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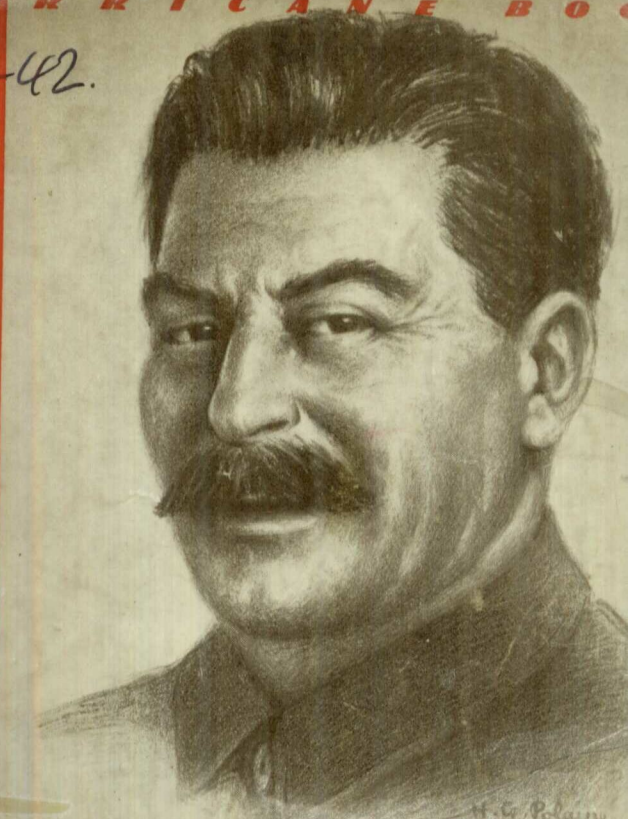

by
JENNIE LEE

OUR ALLY RUSSIA

...—THE TRUTH!

...NE OF THE BEST BOOKS ON RUSSIA YET PUBLISHED "Spectator."
...E MOST SENSIBLE & TRUTHFUL RECORD I HAVE YET READ "Evening Standard"
...T IS QUITE ADMIRABLE"—PROFESSOR PARES in the "Observer"

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OUR ALLY RUSSIA

By

JENNIE LEE

Author of
"Tomorrow is a new day."

JENNIE LEE, M.A., LL.B., EDINBURGH (*in private life Mrs. Aneurin Bevan*) *was born in the Scottish mining village of Lochgelly. At 23 she became Member of Parliament for North Lanark in the Labour Government of* 1929-31. *She has extensively toured America, the Continent and Russia, as lecturer and journalist and in this book she sets down the impressions gained during her many visits to the Soviet Union. Jennie Lee recently gave up an appointment at the Ministry of Aircraft Production to become the only woman lobby correspondent in the House of Commons. As a broadcaster she enjoys a high reputation.*

A HURRICANE BOOK

Cover Design and Sketch by H. G. POLAINE.

W. H. ALLEN & CO., LTD.,
43, ESSEX STREET, STRAND,
LONDON, W.C.2

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First published August, 1941
Reprinted August, 1941
Reprinted March, 1942
Reprinted November, 1942

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Made and printed in Great Britain for W. H. Allen & Co., Ltd.
By Merritt & Hatcher, Ltd., 6-14, Blackheath Road, London, S.E.10

INTRODUCTION

THIS booklet is not written for fanatics, either pro-Russian or anti-Russian.

It is written for the many men and women who, absorbed by the business of earning a living and all the other claims of their private lives, have had little opportunity of gaining first hand knowledge of the U.S.S.R., yet, in these days of war, profoundly moved by the martial courage and tenacity of Russia, our ally, are eager to have an honest-to-God picture of what life is really like in that great country.

If you were living in modern Russia, under what conditions would you do your work? What sort of home would you have? What sort of school would your children attend? What opportunities for travel and study and recreation would be yours? What prospects are there for youngsters who are gifted, hardworking, ambitious?

What offences are regarded as criminal and how are criminals treated? How far are ordinary people molested in their private lives by government officials and government regulations? Are religious beliefs determined by conscience and conviction or dictated by the State? What place do women occupy?

Is there any democracy under Soviet rule? What about freedom of speech and of the Press? What provision is there for sick people and what security for old age? What manner of men and women have been produced by this new Russia? Will their army hold?

Are there supplies and lines of communication

behind the fighting men capable of feeding to them all the requirements of a modern army ?

Russia is our ally ; Russia with its population of one hundred and seventy millions (not including recent wartime additions) and with frontiers encircling almost a sixth of the earth's surface.

It is not Russia of the past or Russia of the future that matters supremely to us at this moment.

It is Russia of to-day.

Therefore such brief references as I must make to Czarist Russia or earlier phases of Soviet development, will be strictly cut down to the bare essentials that must be known in order to see truly and in just perspective the men now fighting an epic battle that is also our battle ; and the women behind them no less soldiers than their men.

Men are governed by what they fear most. So are nations.

Soviet Russia in the twenty-four years of its existence has not felt safe for a single day. It has never been able to relax. Sometimes the sense to strain has eased slightly, but never to any great extent.

Russian life, thought, institutions, its factories, its farms, its schools, bear the mark of a country that has faced the world in a mood of utter certainty that one day it would have to fight for its life, to fight against all comers and most likely be called upon to face this supreme ordeal before it had time to build up an industrially efficient Russia, capable of supporting and servicing a highly mechanised modern army.

All Europe, for many years before the actual fighting began, lived under the threat of war. There was no exact certainty as to who was going to fight whom, but a good deal of cold scepticism regarding the powers of the League of Nations or any other known organisation to keep the peace.

France sulked behind its Maginot Line, grumbling about Britain's easy-going attitude to the growing military might of Hitler's Germany. Every time the British Government made some new concession to Germany, the French felt just so much less secure just so much more afraid that 1914-18 would have to be fought all over again.

But in France fear of war was tempered by an almost boundless faith in the defensive possibilities of the Maginot Line.

The Union of Socialist Soviet Republics (U.S.S.R.), to give modern Russia its official title, believed that it had many more reasons than any other European nation for being acutely and dramatically war conscious.

It was not just a nation among nations, accepted as "one of the boys," sharing the normal round of friendships and hostilities.

The U.S.S.R. stood alone. It was unique among nations, different from all the others, fundamentally different on the basic question as to who within a nation shall own property, how property shall be controlled, and towards what ends.

Because of this basic difference over property rights, the U.S.S.R., wrongly as events have turned out, was for many years fanatically certain that when the second world war did arrive it would take shape as a contribution of all the surrounding capitalist countries with Socialist Russia as the common prey.

Leading statesmen and influential newspapers in Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Japan, have by violent anti-Russian propaganda right from the 1917 October Revolution when the Bolsheviks under the leadership of Lenin first seized power, down to the present year, fed the Soviet's sense of isolation, its feeling that the hands of all other nations might one day be raised against it.

A trivial but revealing hang-over from this traditional attitude towards the U.S.S.R. was displayed in 1941 when the first military mission from Russia to Great Britain arrived in London. Over four million Soviet soldiers, including some of the finest mechanised divisions of the Red Army, were already looked in a titanic struggle with a still larger and more powerfully mechanised German army. The Russian soldiers were fighting superbly. At last we had an ally willing and able to give as good as it got. This was great and heartening news for the British public.

Yet a War Office official instructed Press photographers not to take pictures of British and Soviet officers shaking hands on Euston platform, giving as his reason that the Censor was unlikely to pass such pictures! This Whitehall Rip Van Winkle was dazed by the howl of wrath from the newspaper men. He was over-ruled.

But the point is that a military mission representing no other nation in the world, could have evoked from even the dullest of Whitehall warriors such studied discourtesy.

Hitler, in his rise to power, made lavish use of anti-Soviet sentiment. This was his trump card in playing for British and French support for German rearmament. Germany was a great nation. Germany was bound to have arms. Germany was bound to expand.

But expansion would take place at the expense of Soviet Russia so no other nation need worry. It was thus that Hitler argued and his representatives, at least in the fashionable drawing-rooms of London and Paris, had many willing listeners.

It is not to be wondered at then, in view of the diplomatic game that was played throughout Europe between the First, and Second World Wars, that the U.S.S.R. should have felt itself to be an outcast among nations, and should have lavished so much of its thought and resources on building up its defences.

It was on this question of defence for the U.S.S.R. that Stalin and Trotsky first became mortal enemies.

Both wanted a powerful Red Army but Trotsky argued that that in itself was not enough without World Revolution. He declared that it was impossible to build socialism in one country alone. His recipe for Russian security was to extend the Russian revolution over the rest of the world as rapidly as possible. Only when surrounding countries had similar types of government to that of Bolshevik Russia, could the U.S.S.R. feel safe.

Trotsky for all his great knowledge, eloquence as an orator, skill as a writer, the organising capacity he showed as leader of the Red Army, was a hopeless romantic. He was no match for Stalin.

Stalin, the peasant, the Georgian, the man with local roots, viewed Trotsky's theories with grim, prosaic scepticism. If it was only a matter of what one wished, he too desired speedy world revolution, he too had no objection to revolutionising Russian agriculture over night.

But taking a plain steady look at the rest of the world, Stalin observed that the revolutionary wave that had swept over Europe in the wake of 1914-18 was on the ebb and he did not believe that it could be artificially resuscitated. He preferred to place his main reliance for Russia's defence on Russia's own internal resources.

Should Russia become the victim of aggression, he hoped that popular movements in the aggressor countries would make vigorous protest and do all they could to sabotage war against the U.S.S.R.

But that was a gambler's throw; an uncertain quantity. Stalin wanted more certain ground under his feet. And he believed he could best achieve this by pressing forward with all possible speed the

modernisation of Russian agriculture, Russian industry, Russian education; the training and equipping of a mighty Russian army.

Soviet citizens have never lacked excitement. They and their country go lurching forward in gigantic enterprises of such great moment that the rest of the world is left gasping.

Grim and gay, Mr. Churchill's phrase for wartime Britain, might well be applied to Soviet Russia during the whole twenty-four years of its existence. At least, grim and gay for those whose spirits are in tune with the new regime. For the rest, just grim.

In the U.S.S.R., as much as in any other country in the world, it pays to conform. It is safer to be one of the crowd. Tolerance is not a Bolshevik virtue. There was too much to be done, too little time to do it in, and too lively a sense of enemies threatening the State both from inside and outside, for any gentleness to be shown to people or opinions out of step with government policy.

Gentle idealists who would have liked Russia to become the land of applied Christianity, of simple, unwordly communism, have, with occasional exceptions such as the Dean of Canterbury, been horrified by the ruthlessness of Soviet methods.

Stalin, a steel clad giant, mounting guard over his vast domains, giving blow for blow as the most formidable fighting force the world has ever been cursed with, blasts its way into Soviet territory, has no time for pretty speeches and no doubt feels no need to justify the policies that have brought him and his country to their present strength.

It is a matter of speculation whether by other methods, by a less terrible cost in human suffering, as much or more of what is most worth while in modern Russia could have been accomplished. That issue has been argued with passionate intensity in every corner of the world.

The student of politics who has time and energy enough, will find that a library has been built up for him of books just and unjust, learned and illiterate, that can keep him reading about Russia for the rest of his life and still only touch the fringe of the available material.

This booklet, brief as it must be, has a very definite limited objective. It is not intended as a hymn of praise glorifying everything that the Bolshevik rulers of Russia have done, are doing and will do. Nor yet as an elaborate treatise on the alternative routes along which Russia might have travelled.

It takes the U.S.S.R. as it is, gives some glimpses of the lives of ordinary men and women living there, and tries to present a reasonably unbiased picture of what they are doing and of how they look upon themselves and upon the rest of the world.

PUBLISHER'S NOTE.

This book was written in July, 1941.

Although vast developments have taken place on the Russian front since the first publication the text has not been altered. In the light of more recent happenings, Miss Lee's survey of the Soviets thus gains added significance. Her estimate of Russia's strength—written long before the might of the Red Army became apparent to the world—has been fully confirmed by events.

Thus, by leaving the original text intact, its authenticity and accuracy can be measured by known facts as revealed in the intervening sixteen months.

Few wartime books on Russia have earned such high acclaim from the critics as this little volume by Jennie Lee.

CHAPTER I

THE OLD ORDER CHANGETH

ELEVEN years ago I saw Leningrad for the first time. It was not then the busy and prosperous city it was later to become. I was glad to get out of it. I had arrived as one of a group of young Members of Parliament, all well primed with theoretical knowledge of what was supposed to be happening in the land of the Bolsheviks, and all anxious to establish some contact with its realities.

The Soviet officials who received us did us proud. We were motored to the best hotel in the city, ours being the only car visible in the shabby, empty streets. Once arrived at our destination we were each conducted to an elaborate suite, bedroom, bathroom, sitting room, of a standard that in Czarist days would have been reserved for Royalty.

Quite a bit of our limited time was used up in an involuntary game of hide-and-seek as we went around trying to re-establish communication with one another. We were not so foolish as to be too much annoyed by all this. We knew perfectly well that there was a housing famine in Leningrad as in all other Russian cities; that many Russian families were thankful to possess a half or quarter of a single room in which to house themselves and all their worldly goods.

But we also knew that this asiatic lavishness in the reception of official or even semi-official guests was not to be taken too seriously. It was the Russian way of doing things. It was their way of putting their best propaganda foot forward. It was their regular system with the gaping, credulous succession of impressionable visitors who descended on Russia from every other part of the world, bent on "seeing for themselves."

After the vodka and the caviare, the well-cooked chicken and the savouries, the sickly, sweet Russian

champagne, the fruit and the ices of that first meal I ate in Bolshevik Russia, the coffee was served, and along with it a discussion of the programme of sight-seeing that had been planned for us. There were model houses, model creches, model hospitals, an interminable list of new factories, all of which we were invited to inspect. A model guide and interpreter was thrown in along with the rest, whose task it was to take us from show-place to show-place and see that all went according to plan.

I took great delight in saying goodbye to my companions during this first part of my first journey in Russia (they were John Strachey, G. R. Strauss and Aneurin Bevan, all three at that time Labour Members of Parliament), leaving them to all the grandeur and the conducted touring, while I struck southwards towards Tiflis, no longer wrapped up in cotton wool as privileged sight-seers are, but travelling as ordinary Russians travel, and in company with Russians.

I was on my way to the Caucasus. So were my Russian friends. They had never been farther south than Moscow before. They were so elated with themselves, with the thought that they were at the beginning of a month's holiday, and that they were actually on their way to their beautiful mountains and not just dreaming about it, that you would have thought they were floating on air instead of being crammed uncomfortably together on the hard wooden seats of a third class railway carriage.

"See," they kept saying to me, "could anything like this have happened under the Czar? Could ordinary workers have had such a holiday? Could they have been masters in their own land? Our grandfathers were serfs. They were tied to the land. They could be beaten, they could be sold like slaves to pay for a rich master's gambling debts. In the old days working people owned nothing, not even their own bodies. Now everything you see belongs to us.

Russia is the greatest country in the world. But what you see now is nothing at all to what it is going to be. We are only at the beginning."

The excited, exuberant conversation went on and on. These youngsters, if you want to put a clumsy label on them, belonged to the new proletarian intelligentsia. Their holiday was a reward earned by conspicuously able and devoted service, one as a highly qualified engineer, another as a day time builder's labourer and student of architecture in the evenings, a third as a medical student, the fourth, a girl of nineteen, one of the star pupils of the Isadore Duncan school of dancing. They seemed tireless. They told me that besides working long hours at their special trades and professions, they found time for party work, they all attended night school classes, they all had picked up a smattering of French, German and English.

The only other member of our party, the one who had made it possible for me to travel with those young Russians, was an Englishman who spoke Russian fairly well. So in a blaze of conversation made up of broken sentences drawn from half a dozen different languages, we sped southwards towards the mountains and I began to form my first tentative, halting impressions of what life in this new Russia was really like.

The Cinderella man of the party was particularly revealing. He was the son of a gentleman. That was his great handicap. Ruefully he confessed to me that his father had owned a considerable estate in Czarist days, and had been conservative in politics and in all his ways of life. Only his mother had survived the Revolution. He lived with her in a single room of the mansion that formerly had been used exclusively by his family; sharing a bathroom with three other families and the kitchen with twice as many more.

I learned those details about him by the simple

process of asking. He was not unduly concerned about such material discomforts. He had accepted the new order and was an ambitious young man anxious to get on in it.

But what did upset him was that because of his unfortunate ancestry, there was no place for him at Moscow University. He was in the process of graduating as a member of the proletariat by working as a builder's labourer. One day he hoped to be admitted to the university and like the rest of these young Russians he was certain that a great career lay ahead of him.

That was Russia, remember, eleven years ago. Much has changed since then. This fetish of proletarian ancestry, for instance, is no longer considered so necessary.

Young men and women in Russia to-day, particularly those who are hard working and eager to undertake a strenuous course of specialised study, are given their chance according to their own personal merits, not according to whether their parents and grandparents were rich or poor.

Even with sound proletarian ancestry, however, it is still dangerous, if not fatal, not to conform to orthodox political views; that is, to the views of Joseph Stalin. But for those who satisfy the authorities in this respect, no other obstacle to advancement is insuperable.

But to return to the Caucasus. I am taking you there for as deliberate reasons as I went there myself. It has always been my contention that if you want to get to know an unfamiliar country, it is best at the outset to ignore its great cities and begin by finding a corner for yourself among simple country people, as far as possible from the beaten track.

The country folks may receive you in their best Sunday clothes, and with their best company manners, but that phase soon passes. They can't keep

it up. They have got to get on with their work. They are soon back to their ordinary work-a-day ways and you can all settle down together, natural and at ease.

The most artificial person I found in the tiny foothill village at the foot of the Caucasus, where we halted for an evening before beginning our climb was the wife of the head of the local G.P.U.—that is, wife of the head of the secret police. That lady had a high opinion of herself. She knew everything. And I, coming from the outer darkness of a capitalist country, was fair game for her missionary zeal.

We sat around in a cool whitewashed room, a delightful place to be in after having had rather too much of the hot August sun, and I was treated to a lecture that would have delighted our most ardent feminists.

Russia, apparently, was a paradise for women. Every barrier against their complete equality of status with men had been removed. No post, however exalted, was barred to them on account of their sex if they were otherwise fit to occupy it. They could be doctors, lawyers, sailors, soldiers, pilots, diplomats. No single road was blocked.

Then for women who worked in factories and farms, in shops, in offices, in schoolrooms, no bar was raised against their marrying and everything possible was done to make life easy for them when they were with child, and when they had a family to look after.

Six weeks before and after childbirth a woman was entitled to a holiday from her work, had full pay during this period, her job kept open for her, free medical advice and maternity services, and the state provided a communal nursery where her child could be taken care of during the day once she returned to work.

I listened to all this. I had heard it all before. There was no need for me to have travelled so far to hear what was already so familiar to me. I could have read it all in a penny pamphlet purchasable at any

one of a hundred different bookstalls in the heart of London. I knew that in theory the new Russia aimed at all these things. I knew that in Moscow, Leningrad, any of the main cities, I could have been taken around by an official Government guide and shown examples of all these enlightened social reforms, operating according to the book.

But Russia is a vast country. It is an Asiatic power as well as a European power. A tenth of its women belonged to Moslem families and their lives throughout the centuries had been lived behind the veil. They were regarded as things rather than as human beings. They could be bought and sold by their menfolks. They could be beaten like dogs. They had no passports of their own, being regarded as mere appendages of their men when they travelled.

If a woman travelled alone she could be picked up by the police and returned to her husband like any other piece of lost property.

Even the other nine-tenths of Russian womanhood mostly belonging to the Orthodox Greek Christian Church, and so not quite so remote from Western standards, were in little better plight.

Leaving aside official Soviet literature and official Soviet propagandists and the official show places that tourists are trotted around, how much of all this fine talk I had heard about the emancipation of women was a reality throughout the 8,144,228 square miles of Soviet territory? How far had it got through to the daily lives of the average Russian woman? That was what I wanted to find out.

I knew I could come no nearer to such knowledge however long the policeman's wife went on talking. I was glad when we were out in the open air again, walking through the cobbled streets, looking at real people, not listening to theories.

Then, as so often happens in a foreign country, when we were not looking for anything in particular,

something happened that told me an important part of what I wanted to know.

Our evening walk had brought us to the outskirts of the village. We sat down on a grassy bank and were admiring the austere terrifying beauty of the mountains towering above us.

Then suddenly a curious apparition came walking down the mountainside. It was the most elegant figure of a man you can possibly imagine. He wore the narrow-waisted, wide-skirted traditional Cossack costume complete with silver studded leather belt and dagger case. In his hand he carried a tall, slender, tapering walking cane, such as would have delighted a Regency dandy. But that was not the point.

What caught my attention still more was the figure of a woman walking three paces behind him, as dowdy as he was dapper, and carrying all the luggage.

I looked at my Russian friends, they looked at me, then we all began to laugh. They knew what I was thinking. This fine gentleman and his squaw were not a very good illustration of the lecture that the policeman's lady had poured out on us earlier in the day.

Every line, every gesture of the two figures approaching us, was a repudiation of everything that the new Russia stood for and belonged entirely to the Russia of the past.

My Russian friends were loyal Soviet citizens. They were also charming, friendly human beings with a keen sense of humour. We discussed the phenomenon and I agreed with them that the U.S.S.R. which had gone through war and civil war until 1921, then was devastated with famine in that year, could hardly be expected to have put all its theories into practice, particularly in such outlying districts, in the short intervening space of nine years.

That was all right by me.

But what I could not help pointing out was that

most of their official propagandists would sound a great deal more sensible and convincing if they were not so much given to undermining their own case by claiming too much.

We had planned to cross the Caucasus by the Mamisson Mountain pass and to spend the rest of the month in or travelling between mountain villages that, if you look at the map, would seem geographically and spiritually inaccessible to the ferment of new ideas that were causing such an upheaval in the more central and densely-populated parts of the U.S.S.R.

But that is reckoning without the radio. And without the ardour of the young communist missionaries who were sent out from the cities to every hamlet, however remote, in the whole of Russia, and brought with them a burning enthusiasm that no setbacks could discourage.

The voice of the Kremlin was everywhere. So was its iron control. Some communities, as in the instance I have given, took longer to permeate with the new ideas than others. But surely, inevitably, no exceptions allowed, the new gospel was being made both the law and the practice throughout the whole of this vast land.

These Georgian villages were very poor. But except for a few highly privileged families they had always been poor. Poverty was not the new factor introduced by the Bolsheviks. Nor illiteracy. Nor the enslavement of women. Nor tyrannical control over the lives of the ordinary citizen.

The Bolsheviks, the new masters of Russia, were as insistent on obedience as the old masters. They commanded the women to free themselves. They punished old-fashioned males who tried to prevent them from doing so. They insisted on schools for every child in a land that in Czarist days had been eighty per cent. illiterate.

They provided teachers for those schools, and teachers and children together gave a good deal of their spare time to teaching reading and writing to the parent and grandparent generation that had not had such opportunities in their youth.

Of all the crusades that the new Russia has waged, none has been more ardently pursued or better received by the Russian masses, than that to "liquidate illiteracy."

Changing century old ways of living could in no circumstances be plain sailing. Even many things that to the civilised westerner are bound to seem long overdue reforms, were stubbornly resisted by the more backward elements among the peasants. The Bolsheviks had to fight their way forward by means of propaganda, of education, of promises, of threats, and in the last resort, by straightforward shooting.

I give as an illustration of this resistance to change an example that is admittedly rather special pleading, for the issue involved is not one of which there can be two points of view in a country like Britain. Still, it is an authentic part of the story of the U.S.S.R. and the incidents I describe I saw for myself.

I had asked what the high narrow stone tower was used for that was a feature of many of these Georgian mountain villages. With smiles and laughter it was explained to me that right up to within the memory of peasants still living there, blood feuds were fought out between village and village, and when the men went off to fight they locked their women in the tower in the hope that thereby they would be safe against any marauding band of their enemies who might descend upon their homes in their absence.

We joked about it all, and I was thinking to myself, "Well, well, times *have* changed," when a wail that sounded as if it came from a young infant caught my attention. I looked around and there was no child to be seen.

The thin feeble wail continued. I was sure it was coming from beneath a bundle of none too clean rags covering a wooden box at the door of one of the primitive stone huts that had housed the village for thousands of years. I lifted the rags and cried out in horror. I thought I had stumbled on a monstrous crime. For there was indeed a very young infant there, trussed up like an Egyptian mummy, tight bands strapping its arms to its body and making it barely possible for it to breathe.

Before I had even time to think of rescuing the baby a ferocious peasant woman rushed out from the hut, covered the baby again and shouted murderously at me. I could not understand the language she used but it was plain I was being heartily cursed.

My friends rescued me, took me to the one-roomed welfare centre a few minutes' walk from this hut, and pointed to large, brightly coloured diagrams adorning the wall. They were meant for the local women, who, except a progressive minority that had gone to night school in the last year or two, had to be taught by pictures as they could not read.

The diagram had two main divisions. On the one half was a sickly, sad looking infant, trussed up like the one I had just seen. On the other half was a healthy, merry looking infant throwing its arms and legs about in complete freedom.

The moral was obvious.

But why, I demanded, did the Government not insist on all mothers giving their children the benefit of up-to-date child welfare knowledge. The answer was that an enterprising young mother had been stoned out of this very village some months earlier by older women, who thought that in freeing her baby's limbs and feeding it on modern baby food instead of cabbage soup, she was abusing the infant. What was good enough for their mothers and grandmothers, argued

these diehard mothers, was good enough for their children and for them.

The local Bolshevik leaders were wise enough to see that education and example were their best weapons. A mother cannot be made to do what her heart cries out against. However dreadful these traditional ways of nursing and feeding infants, they were well meant. They were done because nothing else had ever been heard or seen.

Infant mortality was shocking. The need for reform was urgent and obvious. But it could not all be done in a day. The blood feuds between the villages had been stopped. There was a school and a child welfare centre in every village. The women had made enormous strides towards overcoming the emotional as well as the social and economic prejudices of those of the villagers who would have preferred that they remain mere chattel.

All that had been done, but the precariousness of some of the victories, the extraordinary mixing of customs belonging to ancient times with the latest theories known to man, is exemplified by that infant, in the year 1930, trussed up under a bundle of dirty rags.

A Georgian mountain village is not typical of the whole of Russia, any more than a Highland croft is typical of the whole of Great Britain. But to understand the magnitude and variety of the problems the government of the U.S.S.R. has to deal with, it is essential to remember that such communities and many more that are still more mediæval, have their place in the general pattern.

The schools, the welfare workers, the communist missionaries from the towns, newspapers, pamphlets, books, radio talks have, between then and now, maintained a steady pressure on these old world populations. The mountains are still as beautiful. Every-

thing else is changing. New houses mingle with the old. Ultra modern agricultural methods and machinery have replaced the wooden plough, the ox grinding out the corn, the primitive upper and lower millstones.

Eleven years ago I felt as if I had wandered back into an illustrated volume of the Old Testament. The imagery and the similes that you find there, drawn from the life of primitive agricultural communities, were exemplified all around me. It is not so now. Old order changeth yielding place to new.

And if you are inclined to feel any sentimental nostalgia for the old, keep in mind that if a certain picturesqueness has departed, so has much of the dirt and the illiteracy and the disease.

Fewer children die in infancy. Fewer women die in childbirth.

You might still find an old-fashioned mother who privately thought it was best to truss up her infant and that cabbage soup was better for it than orange juice, but she would most likely keep her opinions to herself and do as the others did, for the weight of contemporary opinion, quite unanimously among the younger generation, is now wholeheartedly against her.

However fiercely controversy may rage about the rights and wrongs of much that the Bolsheviks have done in the realm of politics and economics, it is plain that the children at least have had their lives beneficially revolutionised.

In years of scarcity, in times of stark famine, they have had to go short with the rest. But periodic hunger for millions of poor people is an old, old Russian custom. The thing that is entirely new, that is something utterly unknown in its past history, is for a Russian Government to place such passionate emphasis on the health and educational needs of the children of the poor. This is true of girls no less than boys.

CHAPTER II

IN THE HOMES OF THE PEOPLE

THERE are great new housing estates in and around Moscow, Leningrad, all the main Soviet cities. If you compare them with the best that the London County Council has done, or with the famous workers' flats, beautiful to look at and comfortable to live in, that were the pride of pre-Hitler Vienna, they leave a great deal to be desired. But that is not a fair comparison.

In fairness they must be compared with Russia's own past standards. Judged from that angle, though the doors and windows don't always fit perfectly, and the plumbing may sometimes go wonky, they are entirely admirable.

Some of Russia's most ambitious rehousing efforts have been made around the new centres of heavy industry that have been developed as part of the 1928-33 Five Year Plan and subsequent plans. Whole new townships have been constructed in this way.

Magnitogorsk and Dnieperstroy, two of the best known, have had their photographs taken from every conceivable angle and circulated around the world with a lavishness usually reserved for film stars.

Nor have the needs of country workers been forgotten. In many parts they have fared better than the town dwellers. An essential part of the collective farms that have taken the place of the small tumble down individual peasant holdings, has been the provision of new houses for millions of agricultural workers.

The U.S.S.R. in the last fifteen years has built more new houses than any other nation in the world. That may sound as if Russia were well on top of its housing problems. If it had inherited anything like decent living conditions from the Czarist regime it might have been so. But in cold fact, housing accommodation for

all but a small minority of wealthy families was so despicable under the Czars that the Soviets were faced with the task of rehousing virtually the entire population.

Added to that, recent increases in the population (there was an increase of sixteen per cent. between 1926 and 1939 according to the figures given by the Soviet census) have still further aggravated the problem.

Fear of war, the need to give priority to the development of its heavy industries, is the main reason why the gap is quite so great, in spite of all that has been done, between Soviet housing plans and Soviet achievements.

In the peace years there were many observers who thought that Stalin exaggerated the war danger and who criticised him bitterly for not speeding up rehousing even if the transfer of additional material and labour meant slowing down industrial development. Present facts speak for themselves.

But whatever the causes, the practical effect of all this in terms of the everyday life of the Russian people is that if you were a Soviet citizen at the present time you might be living in a flat of your own, modest judged by Great Britain's best standards, but better than anything Russian workers have ever before known.

Alternatively, you might have had allotted to you one or two rooms in a mansion that at one time belonged to a Russian noble or well-to-do merchant. In that case you would have to get along as best you could with the other families living in the house, sharing with them whatever bathroom and kitchen accommodation was available.

Constantly newspaper articles and radio talks would exhort you to be clean in your habits, to be considerate of the other inmates of the house and to remember that all this was a temporary expedient. One day, you would be assured, the state would pro-

vide you with a comfortable home for your own exclusive use.

When I recall many of those improvised Russian households I am struck by their resemblance to some of our own wartime evacuation schemes. In wartime Britain even the same very human problems have cropped up and we have been none too smart in knowing how to solve them; as for instance, how a number of different housewives can be got to share the same kitchen without getting in one another's way and on one another's nerves.

The Russians are a gregarious people. As their country becomes more prosperous I believe they will insist more on the luxury of privacy. There are already tendencies that way. But up to the present everything has been done both by propaganda and by the forms of the new social institutions, to encourage them to enjoy communal living.

Again keeping in mind some of our own wartime experiences, there need no longer be some of the grosser misunderstandings that at one time were prevalent in this country, as to what is implied by communal living. It does not mean, nor ever did mean even in Russia's most chaotic earlier revolutionary years, that you could walk into your neighbour's house and help yourself to his favourite armchair or to his overcoat or to his wife, and that he could take the same liberties with you.

In marriage relations the U.S.S.R. has gone through various experimental phases. The old Bolsheviks called for austere living but at the same time they introduced laws that made marriage and divorce as cheap and simple a process as calling at a post office and buying a penny stamp.

A man and woman who wished to register the fact that they were living together called at the marriage bureau, they were interviewed by a minor official, filled in a simple form and in a few minutes the whole

business was over. They were duly registered.

A week later, if they wished to be divorced, they, or either one of them, called at a divorce bureau, were again interviewed by a minor official, filled in a simple form and the matter was again settled. They were now divorced.

So far as the interests of the children were concerned it made little difference whether the parents were legally married or simply living together. In either case the state insisted that the father must contribute to the maintenance of his offspring.

The practical advantage for the woman of registering at the marriage bureau was that, where this ceremony was omitted, the father might deny parenthood, in which case the whole thing had to be argued out in one of the People's Courts.

In the first confused, experimental, emotionally and economically chaotic years of the revolution, there were those who grossly abused the new marriage and divorce provisions.

In recent years marriage and divorce laws have been made more stringent. The permanent association of a man and woman, building a firmly rooted life together for themselves and their children, is the present day Russian fashion.

In what part of their lives then does this communal living of the New Russia that has been so much talked about all over the world, find actual expression? Or is the whole thing a myth? It is by no means a myth. A country as backward in housing conditions as the U.S.S.R., yet striving to raise its entire population to higher social and cultural levels, felt bound to provide as many centres of education and entertainment outside the home as the straitened circumstances of the country would permit.

The economics of the situation worked out in this fashion. A community of a hundred thousand workers are living in hovels inherited from the Czar. The Czar

is murdered, his Government is overthrown, and Lenin comes to power. Lenin and his fellow Bolsheviks claim to govern in the name of the proletariat. They take over the land, the industries, all the wealth of the country both actual and potential.

They promise that all shall be held in trust for the people. They rouse tremendous enthusiasm by painting the future in the rosiest terms. It is understood, even by the most backward, that it will take time before all these bright hopes can be realised.

But in the meantime, where to begin? What can be done in the present that will serve as an example of the much more that is to come? To start off by building ideal homes for everyone is physically impossible. But although, to take the community of a hundred thousand workers I have already mentioned, it is not yet possible to build a hundred thousand separate homes, by an expenditure of less than a thousandth part of that effort, the community can be supplied with all manner of social amenities.

A few imposing new buildings rise in the midst of the hovels. There is a school for the older children, a creche for the under-fours, a kindergarten for children between four and eight years old, a maternity hospital, a general hospital, a communal restaurant, a cinema, a theatre, a variety of clubs, a recreation park.

All Russian communities are not equally well supplied. But everywhere a beginning has been made; in some places this side of Russian life has been developed on such a lavish and enlightened scale that admiring visitors are attracted from all over the world.

Living in this between stage, half of the old world and half of the new, the Russian may feel that life is hard, home conditions cramping, food and clothing meagre, the ideal future a tantalising will-o'-the-wisp; but for the young in particular, enthusiam is kept at concert pitch by the state aided institutions where they may go to enjoy themselves or to study.

Mothers are not obliged to send their children to creche or kindergarten. But as so much more is done for the children there than is possible in the poorer homes, they are very popular. The child, when taken along in the morning, is given a bath and put into clean clothes. The clothes it arrived in are put away in its own locker until the mother or friend calls for it in the evening.

The nursery rooms are gaily painted, made charming with toys, the children have meals there, sleep in the middle of the day, play together very happily and have their health carefully watched by trained nurses and doctors.

Up to the present more has been done for the children in the U.S.S.R. than for its old people. Most old people live with their families and are wholly or partly maintained by them. There is a complete system of insurance for old age, but all are not yet included in the scheme. To qualify one must be a member of a trade union and the amount of the pension varies according to income while working and length of service.

One thing that all Russians look forward to is their annual holiday with pay. Those who work trade union hours (raised from seven to eight shortly before the war, with further emergency increases since) expect a week's or two weeks break.

The Palaces of the Czars and the grandiose summer residences of the old nobility are now workers holiday homes. There are many of these homes, mostly in the Crimea and the Caucasus, and all are filled to capacity throughout the whole holiday season.

But even at that, less than one in a thousand of the numbers of workers on holiday at any given time can find accommodation in them. Nor does everyone want a holiday in an institution, however pleasant the amenities may be.

You will find young Russia hiking, crowding on to

the trains, sailing on the Volga, bicycling when they can secure such a great luxury, camping together under canvas or in wooden huts. Each to his own taste!

Among higher officials the holiday break is usually longer. When they set off for the summer palaces of the Czars or to their own modest country cottages, they expect to remain undisturbed for a month or six weeks. Favouritism? Perhaps.

But the critic who looks for the perfect social justice in the U.S.S.R. that he would never dream of expecting in his own country must keep in mind that for the rest of the year those in positions of responsibility work much longer than a set seven, eight, or even nine hours per day. The rapid expansion of industry and social services has made it quite impossible for them to keep regular hours.

In that sense Soviet Russia has been living under wartime conditions of excessive stress and strain throughout the whole of its existence. In order to keep going for so many years without a complete nervous and physical breakdown, the occasional long rest for those carrying heavy responsibilities has been more than a well-earned privilege. It has been a necessity.

CHAPTER III

RELIGION IN THE NEW RUSSIA

LEARNING that there was a chess match taking place somewhere in the village, I thought I would like to see what was happening.

I was taken in the direction of the ornate gold gilted dome of the church. It was a very pretentious looking church for such a poor, backward slum of a village. But that is very typical of old Russia. Most villages showed the same sharp contrast.

My guide stopped at the church door, beckoned on me to follow him, and when we went inside I saw

Russians of all ages, mostly men, seated around a dozen plain wooden tables. Hardly one raised his head. They were engrossed in their game of chess.

I looked around and saw very little that could have belonged to the original interior of the church. All signs of religious worship had been removed. The rough stone walls were decorated with large colourful banners and posters, all of them being Communist slogans.

There was an ordinary platform where the altar had stood and the wall behind it was given over to enormous rather blurred black and white photographs of Lenin, Karl Marx and other less well known Communist dignitaries. It all looked peaceful and orderly. The church was now the village recreation hall.

Nothing has scandalised the rest of the world quite so much as stories about "Godless" Russia. Even now, almost a quarter of a century after the collapse of Czardom, the passionate argumentation continues.

Enemies of Soviet Russia have fastened on this issue more than on any other as the basis of their attacks. Friends of Soviet Russia have frequently been guilty of the quite useless foolishness of trying to evade or falsify the whole matter. I myself prefer the utter candour with which the Bolshevik leaders themselves deal with this subject, to the muddle-headed evasions of some of their would-be friends.

To-day, as much as in the first exuberant years of the revolution, a careful, systematic training is given to all young people, the intention of which is to free them from superstition and mysticism.

All members of the Russian Communist Party and probationers who hope to become members, must be atheists. Numerous newspapers are published, discussion groups organised, and museums maintained, all with the purpose of exposing the fallacies of religion and inculcating a scientific rational outlook on life.

It is illuminating to look around one of those anti-

God museums. Prominently displayed in the entrance hall of the one I recall most vividly—and they are all pretty much alike—is a streamer with the well worn old Marxist tag, " Religion is the Opium of the People."

Whether that means anything or nothing to the visitor depends on the point of view he holds before he sets out to investigate. In itself it does not advance the argument by a single hair's breadth one way or another.

But what is much more disquieting are some of the exhibits neatly displayed and documented in cases surrounding all the walls of the museum room proper. They mostly consist of fake charms or fake relics of saints. Some relics claim to be the toe nail or some other fragment of the saint himself.

Other relics are fragments from garments he wore. There is also an assortment of miracle-working mummies. They are so patently fake and so unquestionably part of the stock-in-trade that Russian priests sold to poor superstitious peasants (and sold very dear, with nicely graduated scales of prices), that the clear mind of youth instinctively turns away from such mummery.

If priests could tell lies about those things, how far was all the rest they had to say simply a pack of lies invented to keep poor people docile and obedient to their masters ?

The next stage in the anti-God education of the Russian boy or girl is a forceful schooling in the history of the Greek Orthodox Church. Its crowning jewel was Rasputin, corrupt, drunken, sensual, yet the greatest single influence at the court of Czar Nicholas.

Peter the Great, in 1729, made himself head of both church and state. The church became more than a passive spectator of the worst excesses of Czarist despotism. It became its most powerful accomplice. Priests who could go freely into the homes of the people, and were in a favoured position for learning the most intimate details of their life, were often the agents who denounced to the police anyone they had cause to suspect of working for even the mildest social reforms.

Nor would the Russian church cease meddling in politics, even after the Bolshevik revolution. The Patriarch declared open war upon the revolutionary government. The Bolsheviks retaliated by opening the coffins of the " incorruptible saints " and exposing the bogus wax figures that had been used to hoodwink the ignorant and superstitious masses.

In 1921, a famine year in the U.S.S.R., the government requisitioned all the most valuable possessions of the church and sold them to buy bread for hungry people. Stripped of nine-tenths of its material wealth, denied the right to publish and circulate religious periodicals, every one of its priests under rigid police supervision, the church was nevertheless still allowed certain rights.

The Soviet constitution guarantees liberty of conscience and of religious worship.

Some churches were destroyed because they were physically in the way of new town planning schemes. Others were converted into recreation clubs and used for other non-religious social purposes.

But so abundantly well was " holy " Russia supplied with places of worship that this still left open more churches than there were congregations to fill.

In short, it has always been Soviet policy to conduct an energetic anti-God campaign and thereby to wean its citizens from the church, but those Russians who, in spite of all discouragement and material disadvantages, still choose to keep up their traditional religious observances, are permitted to do so.

Following the Revolution, among other disabilities, Russian priests were disfranchised. It was therefore one of the most discussed features of the amendments made to the Soviet Constitution in 1936 that nearly fifty thousand practising priests of the Greek

Orthodox church, along with representatives of the Roman Catholic, Evangelical, Mohammedan and Buddhist fraternities, were, for the first time under Bolshevik rule, permitted to vote.

This does not indicate any change in Communist philosophy towards religion as such. But it does show that the Soviet tolerance of religious observances among those they fail to convert to the official atheism of the State, is quite genuine.

One sight you are almost sure to see if you visit any of the famous Moscow or Leningrad churches is a group of visiting Americans trying to make up their minds about Russia and religion. They find themselves caught in a most troublesome dilemma. Many of them are devoutly religious men and women.

A high proportion of those who take the trouble to visit Russian churches belong to one or other of the progressive non-conformist sects in America. In their own country their young ministers lay great stress on what they call "the social implications of the gospel." They are ardent social reformers.

On more than a score of different occasions I have been invited to speak in American churches of that kind. Accustomed to the more cautious and conservative attitude of the general run of ministers in Great Britain (there are exceptions here, too, of course), I have been surprised at the outspoken radicalism of many of their American colleagues.

The dilemma that Russia presents to such men is that they find the Government supporting active anti-religious campaigns, yet that same government, in its social welfare work, giving practical form to much that they themselves sympathise with and admire.

The day before visiting a Russian church they may have visited a Russian kindergarten where there were children, who, if born a generation earlier when the church was a power in the land, would have been sprawling on the floor of some insanitary hovel, dirty,

most likely vermin-ridden and with no attempt being made by anyone to check any incipient signs of disease, to tend to their health needs, to plan their education. The mothers of most of Russia's child population were too poor and too ignorant to do much for them. There was no other power in the land that thought these lowly ones worth troubling about. Not "holy" Russia, but atheist Russia has gone furthest towards obeying the Christian injunction "As ye have done it unto the least of these, ye have done it unto me."

At one time religious shrines were everywhere in Russia. Even on the loneliest roadway miles from any village, there would be niches sheltering an image of the Virgin Mary and Child. The meanest hovel had its ikon and its picture of Christ or one of the Saints. In old Russia, dirt, disease, illiteracy, bestial poverty and the symbols of the Greek Orthodox Church lived amicably side by side.

Peasants now-a-days are not obliged to take their ikons from the wall, but most of them have done so or compromised by removing them to a less conspicuous position. In their former place hangs a portrait or plaque of Stalin.

Lenin is fading from the Russian scene. For one picture of his now on display there are a hundred pictures of Stalin. This all but deification of one man is the way of dictatorships. It is also what happens in a country that is uncertain of itself, or passing through a period of severe crisis.

Russia has its Stalin. Germany has its Hitler. Great Britain during the tense days following Dunkirk began to display a marked craving for picture postcards of Mr. Winston Churchill. They came out in a rash all over the place.

A primitive people cannot live by abstract ideas alone. It must have its ideas personified for it. It must have something tangible that it can look at and touch

The Russian peasant, with a prudent eye turned to both his past and present duties, often does his best to reconcile the two. He does not see why he should not have the blessings of both. An ikon and an image of Stalin hanging side by side on the kitchen wall is not an unusual sight.

When the sons and daughters of peasants marry, although they are of the generation whose whole lifetime has been lived in the post-revolutionary era, they mostly choose to be married in church in addition to registering at the Soviet marriage bureau. Even in the towns a considerable percentage of marriages is solemnised in church, the young couple going together to register their marriage only after receiving the blessings of the priest.

Religion is socially unpopular. To be known to be a regular churchgoer does not help you to get on in the Soviet world. Few young people see the church as a career. There is no new generation of priests or seminaries where they can be trained. Any training given to younger men is done clandestinely and in face of all kinds of governmental discouragement.

Nor have any new churches been built since the revolution.

One day, if Russia can be made to feel safe, if its government can relax its rigid controls, anti-God publications, or as we would say in this country, a rationalist Press, will certainly continue to exist. But other sects will also be given the right to publish and propagate their point of view.

Religion in Russia will lose its martyr's crown. No church on its organisational side is likely to be permitted to become as worldly and corrupt as the Greek Orthodox Church was in the days of the Czar. But all sects and none will have equal civic liberties.

On the other hand I may be too optimistic. The future is still uncertain. But present tendencies are pointing that way. Religious services now being held

throughout the U.S.S.R. praying for victory for the Red Army are, to say the least of it, not likely to impede the growth of mutual tolerance between church and State.

CHAPTER IV

EDUCATION IN THE NEW RUSSIA

STALIN has very pronounced views on education. He is the terror of his more romantic colleagues. He wants Russian schools to turn out good engineers, chemists, technicians of every kind. To that end all else has been subordinated.

It is changed days from the early revolutionary years when it was often difficult to believe that Soviet schools were intended for serious educational purposes. The atmosphere at that time was more that of a boisterous public meeting, with the audience getting rather out of hand.

Now-a-days the hearts of our strictest disciplinarians would be rejoiced by the perfect order that prevails in those same schools.

Five years ago, all as part of the Stalin drive to increase the skilled personnel capable of getting the best results out of Russia's new industrial plant, collectivised farms and mechanised army equipment, the new educational regime was already well under way.

In the middle of the winter term I was taken into the classroom of the Moscow school where Svetlana Stalin's youngest child, then a vivacious, dark-haired little girl about ten years of age, was one of the pupils. The headmaster of the school was with me. When he opened the classroom door the children stood to attention. They did it exceedingly well. There was no shuffling, no laggards, no noise of books and pencils being dropped. They had plainly been well drilled and had done this many times before.

It was part of the accepted school routine.

Only those who have been in Soviet schools in the boisterous free-for-all days can appreciate the staggering completeness of the change of which small incidents such as this are indicative.

The authority of the teacher has been completely restored. The children are given their orders and must obey.

In the present day Russian school you will find pupils and teachers going through the day's curriculum in much the same way as in any orthodox, well-conducted English school.

To say that Russian history and literature is no longer presented to the children in a biased, strictly controlled form, would not be true. It still is. The Bolshevik leaders, like every other ruling caste in the world, take great care over the selection and manner of presentation of subject matter in their schools.

That means that what they permit to be taught is a true index of the particular phase of development that Bolshevik thought and institutions are passing through. Startling changes take place from time to time in the U.S.S.R. That is what makes it so absorbing to watch, and often so unpredictable.

In Lenin's lifetime the Czars of Russia, for instance, were presented simply as enemies of the people, oppressors of the poor. Now each is given individual treatment and made more life-like.

Peter the Great is positively a favourite. He could find little to object to in the interpretation of his life and character in one of the most popular of contemporary Russian plays. I was astonished when I saw it.

Peter swaggers on to the stage, cruel, purposeful irreverent. But it is a man in the round you are shown, not a featureless monster. The audience roared with laughter at a scene in which he cut off the beards of the old-fashioned noblemen who had failed to conform

to his decrees. They loved his iconoclasticism. They sympathised with his passion for ships and machinery. They could understand his dream of a mighty St. Petersburg.

One hundred thousand workmen perished in the disease laden swamps before Petersburg was founded. There was utter silence in the theatre throughout the poignant scene that showed some of these poor wretches at work.

The Russian theatre has a brilliant past. Many of its best qualities have been maintained and even improved upon. I doubt if it could ever have been better, more vivid, vigorous, dramatic, than at that moment. I wondered what the tense, packed audience was thinking. Here was the human cost of relentless, large-scale innovation. Their generation had also built new cities, new industries. It had not been done cheaply. Many had suffered.

I asked some Russian friends afterwards how the play had affected them. They cheerfully agreed that there was a family likeness between Stalin and Peter. "Peter in his day was almost a Bolshevik," said one of them.

Then he hastily added, "But you must never forget that whatever privations we Soviet citizens have had to bear, everything that Stalin orders is done for our good, is done so that our future may be prosperous and secure. There he is quite unlike Peter. who did everything for his personal glory and thought less of men than of dogs. Men were just so much coinage that he could spend as he pleased."

Even with this qualification I had heard the term Bolshevik applied in a way that would have scandalised the earlier revolutionaries.

The play and the comments on the play indicated an important shift in the way Russians were being taught to see the past. It was all part of the official drive to merge socialist sentiments with the powerful

emotions that can always be aroused by an appeal to traditional patriotism.

To some readers it may seem highly irrelevant to be given an account of a popular stage production, in the midst of a discussion on school curriculum. What has the one to do with the other? In the U.S.S.R. a very great deal. The theatre, like everything else, is rigidly censored. If a certain interpretation of history is permitted in a play, you can be quite sure that an identical interpretation is being given in the schools.

As with history, so too with literature. Russian children are being taught to be proud of the infinite richness of their own great literature. But Stalin, always severely practical, though pleased enough no doubt that enjoyment of a play by Chekov, or one of Pushkin's poems, has been brought within reach of millions who could never before have had such pleasures, places his main emphasis elsewhere.

Keeping in mind that his young countrymen and women, if they are to hold their own in the world, will have to know what to do with modern machinery, how to make it and how to repair it, technical training has been his first concern.

A Russian friend put the point very vividly to me when he said: "Please remember that in your country most small boys see the inside of a watch before they are five, and are tinkering about with an old motor-car or machinery of some kind while they are still children. They get the feel of machinery. They understand it and love it.

"But millions of our children may never have seen either a watch or a motor-car. Russia is a country of small villages. Think of the vast empty spaces stretching between most of those villages. Think of how many children, and adults, too, who have never travelled in a bus or a train.

It is wood, not metal, that is the traditional Russian material. We can do anything with wood. But that is not enough in the modern world. We have to master steel and concrete."

Knowing this constant pre-occupation of the Soviet authorities with technical efficiency, it is not surprising to find how much of the school curriculum is given over to chemistry, biology, geology, engineering and mathematics. In the main cities the high schools have beautifully equipped science laboratories, as good as the best in Great Britain. That standard, of course, is not maintained in the smaller places.

But the same question arises in regard to schooling in the U.S.S.R. as to housing. Paper plans and future promises apart, how many of Russia's children are actually receiving tuition equal to the best in our country? Or is it all a facade that breaks down where you leave the cities and go further afield?

In theory, according to the Soviet Constitution, every Russian school child is entitled to free elementary, secondary, university education if it so wishes and must attend elementary school whether it wishes to or not. But schooling facilities vary widely in different parts of the country and children cannot be forced to attend schools and colleges that are not yet built.

In the villages, especially around harvest time, you will see children of every age helping their fathers and mothers in the fields. Their parents are paid for the work they do. They go to school when the farm work is less pressing and until around fifteen years of age receive tuition of a simple kind that at least makes them literate.

That is a very great deal. It is little short of a miracle in a country where eighty per cent. of the population could neither read nor write a generation ago. It is, in fact, a rough and ready equivalent to what a country labourer's child receives in this country.

In the towns the available places in the school are nowhere sufficient to meet the demand. Even in Moscow, schools still work double shifts, sometimes three shifts. The last shift, which means children coming home from school about midnight, is unpopular with parents but they have just to put up with it.

Attendance at school from the age of eight to eighteen is the educational norm in Moscow. All children do not complete the ten years' course. Many leave school when they are fifteen and go to work. In that case for a few years more they work half-time and attend a trade school for the other part of the day.

The competition for university places is severe. The number of available places advertised for the college term 1941–42 was 657,000, an advance of almost 13 per cent. on the previous year, but still meeting only a fragment of the demand.

The number of elementary and secondary school children for whom accommodation was to be available in the year 1941–42 was 36,200,000, an increase of 3.4 per cent. over 1940–41.

The war has now done to Russia's children what it had already done to our own. The young ones have been rushed to country places where it is hoped they will be out of reach of the German bomber. The student population, ready to begin college or half-way through their courses, have reported for national defence.

Some have been told that the best service they can render is to continue with their studies, for more than ever the U.S.S.R. needs her trained specialists. Others will be called on to fight. None will refuse. Many will die.

The Bolshevik leaders have always predicted war, but that does not make the tragedy for the young people any less.

CHAPTER V

THE CULT OF THE WORKING MAN

THE wild music of the Russian folk songs, sometimes sad, sometimes exultant, is at its best in the songs inspired by Stenka Razin. When Russians start singing those songs you can see the mighty figure of Razin, rallying a starving peasantry, making warriors out of slaves, bringing hope where before there was only suffering.

So bitter was the suffering of the peasants in Razin's lifetime (he was murdered in 1671) that, able to bear no more, they rose in rebellion and in their mad frenzy murdered their masters, burned their houses, burned even the churches and slaughtered the corrupt prosperous priests who had forgotten all true religion and were ready to give their blessing to every tyrannical practice of the gentry.

That was long ago. But again and again since then, so terrible are the excesses that Russian landowners have indulged in at the expense of the peasants, that the peasants in turn know no reason, mercy or moderation when they break their bonds and make a bid for power.

In our own century as in earlier centuries, when the breaking point came in Russia, it came in a wild torrential rush that knew no limits.

In 1917 Lenin, whose party had seized power in the cities and was master of the industrial population, turned to the peasants, and in return for their support, offered them peace and land.

The slaughter of Russian soldiers in the early months of the First World War was terrible beyond description. More than three and a half million Russians were slain in less than a year. All that was borne with hardly a murmur. The Russians are not a flimsy people. They are heavy-weights. When they go to war they fight to kill or be killed. There are no half

measures with them. Their friends and enemies alike have always granted them exceptional staying power. They can stand almost anything.

But by 1917 the Russian masses were in a mood to listen to Lenin's talk of peace. They were embittered by the breakdown of the whole national economy of Czarist Russia, most of all by the failure of the Czar's government to supply the fighting men with arms. Often even clothing and food were unobtainable.

Again and again troops were thrown into battle against formidably equipped German divisions with nothing but their naked courage to sustain them.

Most Russians longed for an end to the fighting. And the promise to the land-hungry peasants that when they got back to their holdings there would be no landowners over them, that those who ploughed the land would be the owners of the land, settled the issue.

At Brest-Litovsk on March 3rd, 1918, the Germans and the Russians signed a separate peace. It was a cruelly punitive peace. The Germans pressed home every inch of their advantage. The Allied Governments, now left to bear the whole brunt of the German onslaught on the western front, cursed the Russian Bolsheviks for not going on with the war, and vowed revenge.

The Germans were in the end defeated and on November 11th, 1918, the armistice terms were signed.

For three more years Russia was racked with severe fighting. Bands of White Russians, supported by cash, munitions and men fed to them by the Allies, harassed the Bolsheviks.

But through it all the Bolsheviks remained the rulers of Russia. How was it done? Partly because the world was war weary and support for the armies of intervention began to dwindle. Partly because the workers of other countries, including Great Britain, took a hand in the matter and organised influential "Hands Off Russia" campaigns.

But the exhaustion of their external opponents and the efforts of their friends abroad would not in themselves have brought success to Lenin and his party if they had not had something to say to the Russian masses, something to offer them, that aroused widespread support.

What was the main theme of the Bolshevik appeal? Day after day, in speeches, in broadcasts, in every conceivable way, this message was spread throughout the land: "The last shall be first and the first shall be last. Ye who have been poor and lowly, ye are the salt of the earth."

The cult of the working man had become Russia's religion.

I had some amusing experiences in Russia while it was still in this phase. The first questions I was asked wherever I went were, How did I earn my living? How much was I paid? How did my father earn his living? I gave great satisfaction for I was able to say that my father was a miner and my grandfather had been a miner.

There was nothing offensive in the direct and personal questions that the most casual Russian acquaintance, picked up in a railway compartment, at the theatre, in a factory canteen, fired at one's head. It was the Russian way. It was all part of the ardent unconventional atmosphere of the earlier revolutionary years. Everyone talked and kept on talking. Food was scarce but conversation was plentiful. The future was seen through a haze of boundless hope.

There were the dispossessed no doubt, crouching in the background, lost, bewildered, afraid even of their own shadows. But for the devotees of the new regime and the multitudes they had infected with their enthusiasms, it might be said with much evidence to prove it, "bliss was it in that dawn to be alive, and to be young was very heaven."

What of present-day Russia, of Russia in the year

1941, the Russia that has become our ally in the common fight against Hitler's Germany? Does this glorification of the working man still survive? Has life under Soviet rule worked out according to promise? Are there no great extremes of wealth and poverty? Does everyone have the same standard of life? What sort of standard is that?

If you go into a typical factory or farm, not some specialised show-place, who is boss? Is the work carried out efficiently? Is the output such that Russia can sustain its present war effort? Is the general public sufficiently well educated, patriotic, sure of themselves and their cause to survive inevitable reverses and hold on until ultimate victory?

These questions have become of more than academic interest to the British people. They are a probing into the strength of important links in a chain that is part of our own life-line.

As to efficiency in factory management, there has been a second revolution in Russia dating from soon after the rise of Hitler to power in Germany. Stalin has stepped in with ruthless realism and given the man in control in each workshop a status and privileges that were undreamt of in the first years of the revolution. Stalin was compelled to do this, otherwise what I have called the "cult of the working man" would have got out of hand and become a parody of itself.

Workers' control in the raw unpractical forms experimented with in the first phase of the Bolshevik revolution was abandoned. On the production side it was found an unsatisfactory way of managing industry. It was not for the workers in any given factory to be the final arbiters as to what they would produce and how they would produce it. That way lay chaos.

Industry had to be planned as a whole by a Supreme Economic Council and each factory had to be told what contribution it must make to the general plan. The manager in charge of any given works was to be

appointed by and be responsible to the Government A programme was laid down for him. He had to do his best to fulfil it. Often the programme was changed.

Again he had to do his utmost to adapt the factory under his management to the new requirements. He could not refuse to do so. He could resign if he felt incapable of carrying out the instructions of the Central Economic Council but he could not ignore its instructions or defy them.

The Council, of course, in coming to its decision was expected to consider all technical information supplied to it by the individual works' managers and was not supposed to ask them to do the impossible. All this was the genesis of the state economic planning which is now such a distinctive and important part of Russian life.

Without such planning the German army could have speedily cut through a feeble and defenceless Russia. A scientifically planned national economy is an essential part of the defensive preparations of any country that seriously intends to hold its own in total war.

But for long after Russia decided to leave technical matters to be decided by technical experts, the shortage of skilled personnel, able and willing to occupy positions of responsibility in industry, continued to be serious. Foreign specialists were engaged. They were useful; but not a satisfactory permanent method of filling the gap.

It is clear now that Stalin has been haunted for almost a decade by a growing conviction that he had only a very short time in which to accomplish a gigantic task. He is not the type that stands on ceremony or permits himself to be throttled by a theory if that theory does not work out well in practice.

Now one of the theories that gave much of the passionate drive to the first years of Soviet rule was that all were to enjoy a good life together, no man richer than his neighbour, all share and share alike.

Stalin, just at the moment when it looked as if Russia was beginning to be able to provide a tolerable standard of life for all its citizens, a standard better than the Russian masses had ever enjoyed before, a standard spartan enough in all conscience but steadily improving, sent the ship rocking by a daring new innovation.

Equality of income, he announced, was something that belonged to the future. Soviet Russia had not reached that point yet.

In the meantime all citizens would be paid according to the value of their services to the state. No man was permitted to live by owning. The land and all industry was held by the state in trust for the entire people. But though none might live by owning, the value that the state fixed for various services began to fluctuate to such a degree that one man might receive wages ten, twenty, forty times as much as another received.

This was Stalin's way of giving an extra spurt to production, of encouraging more Russian men and women to undertake special courses of study and so fill the gap in the ranks of the specialists. Without this added material incentive, a great army of idealistic young Russians was already ably filling posts of great responsibility. But there were not enough of them. Stalin wanted more. He was fighting against centuries of slow, backward living. He was also fighting against a more immediate past when, discovering it was just as profitable to be the factory doorkeeper as its managing director, and much safer, many Russians hesitated to move upwards into responsible positions.

The manager of a factory, failing to fulfil the programme laid down for him, might have excellent reasons for his failure, and on the other hand might simply have been inefficient. In either case he was liable to have sleepless nights wondering if he would be charged with sabotage, with plotting the downfall of the regime, with being in the pay of a foreign power.

Altogether, it is not surprising that sheer devotion to the state, uncontaminated by any more material incentive was, in those pioneer conditions, not enough to build up as numerous a group of specialists in the time available, as Stalin deemed necessary.

His own words, in an address to Graduates from the Red Army Academies on May 4th, 1935, the time when this phase I have been describing—the most recent phase in Soviet development—was getting under way, have a threefold interest for us now. They give a candid picture of the stage of development Russia had reached. They give a glimpse into the mind of the man on whom so much depends in the present war, and they show the high degree of social responsibility as well as martial prowess demanded from the officers of the Red Army.

Of his country six years ago Stalin could say:

> "Having outlived the period of famine in technical resources we have entered a new period—a period, I would say, of famine in the matter of people, in the matter of cadres, in the matter of workers capable of harnessing technique and advancing it. The point is that we have factories, mills, collective farms, Soviet farms, an army; we have technique in all this; but we lack people with sufficient experience to squeeze out of technique all that can be squeezed out of it.
>
> . . . . . "Without people who have mastered technique, technique is dead. Technique in the hands of people who have mastered it can and should perform miracles. If in our first class mills and factories, in our Soviet farms and collective farms, in our Red Army, we had sufficient cadres capable of harnessing this technique, our country would secure results three times and four times greater than at present.
>
> "That is why emphasis must now be laid on people, on cadres, on workers who have mastered

technique. That is why the old slogan, 'Technique decides everything,' which is a reflection of a period we have already passed through, a period in which we suffered from a famine in technical resources, must now be replaced by a new slogan, the slogan 'Cadres decide everything.' That is the main thing now. . . . It is time to realise that of all the valuable capital the world possesses, the most valuable and the most decisive is people, cadres. If we have good and numerous cadres in industry, agriculture, transport and the army, our country will be invincible. If we do not have such cadres, we shall be lame on both feet."

"Lame on both feet" is a graphic and dramatic phrase. How far have the frankly admitted weak points in Russia's strength since then been made good?

The London *Times* in its editorial column of July 29th, 1941, six weeks after Russia entered the war, is not describing a weak or a crippled nation when it reports:

"The Russian Army at this stage shares with the Royal Air Force the distinction of having found an answer to the blitzkreig. In neither case is it anything like a final answer; but . . . the Russians have treated the Panzer convention with the same contempt as the Germans bestowed on the Maginot.

"A Russian division left behind by the German motorised advance does not think of laying down its arms; it fights on to the last; and even if overwhelming numbers break up its cohesion, its isolated units, devotedly supported by a patriot peasantry, may continue a guerilla warfare for weeks. . . . . The Russians have shown that, unlike any other nation on the continent, they understand the conditions imposed by modern science upon war, at least as thoroughly as their opponents. . . . . .

"In the field of propaganda the Russians have so far had a much more successful campaign than the Germans, because they have not tried to win battles with their mouths. They have not boasted; they have not promised cheap or rapid victories; they have merely said that they would fight to the death and they are doing it.

. . . . . "The failure to find Russian quislings has been so abject that German propaganda has had to proclaim that Russians capable of 'collaborating' with the 'New Order' do not exist. . . . . The future is still incalculable. We know only that our Allies have complete appreciation of the struggle in which they are engaged, and that their resolution will not falter."

CHAPTER VI

THE STRENGTH OF SOVIET DEFENCE

YOU don't expect a young waitress to cancel an appointment with you because she had forgotten that at the time arranged she was due to have a lesson in parachute jumping. That happened to me in Leningrad. I laughed. It sounded so theatrical. Nothing like that ever happened in Great Britain. We left military training to the professional army, mildly supplemented by the territorials and a handful of college boys.

It was hard to take seriously this Russian insistence that every man, and woman, must learn to shoot accurately, to drop from parachutes, to understand the elements of military science.

Even the children were being trained. I watched a group of them listening to a radio talk. Afterwards there was a great deal of excited discussion. They had been set a problem in military strategy and invited to send in their answers. On a given date the correct solution was to be broadcast.

In the villages preoccupation with defence problems was just as great. Every collective farm had its sports organisation, responsible for drilling the peasants. The tractor drivers, very important people on the large farms, were given special training with military service in view. Every tractor and tractor driver was regarded as a potential tank and tank driver. The newest tractors were supposed to be convertible into light tanks. The factories where they were made were equipped so that the plant could be switched over to the making of tanks with the minimum dislocation and delay.

A.R.P. training, Home Guarding, special courses in nursing, all the civic defence organisations that we began to take seriously in this country only after we had been at war for some time, the Russians had in readiness years before the fighting started. That may sound cold-blooded and deliberate. On the Soviet Government's part it was. Convinced that only a miracle could save the U.S.S.R. from war, and not believing in miracles, estimating that their country would most likely have to fight in uniquely difficult circumstances, knowing that millions of Soviet citizens were too technically backward to be able to improvise at a moment's notice, the Soviet authorities set going a gargantuan nation-wide network of organisations, all devised as contributions towards efficiency in what we understand by A.R.P. work, the A.F.S., the Home Guard and the rest.

Russian men and women react to long periods of dull routine " duties " in the same way as you or I do. They become bored. Their efforts slack off. How then, year after year, did the Government succeed in more than holding their interest, in intensifying it? Quite frankly, by injecting a strong element of what to us would seem highly theatrical circus methods in the manner of their appeal to the masses.

Everything possible was done to add spice and excitement to the activities of the sports organisations and semi-military organisations charged with training the public for wartime emergencies. For one thing, to belong to such organisations was the correct and fashionable thing to do. That always helps. No one laughed at you. No one called you a prig. No one dared do that, for sensational press scares and radio speeches continuously reiterated that war was imminent, that the enemies who would have to be faced were many and powerful, that any moment the attack might begin.

Then, of at least equal importance, much of the training in the civil defence organisations was made very enjoyable. It was no hardship to belong to a ski-ing club and to be given government aid in buying your outfit, and in the maintenance of camps and training grounds. Or you might fancy swimming instead, or flying, or parachute jumping. Whatever sport suited your taste, a helping hand was held out to you so that training was made pleasant and inexpensive.

Many people, whatever country they live in, don't become interested in any organisation until there are lots of prizes and publicity associated with it. For that taste, too, ample provision was made. Any day if you looked at a Russian newspaper you would see pictures of prize winners in a score of different activities ranging from first aid ambulance work, to the ability to shoot to kill.

Women were not excluded from any of those training courses and many of them prided themselves on their Voroshilov Badges awarded for expert marksmanship. But the majority of the women specialised in Red Cross work, not so spectacular maybe, but more solidly useful considering the man-power available for direct fighting and that women were not conscripted for military services, nor permitted to serve as front line troops.

One of the most exciting of the auxiliary volunteer defence services is the "Ossoaviachim" which specialises in defence against air and chemical attack. In peacetime it was called on to fight forest fires and pests that threatened the crops. Before war began it already had a heroic record of service to its credit.

All the above, although working in close and friendly co-operation with the Army, are not part of the Red Army proper. The fierce pride of the Russians in their Red Army men has to be seen to be believed. Nowhere in the world was the status of a private soldier in a peacetime army so high. Everything of the best in food, clothing, equipment, living quarters and cultural opportunities that Russia had to give, were his.

He lived hard, spent strenuous days divided between military training and intensive educational work, but in return for all that was expected of him he received much. A youth of nineteen would be called up for two years' military training.

A million and a half received calling up papers every year. Of those, more than a third were granted exemption for health reasons, family circumstances or because they were students engaged in a course of industrial technical study that the Government did not want to have interrupted. The remainder served for two years. Most of them came from peasant households that for generations had lived almost as primitive, unlettered lives as their horses and cows.

What the local village school, itself generally a Soviet innovation, began, army training completed. The boy of nineteen would return to his village as a young man of twenty-one, qualified to become a respected leader in the local community. Among other things, he had been taught to understand the mechanics and economics of large-scale farming. He could answer the objections of the older people, fire them with his own enthusiasms, probably become an active worker in the campaign to "liquidate illiteracy."

But all did not return to their peacetime occupations. Many elected to make soldiering their permanent profession. They were not accepted unless of a high individual standard. It is those men who held the Panzer divisions, who are Russia's crack troops of the line, who have measured up to the best that Germany can put in the field, and not been found wanting.

I do not know the size of the Russian Army. I don't know the number of tanks and planes immediately available for front line service, and how many more are in reserve. The Russians are not fools. They guard their military secrets well. No one knows those figures. Or rather, the few people in the world who do know are not going to be guilty of the fantastic treachery of disclosing them for general publication.

But there are two sources of information available to any trained observer that an give a partial answer, to much of the speculation about Russia's power to hold out over a long period of time.

One source I have already discussed. That is, the skill and preparedness of the entire Soviet population. At no point will the Nazis be permitted cheap victories. Every inch of Soviet soil will be defended to the death. There will be no half measures.

Russians love their homes and their fields. Besides a share in the profits from their co-operative efforts on the large farms, the house they live in, all it contains, a garden allotment around the house, perhaps a cow or a pig or a few hives of bees, are exclusively their own. It is hard to see everything you have in the world scorched to the ground. The little homely things, nothing to others, are often the hardest to lose. But in total war it is all or nothing. The Russians understand that.

Even if Leningrad, Moscow and Kiev should fall, as they all may do at one point in the fighting, there is another Russia behind the Urals with a self-sufficient

industry, food supplies and an army (built up in readiness for the day when Japan might take advantage of a German attack in the East to launch a simultaneous attack in the West).

Hitler has a long, long journey ahead of him. It would be foolish to say that he will not travel far. But it is safe to say that Russian resistance will be tough enough to prevent him completing the journey —provided there is no suspicion that Britain and America are any less wholehearted in their war effort.

So much for morale! But no amount of morale can make up for a serious shortage of guns and tanks and planes. How does Russia stand in this respect? Are the Germans smashing Soviet fighting equipment at such a rate that they can hope to break through to a population brave enough and willing enough to continue the fight but lacking the essential tools? That is the main danger.

That is why, while the main brunt of the land fighting is being borne by the Red Army, British and American munition workers will have to help the Russians hold the breach by sending them supplementary supplies. The potential wealth of the U.S.S.R. is greater than that of any other country in the world. But wars are not won by coal that is still in the ground-steel that has still to be smelted, rich soil that has still to be cultivated.

It is not potential wealth, but immediately usable wealth that counts. The First Five Year Plan of 1928-33 and the two subsequent Five Year Plans have been the instruments of spectacular progress in the development of Russia's resources.

The second source available to us in estimating the military strength of Russia is an examination of the results of those Plans and the national expenditure thereon. Statistics published by the Soviet State Planning Commission may not be entirely accurate.

They may be "cooked" for a quite reputable reason. Certain production figures must be kept secret or camouflaged, for if disclosed to the enemy they are of immense military importance.

In the British House of Commons "Production" debates, critics who suspect that in certain departments the maximum war effort is not yet being made, have great difficulty in making a convincing case, for they can always be told they are talking without full knowledge of the facts, and cannot be given that full knowledge in case it find its way into enemy hands. The same secrecy rules are observed by the Russians.

With that warning, I append some of the main points made by Voznesensky, Chairman of the Soviet State Planning Commission, in a report issued as recently as February 18th, 1941. They may be of value to those who do not already know the scale of recent Soviet developments.

In 1937-38 the U.S.S.R. was reputed to have more than 15,000 tanks and over 10,000 planes. Since then an intensive speeding up of war supplies has been the pivotal point around which the whole economy of Russia has revolved. That these figures are plausible and may even be a conservative estimate is supported not only by the nature of the resistance that the Red Army has put up, but by the following from Voznesensky's report:

> "Between 1937 and 1940 the industrial output of the U.S.S.R. increased from 95,500 million roubles to 137,500 million roubles; an increase of 44 per cent. This includes an increase in the output of the machine building and metal working industry by 76 per cent. . . . . Railway freight carriage increased from 392,000 million ton-kilometres in 1939 to 409,000 million ton-kilometres in 1940, River-borne freight increased from 34,600 million ton-kilometres in 1939 to 36,000 million ton-kilometres.

"However, there are grave defects in the work of the railways; we still have irrational carriage of freight, which places an unnecessary burden on the railways, while the restricted traffic capacity of a number of sections and lines has not been eliminated. . . . . .

"During the first three years of the Third Five-Year Plan state industry (not including district industry of a local character) was reinforced by the putting into operation of about 2,900 new mills, factories, mines, power stations and other plants. . . . . .

"Towards the end of 1940 the average daily output of pigiron had increased to 46-47,000 tons, as against 40,000 tons at the end of 1937.

"The daily output of steel increased to 58-59,000 tons, as against 50-51,000 tons at the end of 1937.

"The daily output of coal in the mines of the People's Commissariat of the Coal Industry had increased by the end of 1940 to 467,000 tons, as against 370,000 at the end of 1937.

"The average daily output of oil and oil-gas at the end of 1940 had risen to 97-98,000 tons, as against 84-86,000 tons at the end of 1937. . . . .

"The improvement in the activities of industry and the transport services in the latter half of 1940 was in a large measure due to improved labour discipline and increased working hours. This was most of all to be observed in such branches of the extracting industry as ore mining and coal mining, which, in their turn, provided a production base for the advancement of metallurgy and other branches of the national economy."

Many Russian munition workers are having to carry on in the face of heavy bombing raids, and are loyally doing so. They are in the front line in the same sense that the munition workers of Great Britain are.

But fortunately for Russia to-day, when her heavy industries, her armament and munition works were planned, they were dispersed over vast areas, many of the most important new centres being in Asiatic Russia. This was done in order to lessen the risk of destruction by bombing and also to ensure that from whatever side Russia was attacked, it would have basic supplies within reach.

The practical result is that only a small portion of Soviet munition workers are in serious danger from Nazi bombing raids.

CHAPTER VII

RUSSIA'S FOREIGN POLICY

GREAT BRITAIN had been fighting Germany for ninety-three weeks before Russia became our ally. Russia did not want to fight. Russia wanted peace. It wanted peace so badly that it followed the well-worn precedent of coming to terms with Hitler.

Hitler, when it suited his purpose, did not hesitate to add Russia to the long list of countries already invaded without any justification except that they possessed something he needed in his bid for universal power.

In the present-day rulers of Russia Hitler has met his match in resourcefulness and guile. They have few illusions about the rest of the world. They have watched the tortuous game of international power politics and learned to play it themselves as unblushingly as if Geneva had been their finishing school.

In a sense it has. The skill with which Sir John Simon, on behalf of a League of Nations dominated by Britain and France, presented Manchukuo to Japan was a liberal education for anyone.

The Bolsheviks took careful note of all that was happening. They made their own analysis of the motives behind each new event. They observed the

total lack of anti-fascist sentiment, the positive affection for fascist nations shown by pre-war British governments, when, for instance, Abyssinia was betrayed, when the scales were weighed in favour of a fascist Spain, when Czechoslovakia was thrown to Hitler. when the Munich pact was signed. All that was interpreted by Stalin to mean that Hitler was to be permitted to march provided he marched eastwards.

Each time that Russia suggested any plan for checking Hitler's power to commit further acts of aggression Russia was well and truly snubbed. When the 1934 Disarmament Conference faded out, Litvinov, then Soviet foreign secretary, proposed a Permanent Peace Conference with powers to act immediately should any one nation or combination of nations threaten the world with war. Litvinov's proposal and other subsequent proposals for regional pacts of mutual assistance against any aggressor, received no support from Britain.

The Bolsheviks then made a strenuous effort to build up an Anglo-French-Soviet combination ready to stem further Nazi aggression. That too was rejected.

Certain by now that influential forces were at work in Britain and France that were by no means displeased at the prospect of war between Germany and Russia. Stalin set to work to counter his move. He signed the German-Soviet pact.

Soon afterwards Hitler marched against Poland and Britain went to war. The Russians did not believe that Great Britain was in earnest. They did not believe that this was to be a fight to a finish. They calculated that a patched-up peace would soon be made; that we had muddled into war and would find a way of muddling out again.

But whatever happened, the U.S.S.R. intended to concentrate on strengthening her frontiers (the Finnish campaign and the occupation of Eastern Poland were part of the strengthening process) and on avoiding being drawn into the main conflict.

The sequel we are now living through. Stalin tried to purchase peace by coming to terms with Hitler—and if not a peace a postponement of hostilities. Like Mr. Chamberlain, he gained a little extra time, paying for it at the expense of other countries. But when it finally became a choice of either resisting Hitler or succumbing to Nazi domination, again like Britain, Russia decided to fight.

Neither country's story is one of romantic altruism. Both may be criticised for being too self-regarding and in the end losing not gaining by a period of compromise and equivocation before rising to the challenge of fascism. But nothing is to be gained by mutual recrimination about the past, especially now that the fight is on and a solid alliance has at last been reached. It is the present and the future possibilities opened up by the present that matter now.

What will Russia want at the end of the war? Further military adventures? An attempt to dominate the world by force of arms?

There are those who, amazed by the early successes of the Red Army, profess to believe such foolishness. Their judgment will be sobered long before the present conflict is ended. Russia, like ourselves, will have to spend her utmost strength before Hitler can be finally brought down.

Beyond that, it is a rest from fighting, time to heal the present wounds, freedom to concentrate on internal reconstruction, that the Bolsheviks will be bound to seek.

A few years ago in an interview given to Roy Howard, head of the powerful Scripps-Howard newspaper syndicate in the U.S.A., Stalin said: "Export of revolution is nonsense. Each country, if it so desires, will make its own revolution, and if no such desire exists, no revolution will occur. . . . . If you think that the people of the Soviet Union have any desire themselves and by force to alter the face of the sur-

rounding States, then you are badly mistaken. The people of the Soviet Union naturally desire that the face of the surrounding States should change, but this is the business of the surrounding States themselves."

I do not believe that the above is a "trick" statement by a smart politician who really intends something quite different from what his words imply. It is consistent with the policy that Stalin has always pursued. It is consistent with what is plain for all to see, that is, that within the frontiers of the Soviet Union the Bolsheviks already possess every essential for the building of a happy and prosperous socialist community, provided they are not molested by the outside world.

The Russian people have been cheated by events of much that they have laboured for. They understood during the first Five Year Plan that in order to enjoy a comfortable standard of life in the future, they would have for a time to sacrifice immediate amenities. Their time, labour and natural resources had to be spent on building power stations, steel works, engineering plants, sinking coal mines, building new railways. During that phase young Russians were always eager to explain how, though shabby and short of food and badly housed, they were really the richest people in the world.

All the means for providing a good life were accumulating in their hands. But the period of fulfilment has been cruelly postponed for them. Just when they might reasonably have expected a swift upward movement in their standard of living, an increasing proportion of their production had to be diverted to building up their war machine.

If, after the war, we can give the Russian people a feeling of security against external attack, that is the highest prize any Peace Settlement could offer them. That is all they want for it is all they require. Everything else they already have.

CHAPTER VIII

OUR FUTURE RELATIONS WITH RUSSIA

THE U.S.S.R. is an exciting country to visit. But I have never wanted to live there permanently. I have been glad enough to come home again. Russia is an exceedingly foreign land. Much that it has done I deeply admire. But the methods it has often used are abhorrent to me.

Need its rulers have been quite so tough on those who failed to conform? Ordinary criminals are treated with enlightened sympathy in the U.S.S.R. They are fairly tried, justly sentenced and usually sent to penal settlements where everything is done to help them to become good citizens. The unskilled are taught trades; all are allowed to earn and spend a little money; living conditions are tolerable, and wherever possible the prisoner is permitted the privilege of going on regular visits to his family.

But the special criminals, those who have offended the State politically, are treated much less leniently. It is safer in Soviet Russia to commit a non-political murder than to be tainted with the faintest suspicion of hostility towards Joseph Stalin.

It is hard for us to understand the great trials that have been staged in Russia followed by drastic purging of those who refused to conform. All those condemned to death or to long sentences of imprisonment *may* have been guilty of plotting the death of Stalin and the downfall of the regime.

But there is too much that is wrapped in mystery for ordinary people, who seek only the truth, to feel convinced one way or the other.

One thing we do know, is that it might have been better for other countries if they had purged some of their leading generals, politicians and industrialists before Hitler's army began to march. Had Russia its highly placed Quislings? Is that part of the answer

to the riddle of the great State trials? I personally am not convinced that it is the whole answer.

In a country with a democratic political system, opposition candidates may be defeated at the polls. In Russia no opposition is permitted and those who attempt to create one are "liquidated," a euphemism meaning anything from being sent to a less important post in a remote part of the country to being shot.

In Great Britain I know men and women who have been dismissed from their jobs or robbed of all chance of promotion because their political views differed from those of their employer. But that is not the rule. It is exceptional.

In most colliery districts, for instance, if the management attempted to dismiss all employees who openly supported and voted for political candidates disliked by the management, there would be few miners left. In some of our country districts economic intimidation is stronger and more direct. But even in the most feudal corners of Great Britain, the secrecy of the ballot box gives some protection to those who hold unpopular opinions.

In Russia no man is dismissed from his employment for voting for opposition candidates. The reason for this is simple. There are no opposition parties to vote for. Only one party is permitted—the Communist Party. To attempt to organise any other is high treason.

Until 1936, voting at elections was by an open show of hands. The new constitution of 1936 introduced the secret ballot. But still only one candidate! You could vote for him or stay at home and not vote at all but it was healthier to vote.

That is the Russian way of doing things. It is not our idea of an ideal political system; nor yet is Russia's rigid control of press, radio and platform!

But if it comes to a competition in what we dislike most in each other's country, it must not be supposed

that the total reckoning of the Russians against us would be light or easy to answer.

We have travelled much further than the Russians have towards a system of authentic political democracy. The Russians have travelled much further than we have towards the attainment of social and economic democracy. We have each much to learn from the other.

We have each, besides the common task of defeating Hitler, the separate tasks of conquering our own special kinds of fear. It was fear of unemployment and poverty that tormented British people between the First and the Second World War. In those years Russia conquered unemployment. Russia was beginning to conquer poverty as well.

But Russians had their own private torment. They had their secret police, the haunting fear that something you had said or done or was rumoured to have said or done might bring on you the dread charge of having been guilty of counter-revolutionary activities.

It would be an invaluable exchange if we could learn from Russia a less tender regard for the sacred rights of property and if Russia could learn from us a greater respect for the rights of the individual.

Economic planning is as essential for Britain as for the U.S.S.R. It cannot so much as be begun in any seriousness in the present muddle of half private, half public controls. But even the necessities of war have so far not braced us to take the forward plunge.

We are straddling between the old and the new, public sentiment inclining towards the new, those who govern in our name plainly biassed towards the old. That is why Russians smile so sarcastically at all our talk of post war reconstruction schemes. Lacking the basic elements of scientific economic planning, that is, the unhampered possession of our own land, transport system, main industries, our talk sounds to the realistic Russians just so much dishonest chatter.

What of after the war? What are our future relations with Russia likely to be? The rulers of Russia are not sentimentalists. They are hard men. They have been toughened by the consciousness that any softness on their part would immediately be pounced on by internal and external enemies and used to reduce Russia to chaos.

They have few illusions about the world outside Russia. They have studied and played the game of power politics too expertly. If you asked them about our future relations they would probably reply, "That depends on the striking power of the Red Army, the extent of Russian influence throughout the world, public opinion in Britain itself—and on the part played in the shaping of the Peace by the representatives of the U.S.A."

It is too soon yet to work out the full equation. The might of the Red Army has been demonstrated. Respect for the U.S.S.R. has grown as a consequence. But public opinion in both Britain and America is in a state of flux.

There is a great sense of waiting throughout the world, of waiting for a lead that will show us how we can plan our material resources and yet leave men's spirits free. The older democracies have half the answer. Russia has half of the answer. Can we, by a great exertion of the human imagination, bring those two halves together and so make possible a new world order in which it is safe for men and nations to become permanent Allies, and at last to end the agonies of war?

These chapters have been written in the hope of furthering that high goal by contributing to the better understanding of Soviet Russia, for such an understanding is an essential preliminary to the making of any worth-while peace.