to be sure, and I have acknowledged them. But he was an insane tyrant, and he held back our country for many years.... One of Stalin's great mistakes was to isolate the Soviet Union from the rest of the world. We need friends. We have mutual interests with the United States. These two great countries would be very stupid if they ignored these mutual interests. They also have serious differences. But no one need worry that these differences will be glossed over. There are people in each country who make a career out of the differences. But someone has to speak also of the serious mutual interests. I have tried to talk about them."

Flux and Dissent

When detente began running into trouble, the Dartmouth Conferences were filled with lively discussions of who was to

blame. The Americans protested that a continued Soviet military buildup was undermining the American public's support for detente. The Soviets replied that they were simply "catching up" in an attempt to achieve parity with the United States so that arms control agreements could be made on a fair basis. The Americans pointed out that Soviet support for Cuban intervention in Angola put American supporters of detente on the defensive. The Soviets answered that they could not abandon the liberation movements in Third World countries. The Americans argued that Soviet behavior had a tremendous impact on American public opinion and that Soviet actions greatly affected the climate within which American leaders could afford to act. The Soviets replied that, as far as they could tell, American public opinion was simply manipulated by major American media in collusion with the American government, and had no independent impact on the shaping of American foreign policy. They worried that editorials in American newspapers calling detente a "snare" or an "illusion" reflected doubts about detente's workability among American government leaders. The Americans insisted that public opinion was a real and independent force in the United States.

"It was apparent at Jurmala (the eleventh Dartmouth Conference in July 1977) that both countries tend to be chained to mirror images," said Cousins. "Almost identical charges and responses characterized the stance of each country toward the other." Also clear, he said, is "the existence in each nation of powerful forces that have a stake in the failure of detente." While the

Soviets initially felt that the breakdown of detente was all America's fault, a few eventually admitted — hesitantly — that Soviet actions in the military sphere, the Third World, Poland, and Afghanistan may have influenced U.S. behavior and opinion.

Cousins says that Soviets at the Dartmouth Conferences still have great difficulty understanding some basic attributes of American culture which are absent from their own society such as flux and dissent. They remain bewildered at what seem to them to be mercurial and unpredictable shifts in American policy and American public opinion. And they have never learned how to "read" American newspapers, he maintains, which has at times led them to make dangerous miscalculations — for example, assuming that

The equivalent of panic among nations is represented by the readiness to believe the worst, the ease with which the worst can be portrayed and an appeal made to the collective sense of insecurity.

the numerous calls in the American press for an invasion of Cuba in 1962 meant that the American government was really going to invade. "When they read criticisms of the Soviet Union in articles or editorials that they regard as objectionable and volatile," he says, "it is very difficult for them to understand that this doesn't necessarily reflect American policy."

Bilateral summit meetings and arms control negotiations have inherent limitations, he believes; such approaches "tend

to substitute peace by treaty for peace through organization." Summit meetings can create slight improvements in official Soviet-American relations which can temporarily mitigate the dangers, but do not result in lasting solutions. "Of course, it's always good to reduce the fever," he adds. "You can reduce the fever with aspirin, but you're not getting at the underlying problem. Still, if the fever gets too high, the patient can die. Therefore, the attempt to reduce tensions is certainly essential and welcome. But at some point we've got to address ourselves to the basic problems involved in structuring a genuine peace. Otherwise, the tensions that are inherent in a given situation are bound to recur and erupt."

Comparing the world situation to a human illness is more than a metaphor to Cousins. He believes there are lessons to be learned from the way humans individually combat disease that can apply to the way humans must collectively combat nuclear catastrophe. "I've learned that you've got to have a healthy disrespect for experts," he says with a nearly imperceptible grin, "and that you always want to seek out their advice, but never abandon the

need to make your own decisions, even if it goes against the experts. In both international affairs and medicine, expertise can be fallible. The human body biologically tends to move in a path of its expectations; the fear in a human body tends to be self-fulfilling and self-justifying. Nothing is more characteristic of serious illness than feelings of helplessness, the fact that one's losing control, and the consequent panic.

Illness in Society

"The same thing is true in society. In dealings among nations, you can always justify your pessimism. You may not always be able to create a level of rapport, but nothing is easier than to create tensions, because you can do that unilaterally. The equivalent of panic among nations is represented by the readiness to believe the worst, the ease with which the worst can be portrayed and an appeal made to the collective sense of insecurity. All this feeds panic. 'This is what they say about us, this is what they're doing, we can't let them get away with it' — there's no one to answer the charges, you see, unless you want to be unpatriotic. And so in both countries those



Gale Warner, a twenty-six-year-old freelance writer, has co-led several citizen diplomacy trips, including a wilderness trek in the Caucasus mountains in 1986 with Soviet and American doctors and medical students. This article is excerpted from Citizen Diplomats: Pathfinders in Soviet-American Relations, coauthored by Michael H. Shuman, Continuum Books, January 1987, with profiles of nine American citizen diplomats, including John Chrystal. It can be ordered directly from the Center for Innovative Diplomacy, 17931F Skylark Circle, Irvine, CA 92714.

who benefit from panic have a clear field."

He pauses — and an unmistakable look of weariness settles on his face. It occurs to me that Cousins has every reason to feel discouraged when he thinks back on the events of the last four decades. Thirty-five years ago, he watched the possibility of creating a peaceful transition to an orderly system of world federalism slip away. Thirty years ago, he helped galvanize an enormous citizens' movement for nuclear sanity, only to have other world events divert public attention. Twenty-five years ago, he helped launch a hopeful series of agreements between the superpower leaders, only to have one leader assassinated and the other deposed before the ink on those first agreements was barely dry. Even the Dartmouth Conferences have not been the panacea that perhaps he once hoped they would be. Bringing together influential private citizens for useful and amiable discussions has created a number of modest accomplishments, but the scale of what still needs to be done is staggering. That brief, telling look of weariness reveals that Cousins realizes this more than anyone else.

"It's not easy to be friendly in this world. There are always people who declare you're being naive or subversive," he continues quietly. "But I've learned from my experiences with illness that there's a very large area of possibility that opens up with the use of human ingenuity, imagination, and courage. And also that there are resources that you can count on that exist inside oneself, but they have to be put to work."

He finds the current swelling of interest in Soviet-American citizen diplomacy very promising because of the "possibilities of crossover and extension, of taking what

we have found and believe to be true, and feeding this into the channels of public opinion. I've always been troubled by the disparity between the evidence of what I've seen and believe to be true and the situation as stated, unofficially or officially, to the public. While no individual can dictate policy, no individual should exempt himself from the attempt to do so. And that attempt repeated often enough is what public opinion is."

Even his belief that laughter, fun, and play can be mobilized as healing forces has relevance to the world situation, he says,

No one really knows enough to be a pessimist.

reminiscing about his freewheeling badminton game with Nikita Khrushchev by the Black Sea. "That helped to create a nice mood. And we told stories to each other. I try not to run too far behind others in the telling of stories. So we had a good time, and that created a stage where all sorts of things were possible. In dealing with Khrushchev, one would suppose that you're dealing with these large, impersonal, implacable forces, many of them the legacy of churning going on in history itself. But I found it was possible to cut through all that.

"It's so easy to become solemn, especially in diplomacy, if we take ourselves too seriously, and there's nothing like a sense of fun to loosen people up," he continues. His eyes brighten as he recounts some of the jokes that have started Dartmouth Conferences off with a laugh. And as he begins talking about what gives him

fun in life, what nourishes and sustains his more sobering activities, his face, despite the wrinkles and the thinning hair and the mild jowl, begins looking almost — boyish.

“Many things give me a great deal of enjoyment in life,” he grins. “I enjoy hitting a golf ball so that it screams for mercy. I enjoy the company of lovely women. It seems to me that any species that can present anything as wonderful as my wife has a great deal to be said for it. I enjoy playing a good game of tennis. I enjoy running to get shots that seem to be impossible, and converting those shots into winners. I enjoy the sensation, which I find exquisite, of not being in a hospital

bed. And not for one moment,” he adds meaningfully, “am I not mindful of the difference.”

Cousins accepts the diagnosis of a world threatened by nuclear catastrophe. But he refuses to accept a verdict of hopelessness. “No one,” he likes to say, “really knows enough to be a pessimist.” Instead, he continues to urge humanity to believe in its own powers of transformation, its own capacity for change. “All things are possible once enough human beings realize that the whole of the human future is at stake,” he wrote in his book *Human Options*. “The biggest task of humanity in the next 50 years will be to prove the experts wrong.”
