

THE RED FLEET AND
THE ROYAL NAVY

"To you, valiant seamen of the British Royal Navy, we, the seamen of the Baltic Fleet, send warm greetings across the seas and oceans.

"The British and Soviet Navies in close alliance will annihilate the Fascist pirates."

VASSILI KULBAKHIN,
Submarine Commander in the Baltic Fleet,
in an address to the Youth Conference,
Moscow.

MAIRIN MITCHELL

THE RED FLEET AND THE ROYAL NAVY



HODDER & STOUGHTON LIMITED
ST. PAUL'S HOUSE, LONDON, E.C.4

FIRST PRINTED . . . September 1942

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Hazell, Watson & Viney, Ltd., London and Aylesbury*

PUBLISHERS' NOTE

THIS book is the first one to appear in English about the Red Fleet. It shows how maritime co-operation between Britain and the U.S.S.R. has been of the greatest importance in this war, and emphasises the need to increase that collaboration after the war. The Red Fleet and the Royal Navy, and the Mercantile Marines of the Soviet Union and of Britain, in conjunction with the Air Forces of these two Powers, must be maintained at strength sufficient for them to be decisive factors in the prevention of a Third World War.

The author, who previously served as a stenographer at sea, has worked as an interpreter at seaports in Britain during the war.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

SOURCES for certain facts stated in THE RED FLEET AND THE ROYAL NAVY have been provided by various authorities, books, and periodicals, among which the Author wishes to mention particularly the following:

The Press Division and the Library of the Admiralty, by whose kind permission *Brassey's Naval Annual*, 1942, edited by Rear-Admiral G. Thursfield (William Clowes & Sons, Ltd.), and *Jane's Fighting Ships* (Sampson Low, Marston & Co., Ltd.) have been consulted; The Anglo-Russian Parliamentary Committee, London, by whose courtesy the speech of Submarine-Commander Vassili Kulbakhin is reprinted; *Soviet War News*, from whose articles the Author has obtained details of some of the naval engagements described in her book, and to whose publishers, the Press Department of the Soviet Embassy in London, her thanks are here expressed; *Why Russia Will Win*, by W. P. and Zelda Coates, which contains an instructive chapter, "The Soviet Fleet" (Eldon Press, Ltd., 1942); *Russia, Finland and the Baltic*, by W. P. and Zelda Coates, recommended as an introduction to a study of modern political developments in the Baltic regions (Lawrence & Wishart, Ltd., 1940); *The Unified Transport System of the U.S.S.R.*, by Professor K. N. Tverskoi, containing much useful statistical information regarding the development of water transport in the U.S.S.R. (The New Soviet Library, X, Victor Gollancz, Ltd., 1935); *U.S.S.R. Speaks For Itself*, Vol. II—*Agriculture and Transport*, with two interesting chapters on Russian waterways by A. Blidman, Order of Lenin, Stakhanovite Stevedore, and A. Komarovsky, Order of Lenin, Engineer (Lawrence & Wishart, reprinted 1942); *Strategy and Tactics of the Soviet-German War*, consulted for details of battles in the Baltic, as given by officers of the Soviet General Staff and Soviet War Correspondents (printed by authority of *Soviet War News*, issued by the Press Department of the Soviet Embassy in London, and published by Hutchinson & Co., Ltd., 1942); *How Russia Prepared—U.S.S.R. Beyond the Urals*, by Maurice Edelman, which includes some instructive facts on the development of Soviet shipbuilding in the Far East (Penguin Special, 1942); *Forty Thousand Against the Arctic*, by H. P. Smolka, vivid narrative of "Russia's Polar Empire" (Hutchinson & Co., Ltd., 1938); *The Epic of the Black Sea*, by André Marty, giving an eye-witness's description of the Black Sea Revolt, 1919 (Modern Books, 4 Parton Street, London, W.C.1); *The Red Army*, by Ivor Montagu, containing a section on the Red Navy (Russia To-Day Society, Ltd.); and *Hitler's Last Hope*, by Ernest Phillips, M.B.E., which, among its informative pages on Turkey, has a section on the Turkish Navy (W. H. Allen & Co., Ltd., 1942). Illustrations have been supplied by the Ministry of Information and Planet News, Ltd.

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I

SALUTE TO SEVASTOPOL

Long live the fighting friendship between the peoples of Russia and of Great Britain. (From the defenders of Sevastopol on the Black Sea to the defenders of Malta in the Mediterranean.)

FROM every fighter for freedom, from every lover of liberty, Salute to Sevastopol. Of all the cities that shine with "the Russian glory," the light of none is brighter than Sevastopol's. That city was the main base of the Black Sea Fleet, and that fleet is the principal one of Russia. So much has rightly been written in praise of the Red Army in this war that little space seems to have been left in the English press for the work of the Soviet Navy. Yet the part played by the Red Fleet in the fight against Fascism is as important as it is stirring. To a people as maritime-minded as the English it must be a subject of great appeal, and, indeed, without the sea-power of England herself, Britain could not have sent aid to Russia. One of the most interesting developments in this war is the new link which is being made between a traditionally maritime nation and a country with all her sea-power in front of her. The purpose of this book is to give some account of the growth of the Soviet Fleet, the extent to which its work in this war has been helped by British sea strategy, and the need for post-war co-operation between the Russian and British sea and air Services. The Red Star and the Red Ensign have flown together; the Red Fleet and the Royal Navy have sailed together. "Long live the fighting friendship between the peoples of Russia and of Great Britain."

It may not be without significance to the sea-minded sections of both Powers that the Treaty of

Alliance and Mutual Assistance signed between Britain and the Soviet Union on May 26th, 1942, is based on the principles of the Charter which was signed out on the Atlantic Ocean. And that Atlantic Charter in its seventh clause says that the peace at which it aims "should enable all men to traverse the high seas and oceans without hindrance." In the collaboration between the Red Fleet and the Royal Navy we may discern part of the pattern of this new Freedom of the Seas envisaged in the Atlantic Charter.

The vastness of Russia, the richness of her resources and her recent development of these, the varied climate which she possesses as a sub-continent, have made her less dependent on overseas trade than England, so in spite of the length of her coastlines she has not, until recent years, developed in a maritime direction. Under the threat of Nazi expansion eastward—the unchanging "drang nach Osten" of the Germans—and of Japanese aggression westward, the Soviet Union was compelled to maintain and increase a Three-sea Navy—in the Black Sea, the Baltic, and the Far East. Of Russia's great advance in a new element, the ice-lands of the Arctic, necessitating the creation of a Northern Fleet, more will be said later. For some centuries Russia has been trying to stretch seawards. Her march to the west was halted by Gustavus Vasa of Sweden, who saw in Russia's approach to the Baltic a menace to the security of Sweden. Peter the Great had tried to bring his country to the sea, and in doing so had brought her to war with Sweden, but Russian victories in that struggle had led to the Treaty of Nystadt, by which Esthonia and the Province of Livonia (now Latvia) were transferred to Russia, who thus secured all the eastern littoral of the northern Baltic. Catherine the Great pursued

the same policy, and by the acquisition of the Province of Kurland and of Lithuania, the southern shores of the eastern Baltic were secured to Imperial Russia. In her later efforts to get an ice-free port, Russia appeared in the Mediterranean when Napoleon gave Corsica to the Tsar, but in that sea she was blocked by England. Traditional fear of Russia, whatever the form of her government, was the root reason of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, formed after Japan had shattered the Tsar's Fleet outside Port Arthur in 1905. It was also the reason why Britain, when she made a treaty with U.S.S.R. in 1927, took precautions to ensure that the Soviet Union should not gain a warm-water port on the Persian Gulf. Tsarist Russia's anxiety to secure such a port had been manifested in the First World War, when she was a signatory to a secret treaty with England and France, whereby England (who by that time regarded the Persian Gulf as even more important than the Dardanelles) was to take over the Iranian oilfields, and Russia was to get Constantinople.

The rapid growth of the Japanese Navy, Japan's mainland conquests of Korea and Manchukuo, which made the Sea of Japan a truly enclosed sea for the Nippon Fleet, virtually cut off Vladivostock from all approaches but the northern one. Vladivostock, moreover, is ice-locked for part of the winter, so the possibilities of naval expansion in the Far East were strictly limited; Russia therefore concentrated on building up a considerable number of submarine flotillas. In the west, it was not till the U.S.S.R.'s pact with Latvia in 1939 that the Soviet Union got an ice-free port on the Baltic. Thus up till her recent acquisitions of Libau and of Ventspils, and her consequent expansion in the Baltic, the U.S.S.R. had no free seas but her inland ones and those on the Arctic

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Ocean. Russia's urge has always been to reach warm water ; it will be interesting to see whether this war will give her an Atlantic port.

The lack of sea routes made Russia develop her river system for transport ; the Volga was one of her chief highways, and Voronezh, scene of some of the fiercest fighting in this war, was the port of the Don Fleet and had big shipbuilding yards in the time of Peter the Great. Blocked from a coastline by the Teutons in the west and the Turks in the east, Russia-in-Europe had found her way to the sea by her great rivers, so that by tributaries and canals the Dnieper with its links to the Dvina connects the Baltic with the Black Sea. In this way the port of Odessa on the Black Sea is linked with the naval station of Kronstadt on the Gulf of Finland, and Astrakhan on the Caspian Sea with Archangel on the White Sea. The water route from Baku to Astrakhan is continued up the Volga and thence by the northern canals to Leningrad. Soviet engineers will overcome the periodic problem of ice on the Volga so that this route can be used throughout the year. Up the valley of the Volga, in the Russian merchant fleets, have sailed supplies from Britain and the United States for the armies of the Don. In peace-time the regular oil route starts from the Soviet's tanker fleets on the Caspian Sea and the Black Sea, and continues up the Volga and the Don, thence by other rivers to the Polar ports and air stations. Taganrog, on the Sea of Azov, and Rostov, principal port of the Don Basin to which the main pipe-line runs from Baku, are key-points in the river transport system for the oil of the Caucasus. The building of the great dam at Dnepropetrovsk made possible the extension of river transport into the Ukraine. The Third Five-Year Plan for the economic development of the Soviet Union showed the importance attached to inland

navigation. Details of the Plan were published in the *Moscow News* on February 6th, 1942, from which it was learnt that the waterway route, Astrakhan-Gorki-Moscow, was to be widened and deepened in many parts, and that there was to be a total increase of 14,000 kilometres in the inland waterways system.

The foundation of the present Russian Navy is the Baltic Fleet ; the Black Sea one was not formed till five years later in 1926. The work of raising a navy which has been powerful enough to keep for so long the Black Sea and its chief oil ports out of German hands, to bar the seaward passage of German troops to the Caucasus, and to prevent Leningrad from being taken from the seaward side, has not been the work of frantic, last-hour efforts. Russian realism is far removed from the sentimental socialism of so many English people, whose wishful-thinking prevented them from realising that all other nations were not as pacifist-minded as they themselves. For the failure to rearm, all political parties bear responsibility ; the Conservatives who were in power almost continuously for over seventeen years had ample majorities to enable them to carry through a bold defensive programme, but the Conservative Party included reactionary elements who regarded Germany as a bulwark against Communist Russia. So the incredible Anglo-German Naval Agreement of 1935 was made, a cause, as we shall see later, of an intensified naval programme on the part of Russia. Official Labour in Britain was always opposed to rearmament, and in 1934, after Hitler had become Chancellor of the Reich, and everything pointed to the imminence of German aggression, the Labour Party, on the introduction by Mr. Baldwin of a very mild programme of defence over a four-year period, moved this resolution :

" That, while reaffirming its adherence to the

system of collective security, the League of Nations, and accepting its obligations thereunder, the House regrets that, despite negotiations for a Disarmament Conference for European pacts of non-aggression and mutual resistance, His Majesty's Government stand upon a policy of rearmament neither necessitated by any new commitments nor calculated to add to the security of the nation." Those who framed that resolution may do more than smile ruefully now at the folly of that last line. Russian dockyard workers, waiting at the Arctic ports to unload supplies from Britain, have not even smiled grimly. The few parliamentary Members and the Naval Staff who did urge rearmament to prevent a Second World War, however divergent their political views may have been, shared the realisation that the almost incurable sentimentality of the English people is only less dangerous to the maintenance of peace than is the collectively aggressive nature of the Germans.

And the British Navy League and the Red Navy Commissars, politically poles apart, had common sense in common. Politically unrealistic people can make it possible for us to drift after this war into the third one which will follow unless we all grasp and act on the principle so successfully practised by Russia—that if a country is worth living in at all, it is worth defending from *potential* as well as actual attack. In the speeches of the Labour Party leaders a new tone has been heard which shows that in relation to defence a large mass of the electorate is approaching an identical viewpoint with the people of the Soviet Union. Speaking at the Labour Party Conference in London on May 25th, 1942, Mr. Morrison said:

"We must be ready in the years after the war to carry the discipline, organisation and sacrifices of

the war into the peace, and be ready, in co-operation with other nations, to maintain such armed forces and such military power as will prevent Germany or any other nation starting up this business again."

To no citizens more than Russian seamen will those words, if really put into effect, give greater cause for satisfaction. For Russian seamen have seen the citadel of their Black Sea Fleet, the proud fortress of Sevastopol, shattered under the staggering weight of steel hurled upon it by the most ruthless invaders in history. Sevastopol, which once sheltered the finest ships of the Red Navy, lies a city of ruins and ashes. But the spirit of Sevastopol lives on in the hearts and minds of Russian sailors, who have taken a vow "to fight like the men of Sevastopol."

The city, surrounded on three sides by German land forces, and exposed on its seaward side to mines dropped from enemy planes and to attacks by the Luftwaffe, in its stoical struggle of 250 days set the whole world an example which may well become the classic one of patriotism. It was Stalin's emphasis on patriotism in the years immediately before 1939 which united all the Soviet Republics, and which has inspired them with the common will to resist. Affirmation of loyalty to "the Soviet Fatherland" forms part of the oath of a Red sailor. In an article devoted to the Youth Conference held in Moscow in September 1941, *Pravda* said: "The young fighters of the Red Navy demonstrate to the youth of all countries . . . how one's Fatherland should be defended." The motto of the Sports Club of Russia is "Ready for Labour and Defence," and every factory worker is trained in rifle-shooting in peace-time; so of course is every member of the Red Marines, whose Corps is always given a place of honour in the peace-time marching demonstrations of the fighting forces. The Russians have been

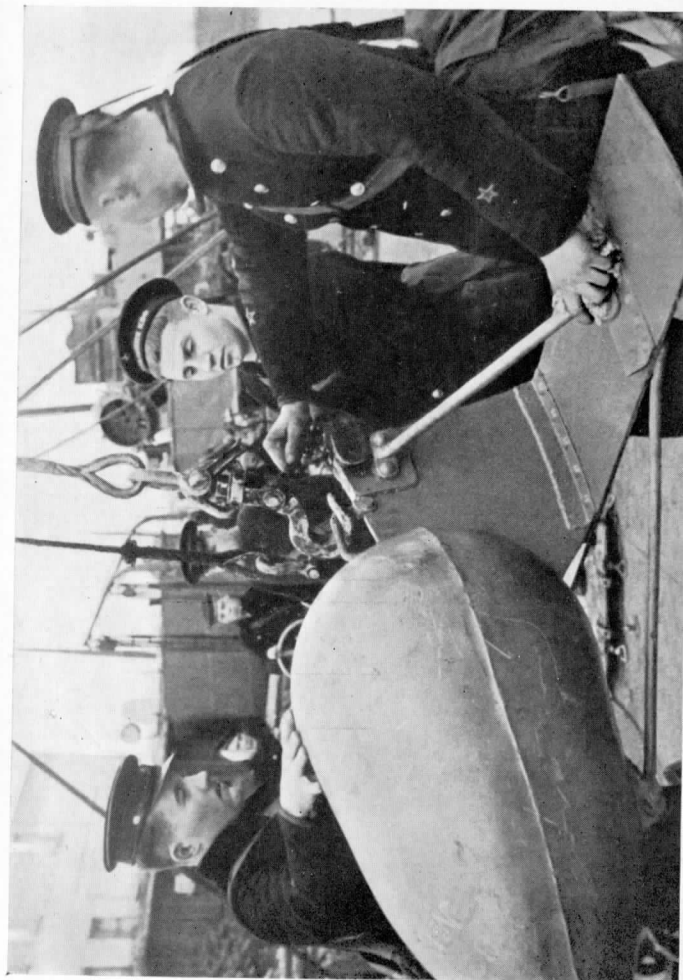
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realistic enough to see that if high standards of health, housing, and education are to be achieved, these social services must also be *maintained*. As long as there are aggressors or potential aggressors, the maintenance of such services rests on defence. What is the use of the most utopian of States, if we have not the means to defend it? In Russia the Fleet is now one of the chief means of such defence.



Photo : Planet News.

DRIVING OUT THE NAZIS. SOVIET SAILORS LAND ON AN ENEMY OCCUPIED ISLAND IN THE BALTIC.



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THE SOVIET BALTIC FLEET IN ACTION.

PREPARATIONS FOR MINESWEEPING ABOARD A RUSSIAN MINESWEEPER.

II

GROWTH OF THE RED NAVY

THE Red Fleet has been built up from the very small nucleus of the navy of 1917, most of which was sunk by the Bolsheviks to prevent the counter-revolutionaries from getting the ships. The Russian Navy had not been designed as an Ocean Fleet; it was essentially a defensive navy, and even seventeen years after the Revolution it had concentrated chiefly on coastal defence vessels, submarines in particular. Not till 1934 when Japan became more menacing, did the U.S.S.R. pay serious attention to its battle fleet. Russia, which in the past had been regarded almost exclusively as a land-power, now realised that she had mighty seas to guard: of this globe's expanse of water, Russia has her share of two oceans, twelve seas, and lakes as large as seas. After this war it is certain that she will build up a substantial fleet and increase her naval and coastal air bases to protect all her seas—the White, Barents, Kara, Nordenskiöld, East Siberian, Bering, Okhotsk, Aral, Azov, Caspian, Black, and Baltic.

"It is only in recent years that we have been able to start building up a navy equal to our needs," said M. Molotov when addressing a Session of the Supreme Soviet early in January 1938. At the beginning of the First World War Russia stood seventh on the list of the world's fleets, but by 1938 she was sixth in the larger class of surface ships; in submarine flotillas, however, she claimed by 1939 to be stronger than Germany and Japan together. That the conception of Russia as a sea-power is a recent one in the Soviet Union is clear from the fact that not till January 1938 was a separate Commissariat for Marine established.

Sixteen months later the office of Commissar for Shipbuilding was instituted, and it is estimated by its representative, M. Tevosyan, that by the last twelve months of the Third Five-Year Plan, the U.S.S.R. will be high on the list of countries building warships.¹ It was calculated that by 1940 the new surface ships built for the Red Fleets would number 168.

The Russian Navy has become the pride of the Russian Fatherland. The day that a Red sailor signs on is a day celebrated with rejoicing at his home and among his friends. Seamen have been the spearhead of many revolutions throughout history, and Soviet sailors have a strong revolutionary tradition. It was the influence of the Soviet sailors in the spring of 1919 at Odessa and Sevastopol which had led to the revolt of the crews of the French Squadron in the Black Sea. After the Armistice in 1918, Allied intervention in South Russia had brought French warships to Odessa and Sevastopol. Here sailors of the *France*, the flagship *Jean-Bart*, the *Vergniaud*, the *Du Chavla*, and other vessels, contacting with the crews of Soviet ships, became imbued with the spirit of revolution. Into Sevastopol roadstead on the afternoon of April 20th sailed the Russian steamer *Kherson*. The joy of the crew was intense when on the quarter-deck of the *France* they saw the French sailors assembled, and heard them heartily singing the "Song of Odessa." Those French seamen who had come to those waters to shell Odessa were now singing the "Marseillaise" of that city. Aboard the *Kherson* the sailors, who had been away for long, saw with astonished eyes the Red Flag hoisted from the mainmast of the *France*. "A sailor of the *France*, standing on the longboat, waved a red flag; on the *Kherson* a sailor, perched in the shrouds,

¹ W. P. and Z. K. Coates, *Why Russia Will Win* (Eldon Press, Ltd., 1942).

answered by waving a red waistband."¹ Later the streets of Sevastopol were filled with joyous Russian seamen fraternising with their French comrades who had come ashore. Marty relates that many of the French seamen tore the red pompons from their caps and wore them on their jackets. Encouraged by the Russian soviets of sailors who were defending the Black Sea against the Allied interventionists, the seamen from France compelled their officers to yield to their demands that the vessels should steam for home. By August 1919 the last ships of the French Squadron had left the Black Sea.

Russian sailors have played a leading revolutionary part in the north as well as in the south. In 1917 they joined with the soldiers in fighting the White forces; in the cruiser *Aurora* they sailed up the Neva and led the attack on the Winter Palace. It was to the Smolny Institute, garrisoned by Red sailors, that Stalin went to fetch aid when Government agents raided his paper *Pravda*. The sailors came, drove out the police, and *Pravda* continued. Their part in the revolt is not surprising, for "the life of the sailors in their steel bunkers, locked up there by force for a period of years, was not much different even in the matter of food from that of galley slaves. Right beside them the officers, mostly from privileged circles, and having voluntarily chosen naval service as their calling, were identifying the Fatherland with the Tsar, the Tsar with themselves, and regarding the sailors as the least valuable part of the battleship."² It was ironical that Kronstadt, "that old fortress which was to have been a loyal sentry at the sea gates of the imperial capital," should have been in the van-

¹ André Marty, *The Epic of the Black Sea* (Modern Books, 4 Parton Street, London, W.C.1).

² Trotsky, *The History of the Russian Revolution* (Gollancz, 1932).

guard of the Revolution. The sailors in that citadel maintained their tradition of discipline; disorders in the streets were immediately suppressed, and this soviet of seamen, though characterised by the impatience of men of action towards the compromising Provisional Government, gained the confidence of such large numbers of the masses that, when Kronstadt sailors were sent out singly from their Council, armed only with a pass issued by the latter, those sailors were freely welcomed, lodged, and allowed to speak at meetings wherever they went. In 1921 numbers of the Kronstadt sailors who had been among the revolutionaries of 1917, rebelled against the Bolshevik Government. In sympathy with the peasants the sailors, always individualistic, forceful, sometimes revealing more of the anarchist than the Bolshevik, revolted against the grain confiscations. Lenin suppressed the Kronstadt mutiny, but these revolts were partly responsible for his introduction of the New Economic Policy, a modified reversion to the system of private trading.

Revolution did not, of course, instantly produce on every deck those qualities of efficiency, endurance, and initiative which have characterised the units of the Red Navy to-day. Even two years after the Revolution, the Russian naval defenders of Kronstadt suffered defeat from a much smaller attacking force of British. In August 1919, eight British coastal motor-boats fired their way into Kronstadt harbour. So inexperienced were the Russian naval gunners defending the fortress that these little vessels actually sank two Bolshevik battleships, the modern *Petropavlovsk* and the *Andrei Pervozvanni*, the cruiser *Pamyat Azova*, and a flotilla leader. The only British losses were two motor-boats. It was clear to the revolutionary leaders that the long dark chapters in Russia's social history, which with the

sailors had led to such events as the mutiny of the *Potemkin*, had their inevitable reactions on such oppressed sections of the people as the seamen. The necessity of training thoroughly a citizen as important to the State as the Red sailor was recognised early by Lenin, whose work for that purpose has been continued under Stalin, till by 1939 there were approximately 26,000¹ intensively trained seamen and officers in the Red Fleet. Actually the number of applicants (as in the case of the British Navy) is more than the Russian Navy can absorb. For male citizens who elect to serve with the Navy for their compulsory training in peace-time, the period of service is five years, at the end of which they are placed on the Reserve List up to the age of fifty. The term of compulsory service for the Navy Air Fleet is three years. In the Navy the officers are paid at the same rate as workers in industry. (This writer, visiting one of the first Soviet ships to enter the Port of London, was surprised to find that, so short a time after the Revolution, officers had superior quarters to those of the crew. The quarters of the crew, however, were better than those provided on some British merchant vessels, and to-day shower-baths are provided in most Russian ships for all the members, a provision which many British shipping lines have yet failed to make.) Before commencing their specialised training as seamen, Russians can avail themselves of the instruction provided by the Osoviakhim, Civilian Council of National Defence, which has trained the people in peace-time in every aspect of war—naval, aerial, military, chemical. The excellent work done for English seamen, naval and mercantile, by the College of the Sea and by the Seafarers' Education Service,

¹ These were the published figures; the actual number may have been much greater.

is paralleled by the work for the Red Fleet of the many cultural institutions of the U.S.S.R. British sailors voyaging to Russia in this war have been entertained at the Red Navy House of their port of call, where they have noted how seriously the Russian sailors have devoted themselves to the cultural side of their country's development. To this rich and varied life the seamen have added their store of song, of music, drama, and story. They have their own theatres, many of their ships are equipped with sound films, and it has been estimated that Red Fleet libraries, ashore and afloat, have altogether nearly three million books. The interest of Soviet seamen in the ballet has brought them visits from artists of the Nemirovitch Danchenko Music Theatre; the cruiser *Red Caucasus* of the Black Sea Fleet is only one of many warships whose crews have been entertained by the most gifted of Soviet musicians and dancers. Red sailors have entertained Red Army leaders, Marshal Voroshilov among them, to displays of national dances on board their ships when in port. Their voyages have brought Soviet seamen into contact with many of the different nationals of the Union, and the sailors have helped to encourage those peoples to preserve their own cultures. Women Commissars are responsible for arranging recreation for Russian and foreign seamen ashore, women tally the cargo at Russian ports, and though women have not served in warships, there are many women working with the mercantile marine.

Of the composition of the Fleet itself comparatively little has been made public; the necessary secrecy with which Russia has had to conduct her naval rearmament programme finds its parallel with "the Silent Service" of Britain. Russian dockyards were guarded as closely as the Japanese: work on the naval and air defences of the Crimea was so

carefully protected that before this war the Soviet Government refused to allow the British Embassy to send a representative to inspect British war graves at Sevastopol, a city which was a key fortress with arsenal and dockyards. After the naval "purge," a progressive constructional programme was adopted; in 1937 the *Kirov* was built, giving her name to a cruiser class of 7,725 tons, with a speed of thirty-four knots and an armament of nine 7.1-inch guns.¹

From the time of the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931 Russia was concerned about her maritime forces in the Far East, and she set out to make a great submarine base, though on the word of the Navy Commissar, Admiral Kuznetsov, even five years before the outbreak of the Second World War the Soviet Union's Far East Fleet had only one warship, a submarine. A new harbour was opened on the Amur river and a line of defensive aerodromes was laid down from the Sea of Okhotsk to the East Siberian Sea. Expansion of the Russian Navy was also the result of the Anglo-German Naval Agreement of 1935, which made the Soviet Union see in the favourable terms granted to Germany a menace to Russia's own safety in the Baltic. That extraordinary agreement cancelled the Versailles prohibition as to the building of submarines by Germany who, at the end of 1938, announced that she would build submarines equal to Britain's. This changed the whole position in the Baltic: "The Scandinavian Powers had been represented at Geneva, they had joined in the protest against German conscription. They now found themselves left high and dry, and the interests of Scandinavia and the Baltic were profoundly affected. It became certain that the Germans would soon re-establish their old and vital

¹ Figures taken from *Brassey's Naval Annual*, edited by Rear-Admiral G. Thursfield (William Clowes & Sons, Ltd.).

command of the Baltic.”¹ Maurice Edelman relates² how at the time when that Agreement became known, a Soviet sailor of the merchant ship *Co-operatzia* was addressing a meeting of passengers and crew on the anniversary of Russia’s entry into the First World War. “A light Baltic breeze fluttered the rigging,” Edelman says, “and war seemed far away.” But to the Soviet sailor it seemed very near. “The last war took ten million victims,” the seaman said in a memorable, hoarse voice. “The next war—how many more victims will it claim?”

That Anglo-German Naval Agreement must be held partly responsible for the Russo-Finnish War. German *Geopolitik* has always regarded southern Finland as the key to the Baltic. So the Berlin Government had cultivated relations with the pro-German general, von Mannerheim and with his *Lappo* organisation. As a result of the Russo-Finnish War, the Soviet Union got by lease the important naval base of Hangö, which controlled the entrance to the Gulf of Finland, the Gulf of Bothnia, and the northern approach to the Baltic. By incorporating the Baltic Provinces in the Soviet Union in 1940, the U.S.S.R. gained command of the eastern shores of the Baltic as far south as the harbour of Palanga. If Russia had not brought the Baltic States into the Soviet Union, Germany would certainly have brought them into the Reich, or else Berlin would have established a Baltic Union of Finland, Esthonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, tied to the Reich against Russia. Ewald Banse, the German Professor of Military Science, Brunswick, made that clear in his *Raum und Volk im Weltkriege*.³ When in the spring

¹ The Rt. Hon. Winston S. Churchill, M.P., *Step by Step* (Thornton Butterworth, 1939).

² *How Russia Prepared* (Penguin Special, 1942).

³ Translated by Alan Harris in the English edition, *Germany, Prepare for War!* (Lovat Dickson, 1934).

of 1939 the Germans occupied Memel, the danger to Russia in the Baltic was sharply increased.

These facts made inevitable the expansion of the Red Banner Baltic Fleet. Another reason for its increase was the sending of supplies to Republican Spain by the Soviet Union during the Spanish Civil War. This brought Russia into the Mediterranean, which provided an additional impulse to the expansion of her whole navy, for the sinking of many of her merchant ships by German and Italian submarines in 1937 led to the Russian naval “purge.” Those admirals who had proved themselves to be unprogressive were removed, and a new programme of warship building was put into effect at once. But even by 1940 the U.S.S.R. appeared to remain deficient in capital ships. The *Marat*, 23,606 tons, to some extent has been modernised, so too has the *Pariskaya Kommuna*, 23,000 tons, but both were in commission for the first time as far back as 1911, the *Oktiabrskaya Revolutia*, though her name suggests a newer battleship, was actually completed in 1915. So was the *Mikhal Frunze*, 23,000 tons. The latest Russian battleship is the *Tretii International*, 35,000 tons, laid down at Leningrad in 1939: two more of this class were being constructed, but one of these ships, and also four destroyers were wrecked at the Black Sea harbour of Nikolaiev by the Russians before the Germans entered that port.¹ Two cruisers, the *Aurora*, 6,730 tons, and the *Krasni Krim*, 7,725 tons, have done notable work in this war, but between the first named and the second there is a difference of 27 years. Recently Russia has specialised in speedy destroyers of about 2,900 tons displacement, like the *Tashkent* (completed 1937); these ships average thirty-seven knots and carry nine torpedo tubes.

¹ *Jane’s Fighting Ships*, 1941 (Sampson Low, Marston & Co., Ltd.).

They have proved themselves successful against German destroyers in the Baltic. There Russian submarines operated with such effect that by July 1942 Admiral Raeder declared that sea to be unsafe for German merchant shipping, and an order was issued prohibiting any cargo vessels to sail there except in convoy.

The Red Fleet has indeed advanced far from the days of 1917 when its ships could not even give effective help to the British in the Baltic against the Germans who were then attacking Riga. Directly Germany attacked the Soviet Union in 1940, Russia mined the Baltic along the coasts of Latvia and Esthonia and in the waters round Hangö. The Russians have long been expert at laying mines; actually they were the first to use these, when they adopted them in the Russo-Japanese War; their efficacy at Port Arthur was duly noted by the Naval Staffs of other Powers "More than 70 per cent. of the known surface ships of the Russian Navy, including all the destroyers, are fitted as minelayers in addition to their equipment for other purposes."¹ Mine-carrying is a function of most of the Soviet submarines, vessels in which Russia by the beginning of 1942 had probably numerical superiority over every other Power, and their efficiency was demonstrated when the *Tirpitz* was damaged in the Barents Sea by two of their torpedoes. Many of these submarines are, however, small, designed mainly for coastal work. The Red Fleet recently included gunboats of the *Moskva* class, the largest 1,500 tons, heavily armed for their size. Another class of vessel which operated with much success in in-shore action was the "MO" speed-boat, averaging sixty tons, small, speedy, used by the Red Marines in daring costal assaults.

¹ Fletcher Pratt, *Sea Power and To-day's War* (Methuen, 1940).

III

THE BLACK SEA FLEET

ONE of Germany's main objectives in this war has been to isolate Russia by sea. By occupying Norway she hoped to cut off the U.S.S.R. from Anglo-American aid in the Atlantic and the Arctic, and she aimed also at breaking Russian command in the Caspian and Black Sea, so that the U.S.S.R. would be denied supplies through the Persian Gulf route. In the Far East Germany favoured Japan's attempts to seize the Aleutian Islands as a means whereby attacks could be made on Kamchatka and its air base, Bolsheretskoe.

The Germans are not a seafaring people, but they have realised the value of sea-power ever since the publication of Mahan's naval classic, *The Influence of Sea-power upon History*. This book had profoundly impressed the Kaiser, who was so enthusiastic about its contents that he made it the text-book for all his sea captains, and, after solemnly stating that he was trying to learn Mahan by heart, declared that "Germany's future lay on the water." One of the first practical steps taken in that direction was the opening of the Kiel Canal in 1895. This started a positive canal fever, and nothing would satisfy the Germans but an all-way water route from the Baltic to the Black Sea. The Rhine, Elbe, Weser, Oder, Vistula, and Danube were harnessed into the new project. The Germans had got water on the brain. But they had not succeeded, till they overran Rumania in 1940, in getting control of the whole waterway to the Black Sea. Once they had pushed themselves into Rumania, they had (except when the Danube was frozen) an uninterrupted line of com-

munication between Constanza and Cologne. Once at Constanza the menace to Russia's Black Sea ports was obvious. And when Constanza was heavily shelled by the Russians, the Germans were able to use Varna and Burgas on the Bulgarian seaboard. But they had to reckon with the Red Fleet.

Of the four Fleets of Russia, the Black Sea one had been the most frequently engaged up to the summer of 1942. And in relation to German plans for world domination, the position of the Black Sea Fleet stands first of the four in importance. The Black Sea controls the chief route to the Caucasus; that seaway rather than any land route is the key to the manganese deposits which Germany requires even more than petroleum. It is this which has made her drive to the Caucasus imperative; for here, in the region of the Caspian Sea, is 40·5 per cent. of the world's supply of manganese, one of the chief constituents of steel. The deposits at Chiaturi in the Caucasus form the richest single source in the world. Before the war Germany imported 80 per cent. of her requirements from India and South Africa. Cut off from these sources, she turned to Russia, for Germany has no *ersatz* for manganese as she has for oil.

But oil too she needed, and in the Caucasus are the wells which yield more than 80 per cent. of Russia's total output of oil. Of those oil wells, the Baku area on the shores of the Caspian Sea yields most of that percentage, represented by a total annual production of twenty-one million tons. If the Red Fleet lost command of the Black Sea, Germany could take the oil port of Tuapse which is fed by a branch of the pipe-line from the Caspian port of Makhach Kala. Russia never forgot that her Black Sea ports and her Caucasian oil once were ceded to Germany—by the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. She did not intend that should happen a second time, so by the spring of

1942 she had in the Black Sea a fleet consisting of a reconstructed battleship, five cruisers (four of which were modern), at least fifty submarines, twenty-seven modern destroyers, and a large number of m.t.b.s.¹ The Germans thought that if they could invest and hold Sevastopol that would be sufficient to ensure them passage to the Caucasus. But they had reckoned without the Soviet Fleet. Against Sevastopol the Germans massed seven divisions in an action which commenced on December 16th, 1941. For ten days the Russians were hard pressed and yielded some ground to the Germans. Then Russian Marines forced the invaders back, but at what cost only those sailors know. For when they landed on the shores of the Crimea they had waded, sometimes shoulder high, through ice-cold water for a distance of two miles. The heroism of these seamen was of the same order as of those "Black Marines" who landed from their ships before Sevastopol, and dived under the German tanks with grenades strapped to their bodies. Marines, with other naval detachments working with the Red Army round the Crimean coast, went to recapture Kerch Peninsula, which the Red Fleet shelled. The naval operations here were responsible for the capture of the enemy's positions at the port of Feodosia, which the Russians took; cruisers and destroyers steamed into the harbour and by December 30th Kerch was in Russian hands again. In these operations the Air Force and the Army worked in close co-operation with the Fleet. Their combined tactics resulted—with the recapture of Kerch²—in the Russian forces being in control of the sea passage between the Sea of Azov

¹ The first motor ships to be built were constructed by the Russians when they built oil tankers in 1905 and sent them on the Black Sea to transport oil from the Caucasus.

² Later lost.

and the Black Sea. The continued stand of the Soviet soldiers in the Kerch Peninsula was due largely to the supremacy of Vice-Admiral Umashev's Black Sea Fleet, which got supplies through to the Crimea. With command of the sea and effective support from shore-based planes, the Red Navy was able to ferry reinforcements to the peninsula. And for long, while the Russians controlled the sea, advance by the right flank on the Kerch Peninsula was denied to the Germans. So long as Sevastopol held out, the Germans could not make a full-weight attack on the port of Rostov which is the northern key to the Sea of Azov, nor could they pass to the Kuban grain fields. Thus the Black Sea Fleet defended at the same time its own waters and the Sea of Azov, and the wheat fields and the oil wells of the Caucasus.

On the outer ring of Sevastopol's defence line, and at the south-eastern end of this, was Balaclava, and against this harbour the full fury of von Mannstein's attack was directed on June 15th. But Russian naval units went out to shell the positions of the German guns on the hills commanding Balaclava, naval commandos raided points to the west of the harbour, even penetrating into the German trenches, and the cruiser *Red Crimea*, which by the middle of June received over two hundred attacks from the air, landed Marines at Sevastopol. The destroyer *Tashkent* made a special page for herself in Russian naval annals when she broke the blockade of Sevastopol, and engaged though she was by a mass attack from Heinkels, brought troops and guns to assist in the defence of the beleaguered fortress. These operations, and those of the planes from the aircraft carrier *Stalin* in the Black Sea, were of material aid in the defence of Sevastopol which, in spite of the tremendous pressure of the enemy attacks on the

harbour and the efforts to blockade it, the Russians continued to hold for so long. Rear-Admiral Oktiabrski, in command of the citadel's defences, said that it came as the greatest surprise to the invaders to find that any resistance was possible in Sevastopol after the enormous weight of their bombing; latterly the Luftwaffe's attacks averaged 6,000 bombs daily, and on June 2-3 nearly 37,000 shells were fired at Sevastopol. "If Sevastopol must fall, it must cost the Germans 100,000 men. If you make the enemy pay this price your sacrifice will not have been in vain." This was Admiral Umashev's Order of the Day to the defenders of the Black Sea's principal harbour. How that order was fulfilled will ring down the years to come in the story of the Siege of Sevastopol.

Odessa, the chief grain port on the Black Sea, could not have resisted as long as it did but for the help of the Black Sea sailors. The men of the First Marine Infantry are superb sea-soldiers, as the Rumanians attacking Odessa found to their cost. Red naval paratroops dropped behind the lines of Rumanian infantry, destroyed their headquarters and wrecked the guns which were firing on Odessa. In the evacuation of numbers of Russian inhabitants, the Fleet played a notable part. (The machine-gunning of 25,000 of Odessa's citizens by the Germans, and the unspeakable tortures inflicted on many of the inhabitants by the invading forces, are among the vilest of the countless crimes perpetrated by the Germans.) When the enemy entered the city in October 1941 they found that the Russian sailors had blocked the harbour with sunk ships. Of the other ports on the Black Sea, Novorossisk, 100 miles east of the Straits of Kerch, is one of the chief; and was used when Sevastopol was no longer available to the ships of the Red Navy. It is, however, mainly

a commercial harbour serving the oil wells of Mai-kop. Batum, the chief oil port, suffers from storms which sometimes render the harbour unusable. It was not, by the spring of 1942, sufficiently developed to contain a large fleet, nor had it then adequate facilities for repairing vessels. Nikolaev is the chief shipbuilding centre on the Black Sea, and is a port which is likely to develop considerably. When Rostov, the great port of the Don, was surrounded by the enemy on nearly all sides, it was supplied from Eiskoi, the port on the Sea of Azov eighty miles to the south-west. This supply service was possible only because the Red Fleet at that time had supremacy in the Sea of Azov.

By May 1942 it was admitted by the German Admiral Gadow that the Red Fleet was in control of the Black Sea, and that German naval strength there was unequal to altering that position. When German regiments occupied the Crimea they soon found how much they needed a Black Sea navy. To hold the Perekop Peninsula they required support from the sea. In her efforts to get control in those waters, Germany had sent m.t.b.s down the Danube to the Rumanian port of Constanza, which, however, the Soviet warships shelled so effectively that the harbour was of small service to the enemy. The Rumanian Navy, which at the beginning of 1942 consisted of only four destroyers and two minelayers, was too small to be of much help to the Germans. The Bulgarian Navy was of little more use to them, for it numbered only two out-of-date cruisers, two submarines, two torpedo-boats, and three minelayers. So Germany sent submarines in sections to the Black Sea ports which she controlled in Bulgaria and Rumania. Many of these submarines were assembled at the Bulgarian port of Varna; this was detrimental not only to the Russians but to the



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ON PATROL ON RUSSIA'S SEA FRONTIERS.
RUSSIAN SAILORS ON GUARD. THEIR TRAINING MAKES THEM
EXCELLENT FIGHTERS ON LAND AS WELL AS AT SEA.



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WOMEN OF RUSSIA DO MANY WAR JOBS.
THIS RUSSIAN GIRL WORKS AS A SAILOR.

[33

British, since it placed a number of enemy submarines at a long-range distance from British bombing bases. The establishment of German-controlled air bases at Varna and at Burgas in Bulgaria was a further source of danger to the Russian Black Sea Fleet. In addition to these dangers, the Soviet ships had to meet the menace of m.t.b.s brought from Italy. Hannibal's alpine elephants had no stranger journey than these 60-foot long m.t.b.s, transported across the Alps in lorry-drawn wagons, then taken on barges down the Danube to the Rumanian port of Galati.

All that could be collected in men and materials was hurled by the Germans against the Crimea, whose shores, washed by the Black Sea, are dear to the heart of every Russian worker. Here the members of the Water Transport Union had their sanatoria; here on the sunny terraces the men of Russia's Navy and Mercantile Marine refreshed themselves on their holidays ashore. Here their wives found rest and their children had hospitals. Here at last the Russian workers were beginning to reap the reward of years of toil and sacrifice in the building of the Workers' State. And here, within a few months, the men with faces like masks, with minds unbalanced by perpetual unresolved conflicts, crushed the whole beautiful fabric of the dream that had come true—the dream of every Russian worker, the national home of rest in the loveliest part of the Fatherland. And now, those white palaces, those broad boulevards? Some are black ashes, and others have been seized by the robber race which, when it reached the entrancing shores of the Black Sea, regarded them only as a stage on the march to the Caspian. (As the Germans, in millions, have invaded the Soviet Union, aided by millions of German workers in the Reich, wrecking wherever they go, the work of the Socialist

Republics, and killing the socialist citizens, the belief, held fairly widely in England, that the German People are likely within predictable time to undertake any revolution of an enduring character against their own militarism, or to establish the socialism which they are doing their best to destroy in another country, does not appear to be well founded.)

Against such an enemy the British and the Russian peoples have formed an alliance which, in the words of M. Molotov, "is essential not only to the peoples of the U.S.S.R. and Great Britain, but also to the people of other countries." Much of this alliance, as we have seen, rests on sea-power, and of the help given to Russia in her all-important region of the Black Sea by the British Navy's command of the eastern Mediterranean, Admiral Kuznetsov,¹ Commissar of the Red Fleet, has spoken in the highest terms. Nikolai Kuznetsov is a great admirer of the Royal Navy, and in his insistence on the importance of sea-power he yields nothing to the most ocean-minded of Britannia's admirals. At the Eighteenth Conference of the Communist Party held in March 1939, he said it was intended that the U.S.S.R. should become a great Naval Power.

¹ At the age of 38 he was the youngest supreme naval chief in the world.

IV

THE BALTIC

IN the Baltic as elsewhere there has been Anglo-Soviet co-operation. The R.A.F. and the Red Air Force together have laid mines in that sea, and together they have attacked the Reichskriegsmarine. Here is part of a speech¹ by Vassili Kulbakhin, Submarine Commander in the Baltic Fleet, who addressed the Youth Conference at Moscow on September 29th, 1941:

"To you, valiant seamen of the British Royal Navy, we, the seamen of the Baltic Fleet, send warm greetings across the seas and oceans. The British and Soviet Navies in close alliance will annihilate the Fascist pirates."

As long as the U.S.S.R. maintained her fleet-in-being in the Baltic, Germany had to keep a number of ships on look-out there, so that she had less to send on raiding operations to the Atlantic. Russia's ability to maintain her fleet in those waters was due to her acquisition in 1940 of the ice-free ports of Libau (Liepaja) and Ventspils; Riga, though much larger, is ice-locked at certain times. The urgency for the U.S.S.R. to obtain an open harbour on the Baltic had been increased when on March 22nd, 1939, the *Deutschland* steamed into the port of Memel. Aboard her was the German leader. Up to that time Memel had constituted autonomous territory over which Lithuania had exercised sovereignty. The arrival of the *Deutschland* was followed by an ultimatum from Berlin—Memel

¹ Published in *Youth Against Hitler* (issued by the Anglo-Russian Parliamentary Committee, Buckingham House, Buckingham Street, London, W.C.2).

entire or Kaunas in ashes. To which piece of blackmail the Lithuanians, who could not at that time rely on the help of any external Power, deemed it expedient to surrender Memel-land. When Lithuania lost Memel she was left with only one harbour, the diminutive and undeveloped port of Palanga, known rather as a seaside resort than as any naval or mercantile centre. But when Memel went to the Reich, it at once became a U-boat base which was clearly going to menace the Baltic; the position of Leningrad, the first port of the Soviet Union, was immediately endangered.

Russia's apprehension as to Germany's intention to make the Baltic a German lake goes back a long way; it is not confined to the present régime in the Reich. After the Russo-German Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, signed on March 3rd, 1918, the Germans had occupied all the Baltic States, including, of course, the naval harbours of Riga, Liepaja, and Ventspils, also Viipuri (Viborg), Hangö, Sveaborg, and other coastal districts in southern Finland. They made the most of that Treaty indeed by taking all the principal bases on both sides of the Gulf of Finland, and every strategic island in those waters. Ludendorff's memoirs¹ reveal what Germany's designs were at that time: "We now hold positions at Viborg and Narva which would at any time enable us to advance on Petrograd." That the makers of Versailles were wise in their insistence that Germany should remove herself from the Baltic States is shown by the report² of Rear-Admiral Walter Cowan, commanding British forces in the Baltic at

¹ *Meine Kriegserinnerungen 1914-1918* [Translation taken from the English edition, *Concise Ludendorff Memoirs, 1914-1918*] (Hutchinson, 1933).

² Published as a Supplement (No. 5) to *London Gazette*, April 6th, 1920, and cited by W. P. and Z. K. Coates, *Russia, Finland, and the Baltic* (Lawrence & Wishart, 1940).

the opening of 1919. "My aim was throughout the year to prevent any Bolshevik warships breaking out into the Gulf of Finland—and the ice has now relieved me of this responsibility—and also to frustrate by every means *the most evident design of the Germans to overrun and dominate the Baltic Provinces and then to advance on Petrograd.*"¹

The German aim to enclose the Baltic as a lake for themselves revealed itself at the southern, as at the northern, entrance to that sea. In 1929 there appeared *Die Seestrategie des Weltkrieges*, written in 1926 by Rear-Admiral Wegener for the Government of the Reich. This memorandum on the strategy in World War I, stressed the viewpoint that in 1914-1918 Germany made a cardinal error in observing the neutrality of Denmark. The admiral argued that his countrymen should have invaded Scandinavia. It is known that Hitler attached great importance to this paper, and with its contents the British Naval Staff were quite familiar. That the English people did not act on that knowledge, and make certain that Germany should *not* invade Denmark, is another indictment of a long record of political apathy, wishful-thinking, and fear of doing anything that might lead to trouble. (As it turned out, trouble was provoked, not prevented, by Britain's naval and air disarmament policy.) Professor Ewald Banse, in his notorious book *Raum und Volk im Weltkriege*, states that Denmark is most important to "Germany's naval supremacy in the future," and he notes that the Skagerrak lies almost as far north as Scapa Flow. It was no wonder then that Russian eyes looked apprehensively out from Leningrad, "Russia's front window on the Baltic," on the last day of May 1938. On that date there passed through the Danish Sound thirty-two German

¹ Italics ours.

warships preceded by twenty-five fast motor-boats to mark the channel. Excursions through Danish waters and flights over Danish territory had become so frequent that by the summer of 1938 the Government of Denmark had ceased to protest. Near Flensburg on the frontier a German naval port had been built which the Reich intended to make a second Kiel.

No less ominous to Russia was Germany's policy with regard to the Aaland Islands in the northern Baltic. This writer was in Copenhagen in the summer of 1938, where along the Gammel Strand she was talking with a Swedish sailor from the Aaland Islands. "Yes, I come from the 'Malta of the North,'" he said, "and we shall be busy there soon. Our islands were neutralised in 1921, but I wouldn't like to say what will happen when war breaks out; there will be a race between Russia and Germany for the Aaland Archipelago." His words were recalled during the Czecho-Slovakian crisis a month later. At that fateful time Sweden and Finland, hitherto hostile over the question of the ownership of these three hundred Baltic islands, made common cause for their defence. German penetration into Finland, and attempts to squeeze Sweden made the Aaland Islands, lying between these two countries, a danger-point indeed. Herr Sandler, Sweden's Foreign Minister, said at that time: "Both the Swedish and the Finnish Governments had found themselves brutally faced with the necessity of taking prompt measures to secure Finland's neutrality." Russia, however, fearing that re-fortification of the islands would strengthen Germany's desire to control them, blocked the Swedish-Finnish intentions, and after the Russo-Finnish War in 1940, Finland, under Russian pressure, removed her troops and war material. At least one of the Aaland Islands has a

harbour which could accommodate the entire German war fleet, and any German domination of that archipelago would mean the strangling of Russia's chief naval harbour, Kronstadt. Leningrad would be cut off from the Gulf of Finland, as well as the Gulf of Bothnia. This would sever all sea-borne communications between Russia and Sweden and Russia and Finland.

The logic of events, therefore, determined the incorporation of the Baltic States in the U.S.S.R. which took place in August 1940. (We are not concerned here with any question as to means by which those States were brought into the Soviet Union.) The fact is that their continued existence as independent States was an impossibility: either they went to Russia or to the Reich. It is their misfortune that having gone to Russia, and having begun to work as autonomous Republics within the Socialist Federation, they have since been overrun, as in 1918, by those people who more closely than most others suggest a reversion to Neanderthal Man. (The Old Man of Neanderthal may or may not be the ancestor of many different peoples in Europe to-day, but he certainly did, in a recent geological epoch, inhabit a valley in Naziland.)

Menaced then as Russia was by Germany in the Baltic, the Soviet Government, before the Germans invaded Russia, had taken precautions to secure Esthonia. Whoever controls the northern shore of Esthonia commands the Gulf of Finland's southern approach to Leningrad. So the Soviet Union on September 28th, 1939, had signed a Pact of Mutual Assistance with Esthonia, the first article of which shows Russia's evident anxiety. For the two signatories bound themselves to come to each other's assistance in the event of even a *threat* of aggression by a third party against their coastal frontiers.

Under the terms of the Pact, the U.S.S.R. obtained the right to establish and maintain naval and air bases on the islands of Oesel (Saaremaa) and Dagö (Hiiumaa), and at the port of Paldiski.

A similar Pact was made with Latvia, at whose ports of Libau (Liepaja) and Windau (Ventspils) Russia was empowered to establish and maintain naval and air bases. Russia had not forgotten that only four years before, Germany had refused to make a treaty with the Soviet Union guaranteeing the inviolability of the Baltic States. It was clear that the Germans had no intention that those States *should* be inviolate. They were marked already in the German *Geopolitik* as living-room for the poor oppressed Germans who were so crushed by the Treaty of Versailles and the inhuman cruelty of the Allies after 1918, that they were able to get money and materials for building up the biggest war machine ever made in this world, and to conquer territory many times larger than their own in less than three years.

The Russo-Finnish war gained for the U.S.S.R. the lease of the Finnish base of Hangö and some territory on the Rybachi Peninsula. The latter is situated between the ports of Petsamo and Murmansk, and in enemy hands would constitute a serious threat to Russia's one ice-free Arctic port, Murmansk. Hangö was occupied by the forces of the pro-German General Mannerheim, but this did not prevent the Russians from effecting something like a blockade in the Baltic and so making it difficult for the Germans to get supplies through to Mannerheim's army. The Luftwaffe had boasted that it had made an end of all Russian ships in the eastern part of the Gulf of Finland, but the number of German ships sunk by Russian submarines indicates otherwise. The truth was, that German commanders in the Baltic had been com-

pelled to call for destroyers from other waters to protect their own depleted shipping in the Baltic.

On June 29th, 1941, the German 18th Army Corps began its offensive in the Leningrad sector. The Red Fleet bombarded the German infantry, and the Marines made several landings, eventually forcing the Germans back. The enemy later counter-attacked and tried to drive the Russians back on Esthonia. In the defeat of this effort a notable part was played by the m.t.b.s of the Red Fleet which, aided by naval gunfire and aircraft of Coastal Command, sank thirteen out of a convoy of twenty-six German troopships attempting to cross the Gulf of Finland to attack Leningrad. The Red Fleet also helped the Soviet garrison to hold the naval base at Hangö. The Soviet Navy's recent addition of new, small, speedy destroyers (the largest not more than fifty tons) proved a success when they forced several of the German warships, which up till the summer of 1940 had been in the central Baltic, to fall back on Kiel. The value of Russia's policy of co-ordinating the work of her naval and air forces in the Baltic, as elsewhere, was demonstrated when Soviet dive-bombers destroyed the German supply base on the strategic island of Oesel¹ at the entrance to the Gulf of Riga. This removed one of the chief dangers to Leningrad. The importance to Russia, and to Leningrad in particular, of the islands of Oesel and Dagö had been demonstrated early in the Russo-German War, when, on July 12th, 1941, more than forty German transports with destroyers and torpedo-cutter escorts appeared. Esthonian coastal batteries opened fire with good effect, and Russian mines accounted for several more of the

¹ Thus was the 1917 position reversed; in the first month of the Russian Revolution Oesel had surrendered after being heavily bombarded by the German battle fleet.

transport vessels.¹ Another determined effort to force a passage through the Gulf of Riga was made by the enemy on September 13th, 1941, when the Germans attempted to land 15,000 men on the island of Oesel. It was well for the Russians that they then held the Esthonian littoral, as their batteries sank a number of the boats and at least one escort ship.

The Russian Fleet Air Arm on this occasion attacked the German barges with excellent results. The Red Naval Air Force could operate to good advantage once the U.S.S.R. had gained bases for it at Liepaja and Ventspils on the coast of Latvia; from here the Fleet Air Arm could protect the naval bases of the Red Banner Baltic Fleet. The Air Arm helped to mine the Irben Straits at the entrance to the Gulf of Riga; its Stormovik fighters, based on the islands acquired from Esthonia, attacked German vessels, and on one occasion sank five transports in a single engagement. The number of awards for bravery given to members of Russia's Naval Air Arm has left no doubt as to the extent to which this service has operated both with the Baltic and the Northern Fleets. It has certainly been a striking factor in the defence of Leningrad from the sea.

That the effort to take Leningrad from the seaward side has so far failed has been largely due to the magnificent defences of its island fortress, Kronstadt, and also to the Soviet Union's small but efficient Baltic Fleet. In quality and in direction of strategy that fleet is a very different one from its namesake of 1905 which suffered such an overwhelming defeat at the hands of Admiral Togo before it could reach Port Arthur. (In justice to that Baltic Fleet of Imperial Russia, however, it must be

recalled that those ships had to sail from Kronstadt through the North and South Atlantic, round the Cape, and by the Indian Ocean to Far East waters. When the fleet reached the Sea of Japan it was to find that the Japanese warships had by that time cut off the Russian battleships from the naval base of Vladivostock.) The present Baltic Fleet certainly shows immense superiority over its more recent namesake of the 1914-1918 war, which failed to close the Baltic against the German importation of iron ore and timber from Sweden. Though the Russian Baltic Fleet of 1942 has not been entirely successful either in that respect, it has done well its main task to keep the Germans from getting full control of the Gulf of Finland and thus making an assault on Leningrad from the sea. In the early inland advance on that city the Germans got to within fifteen miles of it, but on the coastal side they could not approach nearer than Oranienbaum, twenty-five miles to the west, owing to the resistance of the Baltic Fleet. Leningrad is Russia's first naval base; a canal fifteen miles long connects the city with the fortress of Kronstadt, whose proximity to Finnish airfields is the one disadvantage to this immensely strong naval base. Recently the Kronstadt-Leningrad Canal was deepened to thirty-one feet to allow of a clear passage through the shallow water between the city and the island fortress, the base of Russia's Baltic Fleet. Kronstadt was called in 1917 "the beauty and pride of the Revolution." Here in the years before 1939, when England's dockyards were idle, the great naval yards of Kronstadt were swarming with workers and swelling with ships.

¹ See also account given by Captain E. Matveyev, "Naval Battles in the Baltic," published in *Strategy and Tactics of the Soviet-German War* (Hutchinson, 1942).

RUSSIA'S NORTHERN FLEET

OF all the vast developments of Soviet enterprise, the most notable, yet to peoples outside the Union the least known, are those connected with the Polar regions. Russia has long realised that the Arctic Sea must be conquered to give her another line of sea communications, and also to give the territories of the north intercourse with other land areas. She has therefore developed her Northern Fleet. This, the most recent of the U.S.S.R.'s fleets, guards the supply ships which work between the ports of the White Sea and those of the great river deltas between the Barents and the East Siberian Seas. No Atlantic convoy works with more secrecy, for the ice-breaker, loaded with explosive material for forcing the ice passage, has to take every precaution against attack from enemy aircraft; the loss of an ice-breaker would indeed be a serious matter for the cargo ships. Part of the Northern Fleet consists of those submarine flotillas whose crews have won the admiration of Allied seamen, for the vessels operate at disadvantage in the Arctic in summer owing to the almost total absence of darkness, so that they cannot risk surfacing in home waters, but have to move out into the Atlantic for recharging of batteries.

Over the frozen tundra and across the North Pole there will be a regular air service to New York when air-fuelling stations have been extended. The shortest airway from Moscow to San Francisco is over the Pole, and from New York to Leningrad the route crosses the Arctic Circle. Air lines linking the Far East and America will cross Siberia and the North Pole: airways that will connect Moscow and

Leningrad with New York will be plotted above the Polar Seas, and from the great Siberian cities of the future, Yakutsk and Turukhansk, airships will sail over the Arctic Ocean to Le Bourget, London, or Limerick. The opening up of the Polar seas by Russia's wide-beamed ice-breakers will stir the minds of our own people, for it was the English king Alfred the Great who had been one of the earliest known patrons of discovery in the Arctic regions when he commissioned Othere "the old sea captain" to venture into the White Sea. Seven hundred years later it had been the dream of Elizabethan sailors to find a way to Cathay and India by the "North-East Passage," and Englishmen were the first known explorers of that route. Richard Chancellor and Sir Hugh Willoughby, with the *Bona Esperanza*, the *Bona Confidentia*, and the *Edward Buonaventura*, set sail on May 20th, 1553, from Greenwich, the Cross of St. George proudly flying, on their passage down the Thames, the first stage of a voyage which the navigators hoped would bring them to the east by the Northern Seas. The smallest of the three vessels was only ninety tons, whereas to-day the Soviet ice-ships which break through those waters are more than one hundred times that tonnage. Willoughby sailed through the South Barents Sea to Novaya Zemlya, but he and the crews of the *Bona Esperanza* and the *Bona Confidentia* eventually "perished all of cold" on the Lapland coast near Keger. Chancellor, who rounded the Kola Peninsula into the White Sea, made his way to Muscovy; out of his journey arose the Muscovy Company of Merchant Adventurers "for the discoverie of Regions, Dominions, Islands and places unknown."

The first ice-breaker specially constructed for a North-east Passage venture was built in British yards; her name was the *Yermak*, and her attempt

was made before the outbreak of the First World War called a halt to Russia's oceanic advance. But this attempt, made at the instigation of Admiral Marakov, did not meet with success. It was nearly three hundred years after the Chancellor-Willoughby expedition that the break-through to the north-east was made. In 1932 the Soviet ice-breaker *Sibiriak* made the passage from Archangel to Vladivostok in nine weeks. The first ship, as distinct from an ice-breaker, which all but succeeded in the same venture was the *Cheliuskin*. On August 10th, 1933, the specially designed ship left Murmansk on her attempted voyage to Vladivostok with a picked crew and a scientific staff, some of whom were women. For years before, at the Arctic Institute and at the University of Polar Science, Leningrad, these scientists had been mapping the Arctic, studying the composition of the sea-beds of the Polar North, analysing the mineral deposits of the islands. Meteorologists had followed the weather conditions of these regions; investigations had been made into the effects of solar radiation, for the Arctic is one of the great centres of the earth's meteorological conditions. Marking ice-floes, plotting currents, the members of the *Cheliuskin* expedition steamed through the Barents Sea, past the cape now named after their ship, and from the Taimir Peninsula they sailed by the mouths of the Ob and the Yenesei. And then they drifted into the Bering Straits. Locked now in an ice-field with the frozen ocean behind them, the explorers were driven by currents along the coast of Alaska, and then back to the north. In February 1934 the *Cheliuskin* sank, but the heroes of that voyage, after leaving the ship, set up camp, and in a temperature in which birds dropped dead in the air of cold, they made a landing-ground for a rescue plane. By the time they were

finally rescued from the air, they had collected scientific data of the greatest value to the Fatherland. But for the necessity of having to prepare for an inevitable war, and for the invasion of their country, the Russian people might by now have conquered the Arctic. Merchant ships might have sailed all the year round from Vladivostok to London through the Bering Straits; a new all-seasonal route might have been opened for Russia, China, England, and America. And it will be opened. At present the north-eastern passage is only open for four months, but the Union's plans to build a number of 10,000-ton freighters for this route and new-type ice-breakers is evidence of Russia's confidence that the Arctic way will be clear for regular service in the not distant future.

Already, on the American side of the Bering Straits, a new route to Russia has been commenced at the instigation of the joint United States-Canadian Defence Board. This will increase the importance of the strategically vital outpost of Alaska, which will become one of the greatest, if not the chief, of the world's airway junctions; the territory was purchased, with much foresight, by America from Russia in 1867. The new route will connect eventually with the Polar sea and air routes to Europe. From Seattle, U.S.A., through Canadian territory to Alaska, a great highway 1,200 miles long is being developed, through the Alaskan port of Nome and the airport of Fairbank. This route, by ferry extension across the Bering Straits, will thus link Siberia with Edmonton, Winnipeg, Chicago, and New York. Again Russia will be drawn closer to the United States when the chain of air and sea bases from Labrador along the coast of Baffin Land to Greenland, Iceland, and the Russian Polar stations links the Atlantic and the Arctic.

Russia, like America, has to master the ice problem in the Bering Straits. Up to the present a ferry service could only operate for six months in the year. If that problem could be solved by the U.S.S.R. and the U.S.A., it would provide an alternative supply line to the Northern sea route, which stretches from the United States to Murmansk via Iceland. A strange situation exists in the Bering Straits: in this channel between two continents are two islands which will be very important in the future: the Big Diomed and the Little Diomed. The first-named belongs to Russia, the other to America. In the days when Russia possessed provinces on the American continent, the Bering Sea, which separated north-east Asia from north-west America, was not unnaturally a region with possibilities for international friction. In 1821 by ukase of Tsar Alexander, non-Russian ships were forbidden to come within the limit of 100 nautical miles of the Alaskan coast. The following year another decree asserted the rights of Russia over all the Bering Sea and the North Pacific between Alaska and the Russian mainland. America quickly challenged that claim, and it was later dropped. The area of those Bering Straits between the East Siberian Sea and the Beaufort Sea would have been one of immense possibilities for international maritime co-operation to-day had the Labour Government of Britain accepted Wrangel Island when Stefansson offered it to them. In that maritime zone, vitally important for the future, Russian, American, and English spheres of influence would have impinged on each other. It is indeed strange that the British Labour Government could not see the great strategic value of Wrangel Island; strange, too, that the U.S.A. did not take it when Britain declined it. Wrangel went to Russia and (if an irresistible pun may be pardoned) there has been

no wrangle over this since. The island commands the Bering Straits, and from its air bases ships could be bombed on their passage between America and Asia. Of even greater strategic importance is the Big Diomed Island in the Bering Straits, on which the U.S.S.R. has built a big naval harbour. The urgency of this area for maritime collaboration between U.S.A. and U.S.S.R. is thus evident. South of the Bering Straits the American-owned Aleutian Islands stretch in a semi-circle nearly to the Russian Kommandorski Islands off the Kamchatka Peninsula. Dutch Harbour, on Unalaska Island, has large submarine and air bases, and Fort Mears has a harbour which could accommodate an increased American navy. Kodiak, between the mainland Alaskan air station of Sitka and the naval base of Dutch Harbour, has a naval anchorage of considerable size. Madni, on one of the Kommandorski Islands, and Petropavlovsk, Kamchatka, are highly fortified Russian naval bases, and Petropavlovsk is only 800 miles from the most westerly of America's Aleutian Islands, Kiska.¹ So that Russian and American interests touch each other at the southern as at the northern passage of the Bering Sea, and upon the nature of the relations of those two Powers, the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R., in that vital area depends the future of two continents.

West of the Bering Sea is the Sea of Okhotsk, with the Gulf of Tartary leading to the great Russian submarine base Vladivostock. The Russian naval harbour of Nikolaievsk at the mouth of the Amur River guards the Tartary Gulf passage to Vladivostock, but the latter suffers from its position on the

¹ It is but 900 miles from Kiska to the Japanese naval base of Paramushiro, and only 224 from the latter to the U.S.S.R. base of Petropavlovsk. See an article by Alec Hunter, "Short-cut to Japan," *News Chronicle*, June 16th, 1942.

Sea of Japan which, enclosed as it is by the islands that constitute the Empire of Nippon, restricts the disposition of Russia's Far Eastern Fleet. Thanks to the powerful submarine flotillas of that Fleet, America has been able to get a certain number of supply ships through to Vladivostock with war material for Russia and for China.

VI

THE ARCTIC

THE chief Russian supply port used by America and Britain, however, has been the Arctic port of Murmansk on the Barents Sea. In that sea the Soviet Northern Fleet, up to the beginning of February 1942, had sunk forty-five enemy transport vessels. From here eastwards right to the Chukotski Peninsula, the U.S.S.R. is establishing radio stations to aid its Polar airmen in this region of fogs. Air stations are being built on the vast ice-fields linking up everywhere with river and sea routes. The most northerly air base is on Fridtjof Nansen Land whence, across the Pole, it will be 3,000 miles to the "nearest landing-place contemplated on the other side of the Atabaska River,"¹ one of the chief routes of the mammoth airships of the future. Soviet sailors in their broad-beamed ice-ships are co-operating with airmen in establishing these bases; everywhere they are opening up the Arctic, working with scientists and engineers to find suitable places for new harbours. In the Vilkitski Straits between the Taimir Peninsula and Bolshevik Island they are opening the difficult passage for Russia's Northern Fleet. Already they have forced a way through the Kara Straits, so that it has been possible for vessels to sail direct from the Barents into the Kara Sea; a more northerly passage as an alternative has been opened through the Matochkin Straits which divide the territory of Novaya Zemlya into two islands. By this route ships from the White Sea can pass Cape Vykhnodnoi, cross the Kara

¹ H. P. Smolka, *Forty Thousand Against the Arctic* (Hutchinson, 1938).

Sea to Belyi Island, and make their way down the Gulf of Ob.

The fascinating story of how from nothing a progressive industrial settlement was established in 1936 at Nordvyk on the Nordenskiöld Sea, built entirely of material shipped from Murmansk and Vladivostock, is told by H. P. Smolka in *Forty Thousand Against the Arctic*. Nordvyk is now a fuelling base for Polar planes and ships; the salt-mines here will supply the fish-canning, salmon, and sturgeon industry of east Siberia and Murmansk. Sindasko Bay, on the Khatanga Estuary which joins the Nordenskiöld Sea, is already an important mining and fishing centre.

All the ice-breakers at work in these regions have diesel engines, for the oil of the U.S.S.R. is the best in the world for such machines. To bring that oil up to the Ice Fleet, river transport is used. In writing of Russia's maritime development we must include her River Fleets, for the Soviet's system of inland waterways is directly connected with her seas. The extent of this development may be realised from the fact that "nearly a hundred and sixty million pounds was set aside for the development of Soviet waterways, new shipbuilding yards and docks, wharves and jetties, tugs and lighters."¹ This advance in water transport has been necessitated by the immense expansion of Russia's economic life, industrial and agronomic. When the Soviets came into power they nationalised all the means of transport, and the old chaotic, competitive system which had led to the Baltic-Black Sea shipping rivalry gave way to the unified system of transport which has brought such substantial benefit to all the Republics. In the first World War the break-down in the system of com-

munication was mainly responsible for the Russian disasters; the naval construction at the Obukhov works, for instance, was at a standstill through the non-delivery of material. But under the Soviets, consumption and production were organised on a planned basis, and transport was related to regional products. Whereas in Imperial times the Government had opposed development in the Far North and placed obstruction on foreign as on native enterprise in those regions, under the Soviets the most intense efforts were made from the start to open up that White World, to bring wheat to the nomad peoples of the tundras, to give them industries, to develop the forest products and the fishing of Siberia, and to make available to all the Union those great mineral resources which had hitherto remained undeveloped and, over wide areas, undiscovered.

¹ Tom Barker, "Transport in the U.S.S.R.," *The Listener*, May 21st, 1942.

VII

INLAND NAVIGATION: RIVERS AND CANALS

THE vast development of Russia's economic resources necessitated, as we have said, the corresponding expansion of her system of communications, and nowhere has this been more evident than in the inland navigation of the U.S.S.R. Russia has half a million rivers, but few of them in Imperial times had any aids to navigation; the Soviets set to work to install harbourage, and warehouses with ice-storage, to erect lights, to mark the delta channels with buoys, to dredge river-beds. And by now the navigable waterways are almost double those of the pre-Revolutionary era. By 1932, the end of the first Five-Year Plan, freightage on rivers and canals was nearly twice as much as in 1928; in tonnage it was no less than 34,349,000, of which by far the greatest amount was accounted for by two products, machinery and oil. Sixty-seven million passengers had travelled up and down Russia's rivers in the last twelve months of the Second Five-Year period. Mr. A. Blidman has stated¹ that the planners of the Third Five-Year period had estimated that by 1942 the length of the inland waterways would have increased to 76,015 miles. Along these rivers and canals sail the Soviets' new motor passenger ships, fleets of barges whose number is made possible by the increased power of the towing tugs, thus offering a contrast to the slow-going rafts of the old days.

Much of this war which has been fought on U.S.S.R. territory can be called the Battle of the Russian Rivers, for because of their increased use as

means of transport, and their excellent port facilities, the rivers are vital lines which the Germans have realised they must attack at all costs. So of the great river, Father Don, beloved homeland of some millions of Soviet citizens, it can no longer be written "quiet flows the Don," for it is red with the blood of heroes, of the men who have perished in its waters in defence of *Rodina*, their Fatherland. Into the battle of the Lower Don, in their assault on the great oil and grain port of Rostov, the Germans flung 600,000 troops and 2,000 tanks, but when they entered the blazing city the German hordes found that the Russians had themselves destroyed the big modern docks, and that for their oil supplies the Soviet fighting forces were then making use of the port of Chapaiev on the Caspian Sea, whence by the Orsk pipe-line oil was conveyed by rail to Moscow.

From the Don we turn to the Volga, for these two rivers are inevitably linked in our minds to-day by the furious battles which have raged in the rich lands between these powerful waterways. Where the old fairs once trailed a riot of colour and rich traditional music over the broad land between the Oka and the Volga at Nishni-Novgorod, and where merchants carried their wares across a rocking bridge of boats, there stands now the shipbuilding city of Gorki. From here we can sail south to Kuibishev (once the Tartar city of Samara), where Soviet engineers have projected a work even greater than the dam of Dneprostroi. The Kuibishev construction will raise the level of the Volga for over 1,000 miles, so that deep-draught vessels from the Caspian Sea can bring oil right up to the Middle Volga. Sailing south we can reach Stalingrad, which though more than 300 miles by the river route from the Caspian Sea, is yet a port of first magnitude, a city of wharves for the grain ships and docks for

¹ *Waterways and Water Transport*, in the "U.S.S.R. Speaks for Itself Series," No. 2 (Lawrence & Wishart, 1942).

the tanker fleets. Or from Gorki we can steam westward for eighty miles along the Moscow-Volga Canal, which was first used in 1937, after taking less than five years to complete, though its construction had involved the building of eight hydro-electric stations. By diverting water from the Volga into the formerly shallow Moskva river, deep-draught vessels can use the latter, and the construction of a large artificial lake, known as the "Sea of Moskva," has formed a junction for the canal system which has now made the inland city of Moscow a true port.

Through the heart of Ukraine sweeps the Dnieper, much of whose course in former times had been lost to navigation on account of its mighty rapids. But the construction of the Dneprostroi Dam enabled traffic to voyage from the head waters of the Dnieper to its mouth on the Black Sea, so that Smolensk in White Russia could now receive oil from the seaport of Kherson. The sacrifice of that monument of Soviet industry and united effort, necessitated by the attempt of the Germans to impose their New Order of world slavery, will for long make the name of the enemy hated¹ in Russia as it is in every country where those savages have left the mark of their barbarism. The great dam, the pride of the peoples of all the Republics, sent power to the shipbuilding centre of Nikolaev, for it enabled materials for the yards to be transported there; the iron ore of Krivoi Rog and manganese for strengthening the steel of the new ships.

The crews of the vessels which sail these rivers are trained at one of the numerous colleges of the Academy of Water Transport; their work and that of the stevedores at the great ports of the Volga, the Don, and the Lena, has been lightened by the instal-

¹ See also recent articles by foremost Soviet writers Ilya Ehrenburg, Alexei Tolstoi, Mikhail Sholokhov.

lation of conveyor belts and every modern technical device to speed the work of discharging and loading.

The new programme for inland navigation had already begun to take practical shape under the Third Five-Year Plan; much of the construction, both of yards and of vessels, was being undertaken by Stakhanovite workers, and the advantage of the State's encouragement of the engineering faculty was widely manifested. The integral character of the various aspects of the "water life" of the U.S.S.R., naval and mercantile, coastal and canal, has made it natural for us in this book on the Red Fleet to deal also with the development of Russia's merchant marine. The advance in the latter was materially helped by skilled technicians from the institutions of the naval schools, who aided with their specialised knowledge the maritime development of the Union.

The increased use of the waterways gave a great impetus to shipbuilding. Though the figure of eighty-six, representing the total number of cargo vessels built under the first Five-Year Plan seems a small one to-day, it compares very favourably with the total of nine which represents the number constructed in thirteen years in the period just before the Revolution.¹ Particular attention was paid to the tanker fleets for shipment of oil on the Caspian and the Black Sea; by 1938 these vessels had transported nineteen million tons of oil. A service on the Moscow-Volga Canal was made possible by the launching of a special class of motor passenger and cargo vessel. In the shipyards the process of welding, which was increasingly superseding that of riveting, had done much to ensure the speedy deliveries of these new additions to the Soviet's mercantile marine. That the seas and rivers of

¹ Figures given by Professor K. N. Tverskoi in *The Unified Transport System of the U.S.S.R.* (Gollancz, 1935).

Russia are regarded as an integrated means of transport is clear from the Soviet Government's May Day broadcast to the Russian transport workers: "Workers of the Sea and River Fleets! Bring war cargoes more quickly to the front! Deliver to the front and rear more oil, coal, metal, timber, and bread. By efficient and self-sacrificing work help the Red Army to defeat the Nazi robbers."¹

Such are the main duties of the Soviet water transport workers in this war. But before the German invasion the river fleets were helping to build up the great Siberian cities of the future. All Russia's great rivers, except the Don, Dnieper, and Volga flow north, and the importance of keeping ice-free the Arctic deltas of those wide waterways and those of the Ob, Pechora, Indigurka, Kolymia, Khatanga, Olenek, for unbroken transport to the Northern Sea Route, has long engaged the minds of Soviet sailors and engineers. The largest of all the rivers are in Russia-beyond-the-Urals; the Lena is 5,300, the Yenesei 4,750, and the Irtush 4,150 kilometres. These rivers are the great trade routes to the north. Vessels steam down the Ob, the Lena, and the Yenesei laden with timber from the Siberian forests, and oil shipped from the Black Sea ports for building the new industrial cities of Krasnoyarsk, Igarka, Khatanga, Yakutsk, and Novosibirsk. The growth of such cities is the natural outcome of the U.S.S.R.'s immense industrial development: Siberia could contain three hundred million people in modern conditions when its resources are developed. The water power of its rivers has no rival in any other system of waterways outside the Union, and this fact, together with the advanced stage of electrification throughout the U.S.S.R., will make these Arctic lands the

¹ Tom Barker, "Transport in the U.S.S.R.," *The Listener*, May 21st, 1942.

richest provinces of the future. Siberia has the largest deposits of gold and platinum in the world, iron-ore mines of unknown vastness, and the great coalfields of Kuznetz.

The new cities of the Polar Plain are not springing up as unplanned, haphazard urban growths. They are all related to Russia's industrial expansion. Hence they arise where the rivers and the air routes favour such city sites; Yakutsk has become the chief air and river port of the Lena; Krasnoyarsk and Igarka for the Yenesei, Obdorsk the airport for the delta of the Ob. The produce of the collective farms of Krasnoyarsk supplies the river sailors and the Arctic crews, the Yenesei fishermen, and the Polar pilots. Along the great rivers come the sailing shops to meet not only the other needs of these workers but those of the natives of the tundras. Just as the Seafarer's Education Service and the Sea War Libraries' Service have by their supply of books and papers on almost every subject enriched the cultural life of men serving with the Royal Navy and with the British Mercantile Marine, so the Institute of the Northern Peoples has widened the interests of Russian seamen, and now even regional papers, revealing the lives of the nomadic peoples of the Polar shores, have their place on the bookshelves of the ice-breakers and the river fleets.

Nowhere more closely than on the fringes of the frozen seas is there co-operation between sea and air services. H. P. Smolka relates in *Forty Thousand Against the Arctic* that when he was on the ice-breaker *Yermak*, the ship radioed for a plane from the shore-base to pilot them through a passage; that the pilot surveyed hundreds of square miles, and the observer drew a map of the drifting ice-floes. The *Yermak* was then directed by the plane's wireless, and later the airman dropped a parachute with a

small parcel containing the map of the route which the ship should follow. Polar observers help fishermen by aerial search for seals, the radio stations picking up the airmen's directions; keeping watch for the ice-floes, the air crews direct the ice-breakers through safe passages. But for the Polar pilot Liapidevsk there might have been no survivors of the unforgettable expedition of the *Cheliuskin*. The airships of the future will supplement the transport of the river fleets, bringing technicians, workers, and supplies to the new cities of the Arctic Circle. Supplies of all kinds can already be shipped by the Northern Sea Route via Cape Cheliuskin to Vladivostock. The initial stages of this passage have been made possible by the construction of the ship canal linking Leningrad (by the lakes route of Ladoga and Onega) with the White Sea.

In that White Sea, Anglo-Soviet co-operation has been close. And here we may recall that brave band of English seamen who first broke the ice between their country and the men of Muscovy. "And out of the mist that hangs above the little Lapland harbour where Sir Hugh Willoughby and his gallant company gave their lives, and past which the convoys steam, Murmansk bound, loaded in the cause of freedom, a visionary may discern in the changing clouds the mighty shape of splendid things to come."

To-day, Russian ice-breakers have helped to keep open when possible the port of Archangel on the Dvina, for tanks, guns, and planes from the workers of Britain. Here in their transports toiling through the ice-floes to Murmansk, British seamen have brought in supplies from English and Scottish factories to their Russian comrades. Murmansk, on

the Kola Peninsula, unlike Archangel, does not become closed with great ice-packs when the northerly winds prevail in winter. Owing to Gulf Stream influence it remains ice-free all the year, and it is the only port on the Barents Sea which does. Hence it has been used for the supplies sent from the U.S.A. by the Northern Sea Route across the Atlantic, and as it is the terminus of the railway to Leningrad, the importance of this harbour to the Powers bringing aid to Russia is supreme. Though the port is ice-free, the cold in the region around Murmansk is intense, and so British sailors have worked in 70° of frost, their decks, ropes, and wires frozen. Here they have fraternised with their Soviet comrades of the seas, here they have met Russian sailors from submarines almost top-heavy with ice, where the conning-tower has to be continually wiped with glycerine to keep its rim ice-free, and the vessel has to dive to melt the ice. And here in these Arctic ports British seafarers have experienced the warmth of Russian hospitality. More will be said later, in the section on the Northern Convoys, about this Russo-British co-operation.

¹ George Edinger, "Strange Navigation," *World Review* (All Russian Number), June 1942. (Published by Review of Reviews Ltd., 43 Shoe Lane, E.C.1.)

VIII

LENINGRAD

A BRITISH sailor who had served nearly half century at sea, told this writer that he had not till this war, seen Leningrad since 1917. He was greatly impressed with the modernised harbour, the new wharves for timber vessels, and the great ship building yards. The city has given its name to a special class of destroyer, 1,900 tons, with five 5.1-inch guns.¹ The citizens take a particular pride in the Red Banner Baltic Fleet, and when the German made landings on some islands near Leningrad, the factory workers turned out with hand grenades to help the naval patrol men, and together they succeeded in driving out the enemy. Another German attempt on Leningrad from the seaward side was the occasion for a display of great bravery by the members of a naval patrol unit, which sighted an enemy advance ship approaching the city's outer defences. The Russians, rather than betray the position of their own patrol-cutters by firing, decided to ram the ship with one of their vessels, and not only damaged that enemy ship, but two more vessels and two troop barges in the same way. But we shall know more about the defenders of Leningrad when we have read the speech² by Vassili Kulbakhin, Submarine Commander in the Baltic Fleet, who addressed the Youth Conference held in Moscow, September 1941, as follows:

"I greet you, friends, on behalf of the sailors of the Red Banner Baltic Fleet and of the armed lads

¹ Figures taken from *Brassey's Naval Annual 1942*. Edited by Rear-Admiral G. Thursfield (William Clowes & Sons, Ltd.)

² Published in *Youth Against Hitler*, issued by the Anglo-Russian Parliamentary Committee, London.

and girls of the city of Lenin. These are stern days for our beloved city, threatened as it is by mortal danger. In this grave hour, our country has called upon the Baltic sailors, upon the Leningrad youth, to defend the city at all costs. 'Fight to the last drop of blood, but Leningrad must not be surrendered,' say the Soviet people, and we reply: '*Leningrad will not be surrendered.*'

"I have just come from Leningrad. It is girdled by trenches and pits, our warships keep a vigilant eye on the enemy from the sea, and our fighter planes from the air. Everyone able to bear arms is at his post. From the factory gates tanks pour forth—made by the workers of Leningrad. Along the streets march detachments of the Popular Guard—armed Leningradites. On the roofs anti-aircraft crews stand watch—their guns and machine-guns made by Leningradites.

"In the battles for Leningrad, Baltic seamen have proved themselves worthy sons of their country, and the splendid youth of Leningrad are vying in bravery with the seamen. The young men and women of Leningrad and sailors of the Red Navy have instructed me to convey their warrior greetings to the valiant men of the Black Sea Fleet, the heroic defenders of Odessa. Fight, comrades, as the sailor Zheleznyak fought. . . .

"Friends! Here at this meeting, the word 'sailor,' the word 'Leningradite' is an inspiration to us all. *So long as we can grasp a rifle, so long as our hearts still beat in our breasts—the enemy shall not pass.*"

Before the incorporation of Esthonia in the U.S.S.R. and before the lease from Finland of the naval and air base of Hangö, Leningrad was exposed on both flanks. The Gulf of Finland is forty-five miles wide at its entrance, and the port of Leningrad is

thus strategically even worse placed than the Port of London. The lease from Esthonia of Paldiski, and from Finland of Hangö, brought to Leningrad a new degree of security both on the southern and the northern shores of the Finnish Gulf.

Leningrad is linked with the Arctic by the Baltic-White Sea Canal. This project had been stirring in the mind of an Englishman early in the nineteenth century. Adam Armstrong realised the advantage of reducing the 4,000-mile voyage between Leningrad and Archangel, a passage which normally took nearly three weeks, and he had plans for making the short-cut by Lake Onega. But in Tsarist times such schemes for establishing regular communication between the far north and other parts of the Russian Empire were regarded with disfavour, and not till 1933 was the undertaking started. In that year, the first of the Second Five-Year Plan, work on the Baltic-White Sea Canal began; it was completed less than two years later, though it had involved the construction of fifteen dams and the removal of enormous quantities of rock. To-day fish brought in to the new port of Soroka, oil from the region of the River Usa, and timber from Karelia can be shipped to central and southern Russia by the use of the canal. Its construction, which was the work of delinquents of every category, was the fulfilment of a remarkably successful social experiment. Crews and captains of some of the White Sea ships to-day are in many cases composed of those formerly non-co-operative elements redeemed to society by their corporate work in the building of the canal.



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ON A BRITISH MINESWEEPER, FORMERLY A YARMOUTH DRIFTER. THE OFFICER SIGHTS A SUSPICIOUS AIRCRAFT FROM THE BRIDGE.



H.M.S. "KING GEORGE V" STEAMING THROUGH A ROUGH SEA.
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IX

FAR EAST

RUSSIA's maritime position in the Far East has been clearly menaced by Japan ever since the Russo-Japanese war of 1904. Japan has never made any secret of her plans of aggrandisement, but it is lamentable that the publication of *Japan Must Fight Britain*,¹ which revealed so many of Japan's designs, and her cynical intentions with regard to Russia, did not produce in Britain and America an immediate demand for naval rearmament to the maximum extent possible. During World War I, Japan had joined the Allied interventionists in fighting the Bolsheviks, and welcomed the opportunity this afforded to take over Vladivostock, also much of the Russian maritime province of Primorsk, and the northern half of Saghalien Island with its oil supplies. Later Britain and the U.S., becoming apprehensive as to Japanese intentions, obliged Tokio to yield most of her gains. That they were wise to do so was shown when the contents of the secret Tanaka Memorandum became known. This document, compiled in 1927, outlined the pattern of Japan's new order in the East, and showed how her expansionist aims threatened the U.S.S.R. "Looking into the future for Japan," the Memorandum stated, "a war with Russia is inevitable." And so it was, if Japan's intentions were to be fulfilled, for the document went on to state that "in order to conquer China, we must first conquer Manchuria and Mongolia; in order to conquer the world, we must first

¹ By Lieut.-Comdr. Tota Ishimaru, I.J.N., translated by Instructor-Capt. G. V. Rayment, C.B.E., R.N. (Retired) (Hurst & Blackett, 1936).

conquer China. If we attain this, then all the other countries of Asia and the South Seas will fear us and capitulate to us."

In 1938 Japan in the course of her war of aggression against China, attacked Chang-ku-feng, near enough to Vladivostock to constitute a direct threat to Russia's naval base. Soviet troops, however, captured that town, and from that time increasing precautions were taken by the U.S.S.R.'s naval authorities in the Far East. Russia's Far Eastern Fleet, as we have said earlier, has been built up from the one submarine of 1934 to flotillas which are believed to make the U.S.S.R. submarine strength the greatest in the world. Vladivostock, the base for these flotillas, is very strongly defended; it is certain that it has 20-inch guns or even larger¹; the fortification system is continued northward to Lake Hanka on the borders of Manchukuo and the Russian Maritime Provinces. North of Vladivostock on the Amur River is the recently built naval port of Soviet Harbour, a very necessary addition to the defences of the U.S.S.R.'s Far Eastern Territories following attempted Japanese encroachments up the Amur River.

Vladivostock and Soviet Harbour are the centres of the important fishing industries in these regions; these industries, which include the canning of fish, are organised as co-operatives and are subsidised by the Government, which has provided the fishermen with the most up-to-date vessels, equipped of course with ice-boxes. Many of these boats were built in the yards of Nikolaievsk, the U.S.S.R.'s important ship-building centre in the Far East. Oil for this industry

¹ W. P. and Z. K. Coates, *Why Russia Will Win* (Eldon Press, Ltd., 1942). Quoted by these authors from the writings of the Japanese military author, Yasuo Mishima, extracts from whose work were published in *Parade*, November 1938 (published by the Periodical Press, Ltd.).

and also for the naval vessels built here is brought by a pipe-line running from the wells on the northern part of Sakhalin Island. Between the harbour of Nikolaievsk and the naval port of Petropavlovsk on the Kamchatka Peninsula spreads the Sea of Okhotsk, and across that water a great floating dock was towed by the s.s. *Kharkov* and the tug *Typhoon* in 1938.¹

From the southern tip of the Kamchatka Peninsula the Japanese-owned Kurile Islands stretch in a long chain to Hokkaido, one of the four main islands of the Empire of Japan. Those Kurile Islands, as stepping-stones to Kamchatka, are a likely source of trouble in the Far East, where Russia's maritime interests have for long been menaced by the conflicting aims of Germany and Japan. It was partly because Germany, thanks to Anglo-American sea-power, had failed to get control of the Atlantic routes, and Italy had failed to command the entire Mediterranean, that Berlin turned to Tokio. Japan was a maritime Power, she could perhaps do in the east what Germany had failed to do in the west. But Germany was double-crossing. The real aim of the Reich was to weaken Russia in the east so that she could get possession of Vladivostock, and then Germany would be in a position to threaten the Nippon Fleet. That is why the Germans encouraged the Japanese to go south; Germany would, they hoped, then be left a freer hand in the east. In May 1941 Mr. Matsuoka, Prime Minister of Japan, went to Berlin to get Germany's help in the formation of a non-aggression Pact between Russia and Japan. Such a pact suited, at that particular time, the plans both of the Reich and of the Japanese naval and military leaders. The Soviet Union would be fully aware of this, but the

¹ Maurice Edelman, *How Russia Prepared* (Penguin Special' 1942).

time factor was of no less importance to her than was to Britain and America. On April 13th, 1941, Soviet Russia signed the Pact of Neutrality with Japan. On the same date Moscow broadcast the announcement: "The Government of the Japanese Empire and the Government of the Soviet Socialist Republics, in order to ensure the peaceful and friendly relations existing between them on the basis of the spirit of the Neutrality Pact concluded between the two countries, respect on the part of the Japanese Empire the territorial integrity and inviolability of the Empire of Manchukuo."

Manchukuo, the puppet State set up by the Japanese in the former Chinese territory of Manchuria, was one of the areas through which Germany was anxious that Japan should strike at Russia. Germany, while desiring the Japanese to attack Russia through the Maritime Province of Primorsk, wished Japan to be weakened by this, so that Germany would have less opposition to her own designs on Vladivostock, and to her intended claims in the Pacific later. At the time when Germany first struck at Russia in the west, Nazi agents were carrying out the designs of the Reich in the east. Captain Wiedemann and Eugen Ott visited all the strategic ports and bases from Kobe in Japan to Saigon in Indo-China and Bangkok in Thailand. At Shanghai, as stated by the *Daily Telegraph* correspondent writing from Singapore, Nazi Gestapo centres were established at the Kaiser Wilhelm School.

Thus in the east Russia's maritime interests were threatened by the Tokio-Berlin Axis, a partnership in which the two members, however, were sometimes working for conflicting objectives. In all naval considerations in the Far East, Vladivostock remained a focal point with Tokio and Berlin. The

¹ Mr. H. A. Standish.

importance of future maritime co-operation between the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R. is as great for the Pacific route from the west coast to Vladivostock as such co-operation has been in this war for the Atlantic route from the east coast to Murmansk. The Pacific Route is 5,500 miles; its use by America for supplies to Russia was discontinued in October 1941, two months before the Japanese entry into the war, as at that time the U.S. was trying to avoid conflict with Japan. After the attack on Pearl Harbour, the Vladivostock route became virtually impossible in any case; the Northern Atlantic route and the 15,000-mile route via the Cape and the Persian Gulf were then the two chief seaways left for American aid to Russia. Of these two ocean ways the E. Coast-Murmansk one was the best, as it allowed of delivery of cargoes straight to a Russian port; the Persian Gulf route involved a long rail journey through non-Russian territory. The possibility of keeping that last route open depended on British sea supremacy in the South Atlantic and the South Indian Ocean. Therefore the English occupation of Madagascar, which gave the British Navy command of the Mozambique Channel and of the approaches to the Gulf of Aden and the Persian Gulf, was a direct help to Russia.

X

BRITISH SEA STRATEGY: HOW IT HELPS RUSSIA

BRITISH sea-power has saved Russia from isolation; without it the U.S.S.R. would have had no effective allies. Recognition of the Royal Navy's aid to Russia was expressed by the Soviet writer M. Victorov: "The mighty British Navy has grown in numbers and strength. The powerful fleet of our Ally guards the seas and guards the convoys with military cargoes which are constantly arriving in Britain and now also in Soviet ports." And the co-operation of the Red Ensign and the Red Merchant Fleet was stressed by the British Minister of War Transport who, welcoming Russian sailors to a Scottish port on November 11th, 1941, said: "From now onwards our two merchant navies will form a single unbreakable line along which we are resolved that there shall flow an uninterrupted supply of munitions of war."

A single unbreakable line. It must be our aim after this war to keep unbroken that line so splendidly held by Soviet and British seamen as by members of the other fighting services. Difficulties there will be, but together we shall overcome them. How much better it would have been for Britain and the Soviet Union, how much easier the task for seamen and other fighters of both countries, if England and Russia had given a joint ultimatum to aggressor Germany in 1939. An Anglo-Soviet ultimatum, if it would not have prevented the outbreak of war, would at any rate have saved France. The Soviet-German Pact was undoubtedly a factor in the weakening of France's will to resist. But unfortun-

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ately for the rest of the world, Britain and Russia were almost strangers to each other at that time, and not without some reason did the Kremlin regard the contemporary Government in England as being unlikely to prove a particularly helpful ally against Germany. It needed a Second World War to teach more than one country that only by adopting the principle of Collective Security can nations hope to survive to-day. The efficacy of this principle was demonstrated at sea during the Civil War in Spain: at the Conference of Nyon, Britain, France, and the lesser Mediterranean Powers agreed to form a collective naval patrol and to take action against any submarines found attacking merchant ships. If only the signatories to Nyon had extended that agreement to apply to the shipment of war materials to Spain for use against the legal Republican Government, neither of the Axis Powers would have been able to establish themselves in important coastal positions, as the Germans have done in Bilbao and the Italians in Mallorca, thus increasing the threat to British shipping both from the Atlantic and the Mediterranean seaboard. The value to Russia of English naval operations in the Mediterranean has been acknowledged by the Russian Commissar for Marine. By holding Gibraltar and Malta, Britain denied full sea supremacy to the Axis supplies which would otherwise have gone from French Africa to reinforce Rommel's invasion of Egypt as a prelude to a drive on the Caucasus. In the eastern Mediterranean, British sea-power, while it remained based on Alexandria, and Turkey's friendly disposition to Britain, held up the enemy's efforts to force a sea passage to the Caucasus and to establish unbroken sea communications from the Baltic to the Black Sea. Britain's intervention in Greece and Crete gained for Russia

six precious weeks when the time-factor was most urgent for her, prior to Germany's attack on the Soviet Union. Greece and Crete were made possible by the British aero-naval victory of Matapan, as has been pointed out by Admiral Sir Andrew Cunningham,¹ who referred to the campaigns in Greece and Crete as an epic, "because air power, under uniquely favourable conditions, was pitted against the forces at sea." The rest of his words may be read by Soviet seamen with the same admiration for the British as the English nation feels for the Russian people:

"That our ships performed their tasks to so large an extent that they landed and re-embarked tens of thousands of troops in the face of such unparalleled attack is indeed an epic, and I believe no other body of men could have done it. It may be said with some truth that Greece and Crete were reverses, but I count it my greatest pride to have been privileged to command those men in that time of adversity." We must, said the Admiral, "so work that these situations cannot arise."

The best way we can work is together. As in war, so in peace—the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the United Commonwealth. The significance of the Admiral's closing words will be clear to the specialised fighting services of Russia and of Britain. "The ultimate victory in war is won by the foot-slogging soldier forcing his way over enemy defences into the enemy country. To achieve this he has first to be landed and supplied by sea. For this sea-power is essential, and never have we seen the fact more clearly demonstrated than in the Mediterranean in 1941 and the Far East in 1942." Of all the areas in the Mediterranean combat zone

¹ C.-in-C. Mediterranean Fleet, from January 1st, 1939, till the spring of 1942.

none is more admired by the Russians than Malta; the port of Valetta is still partially used as a harbour by the English, and the island remains a key point in those British naval operations in the Mediterranean which directly influenced the course of the war on the Southern Front in Russia. To the heroic defenders of Malta in the Mediterranean, the valorous defenders of Sevastopol on the Black Sea sent this memorable greeting: "Long live the fighting friendship between the peoples of Russia and of Great Britain."

The British campaign in Libya was invaluable to the Red Fleet round the Crimea, and to the Russian Front from Kharkov to Kerch, from Taganrog on the Sea of Azov to Sevastopol on the Black Sea. By their securing of sea communications the British were able to hold Tobruk for eighteen months and so bar the way to Rommel's march to Egypt, from Egypt to the Levant, and thence to the Caucasus. Only by exercise of sea-power could tanks have been taken to Tobruk and could that base have held out so far from any main one for as long as it did. For a year and a half the British Navy had worked a shuttle service of ships from Alexandria to Tobruk with supplies not only for the garrison but for part of the Eighth Army. Since the German capture of Greece and Crete, these British ships, loaded to capacity, had had to run the gauntlet of aerial and submarine attack, their crews working with the knowledge that if their vessels were lost there was no shipping margin for replacement. With proper co-ordination between the Services, a substantial number of the defenders of Tobruk could have been taken off by sea. Such was the lack of unification, however, that "according to the officers, naval units in Tobruk harbour were unaware that the fastness had fallen until they saw German tanks rumbling down the

main street.”¹ This makes it clear that the military leaders had made no preparations for an evacuation by sea. Failure to co-ordinate our fighting Services in the way that the Russians have done was partly responsible for those British disasters in the Middle East: those disasters besides so seriously threatening the existence of the British Empire have also gravely diminished the support that Britain was giving to Russia by holding the line in Libya and Egypt.

The tragedy of Tobruk when it fell also illustrates, among several other things, the ineptitude of those politicians who arranged for, and the complacency of the electorate who acquiesced in, the reduction of Britain's naval and air armaments and shipping to the figures at which these stood in the pre-war period. Two divisions of some of the finest anti-Axis fighting forces were lost at Tobruk because we had not enough air-protected shipping to get those men out rapidly when the fall of the garrison was imminent. What British ships there were in Tobruk harbour were of a size and class which suffered damage when fired on by the German tanks. Remember what Admiral Sir Andrew Cunningham, C.-in-C. Mediterranean Fleet, said of the position when Italy attacked France in 1940: “Our Fleet consisted of a few old cruisers and destroyers” in the Mediterranean. “We must learn the lesson that sufficient trained air forces are an indispensable part of sea-power and that sea-power properly armed can operate to the full discomfiture of the enemy.”

But the results of apathy and wishful-thinking over a long period are not quickly overcome, and when Germany extended her submarine and air operations in the autumn of 1940, the main strength of the British naval units in the Mediterranean had to be dispersed. The accounts of naval eye-witnesses all

¹ Reuter and B.U.P. dispatches from Alexandria, June 23rd, 1942.

testify to the fact that the shortage of ships based on Alexandria and Cyprus at the time of the Tobruk disaster would not have stood any further strains on the navies. The dive-bombers and the torpedo-carrying planes for which the Navy had long pressed were too few to ensure evacuation of the whole of the Tobruk garrison by sea, even had there been the necessary ships and Army-Navy co-ordination at that time. It is the more remarkable that in spite of the grave handicaps suffered by the Navy through the Limitation Treaties, and the serious disabilities imposed on the Mercantile Marine through the failure of the Government to subsidise shipping in the years of economic depression, both these Services accomplished so many “impossible tasks.” With a proper pre-war policy, ensuring the adequate air-and-sea strength for the common struggle, the magnificent navies of England could have done still more to aid the Red Forces, as well as the British armies in Libya and elsewhere.

The Russian winter campaign of 1941 obliged Germany to use up a large amount of her reserve stocks of oil which she had got from the Rumanian wells; a drive to Baku was therefore a pressing necessity. The German plan was to make a combined air and sea landing at Batum and to seize the Caucasian oilfields, but as long as British naval and air forces barred the seaway in the eastern Mediterranean, the Germans had to face the fact that they must take the difficult overland route for the transport of any oil they might seize. Some day it will be shown in detail how, despite the appalling blunders in so many campaigns, and the static mentality of many of her military leaders, despite the myopia of many of the pigeon-hole people in Whitehall (who were warned in 1937 of the German 88-mm. tank gun), Britain nevertheless endeavoured to work in the

Middle East to a strategic plan based broadly on sea-power. In so far as she had certain successes in this, her help to Russia can hardly be over-estimated. She had secured with the Free French, control of Syria, and, being already in control herself of the Palestinian ports, she was holding from the first year of the war the Levantine coast against the intended German advance to the Caucasus through Irak and Iran. With those last two States England had agreements which ensured her communications with Russia via the Persian Gulf. Her sea-power enabled her to use for the transport of supplies to her Russian Ally such ports as Bandur Shahpur and Basra on the Persian Gulf. That Levant-Caspian quadrilateral, flanked by seas—the eastern Mediterranean, the Black Sea, the Caspian Sea, and the Persian Gulf—is the zone which, above all others, shows the true pattern of British and Russian allied strategy. The ships that sailed under the White Ensign and the Red Ensign up the Persian Gulf, bringing aid to Russia through Basra, were as surely aiding the seamen who sailed in the Black Sea under the Hammer and Sickle, as those Russian seamen, by holding the Black Sea, were barring for their British comrades the German march to Baghdad and Bombay. The German aim of an overland route, Berlin-Baghdad-Basra, was the same in 1942 as in 1916, but the ambition was extended also in a maritime direction in 1942, when the aim was to secure a sea-to-sea route for supplies, from Bremen to Basra. This would bring Germany into the Indian Ocean.

The Persian ports of Basra and Bandur Shahpur were indispensable links in the Anglo-Soviet supply line. Bandur Shahpur had been considerably developed since the outbreak of war, and rolling-stock from British factories had been sent out there, a notable achievement, since it meant taking the

long sea-route by the Cape. After the British cargo vessels brought the supplies into port, these were taken by the Trans-Iranian Railway to the Caspian ports, where Russian vessels received the consignments. The use of this route for supplies to the southern armies of Marshal Timoshenko became additionally valuable as the Germans increased their advance down the Don. Here the importance of Russian sea-power is clear; the supplies could not be shipped across the Caspian Sea to Baku and Astrakhan if the Red Navy lost command of that sea. It is equally clear that supplies could never have got through Persia to the Russian Caspian ports but for the Royal Navy's command of the Persian Gulf; it was British naval and air co-operation which had made possible the landing of troops at Abadan and Bandur Shahpur, and which destroyed the German ships that had already reached the Persian Gulf. In view of the past relations between the British and Russian Governments concerning Iran and the Persian Gulf, it is matter for satisfaction that for the first time Britain and Russia have acted in agreement in this sphere. Together they made the pro-Nazi Shah abdicate, expelled the German "tourists" from Teheran, and joined forces in the north of Iran. On January 30th, 1942, a Treaty of Alliance was signed between Britain, Russia, and Iran, empowering Britain and the U.S.S.R. to maintain sea, land, and air forces on Iranian territory and waters, and all means of communication were to be open to them. The Allies guaranteed the sovereignty of Iran, economic help, and their own evacuation from Iranian territory six months after war ended. In this way they secured the Persian Gulf-Iran-Caspian route for British supplies to U.S.S.R. The importance of this quadrilateral area will be still greater when the Caspian and Black Seas are

linked, as is intended, by the Don-Volga Canal, and when the Manych Canal¹ connects the Caspian and Azov Seas.

Of the utmost value to Russia were the British victories in Italian East Africa and the recapture of British Somaliland. Italy had made a move of strategic importance when she established a naval and air base at Assab in Eritrea. From here she could threaten, not only British passage through the Red Sea, but the Gulf of Aden. British victories here gave England control of the western shores of the Red Sea, and ensured her command of the southern shore of the Gulf of Aden. But for that, supplies destined for Russia by the Persian Gulf would have been subject to heavily increased attacks. It was well for her Russian Ally, too, that Britain continued in control of her Protectorate in Southern Arabia; it had always been axiomatic of British policy in the East that no other Great Power should control the eastern shore of the Red Sea, otherwise Aden would be lost. That British Protectorate of Aden had been a master key in opening the route to Russia.

England's treaty with Egypt in 1936 had placed at Britain's disposal the naval base of Alexandria, and England by her control of Suez had enabled America to ship supplies to Russia via Tewfik and Port Said. Her control of Cyprus had for long checked a seaborne invasion of the southern shores of Turkey. "The Power that rules the Mediterranean rules the world," said General Smuts, as recently as 1941. This may be an over-statement, but while Britain did have naval-air supremacy over some parts of that sea, squadrons of

the Luftwaffe¹ had to be drawn off Russia for operations on the Libyan front.

Of great importance for the future was the British-Russian maritime collaboration on the Black Sea; here British naval technicians, skilled dockyard workers, and naval gunners co-operated with the Red Fleet, giving expert assistance in the ports of Batum and Novorossisk. Such co-operation among men who know that closest of all fraternities, the brotherhood of the sea, may well be a piece of the pattern of *our* New Order.

¹ Over the total war front, the British R.A.F. attacks by May, 1942 were keeping more than half the Luftwaffe's operational aircraft from the Russian front.

¹ The Russians have been compelled to blow up the Manych Dam. To what extent this will delay construction on the canal, time alone can show.

XI

TURKEY

IN the area of the Black Sea, Britain's policy with regard to Turkey has been of high value to the U.S.S.R. The Straits of Istanbul guard the sea-way to Ukraine and the Russian Black Sea ports. Turkey herself has extensive maritime interests; four seas wash her territory: the eastern Mediterranean, the Aegean, the Sea of Marmora, and the Black Sea. Her chief centres of population and industry lie along six hundred miles of seaboard, and Smyrna is becoming an important naval base; the principal naval harbour is Kocaeli at the eastern extremity of the Sea of Marmora.

The importance to the Allies of friendly relations with such a key-country as Turkey is evident. Between the German advance to the oilfields of Iran stands Turkey; if the Germans reached Iran they would be in a position to block the Persian Gulf against Anglo-American supplies to Russia. The defence of Turkey is thus as vital to the United Nations as is the defence of Egypt. And the defence of Egypt, in turn, is vital for that of Turkey, for by the Red Sea route, in British vessels, comes America's Lease-Lend aid to Turkey in the shape of material for the defence of the Republic.

Germany's aim has always been to bottle up the Russian Fleet in the Black Sea; British naval command at Alexandria and the neutrality of Turkey were important factors in holding back Germany's effort to get control of the Straits—the entrance to the Black Sea and the sea-way to the Caucasus. When the German armies marched into Thrace in 1940 they would have made a drive through Asia



Photo: Planet News.

SAILORS ON A RUSSIAN WARSHIP GETTING SOME FIRING PRACTICE DURING NAVAL MANOEUVRES.

Minor and thence into the Caucasus but for Turkey's fidelity to her undertakings to England. The most that Germany could get from Turkey at that time—a time so vital for Russia—was a pact of non-aggression signed on June 18th, 1941, and the passage of a few vessels through to Lemnos. Turkey, just as Russia and Britain did earlier, had to play for time: she signed a pact with Berlin, but she remained loyal to London. She had to wait till sufficient supplies from England and America came to strengthen her defences, for up to the outbreak of World War II the Turkish Navy consisted of only one capital ship, and that out of date, four recent destroyers out of a total of eight, two cruisers, and some coastal mine-layers. So she placed orders for warships in England—two destroyers and a submarine: “not only was the order carried out, but vessels were delivered to Turkey by British crews.”¹ Thanks to British sea-power, these ships, one of which was the destroyer *Sultanhisar*,² reached her through Alexandretta, which port had previously been included in the French mandated territory of Syria: its retrocession to Turkey in 1939 proved to be sound policy. The friendly relations between England and Turkey made welcome the announcement that General Chakmak, Chief of the Turkish Air Staff, was invited to British R.A.F. headquarters in the Middle East, and had made a special study of Fleet Air Arm in that region. No people are more practical-minded than the Turks, and therefore they have done everything possible to ensure that their progressive Republic shall possess all the latest means of defence which it can acquire. Advances in industry, agriculture, and transport which took place under that most

¹ Ernest Phillips, M.B.E., *Hitler's Last Hope* (a Hurricane Book, W. H. Allen & Co., Ltd., 1942).

² *Brassey's Naval Annual, 1942.* (Edited by Rear-Admiral G. Thursfield. (William Clowes).



W.R.N.S. MOTOR TRANSPORT SERVICE IS ON CALL NIGHT AND DAY.
A WREN DISPATCH RIDER MAKING READY FOR THE ROAD. TIME 2.18 A.M.

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exceptional man, Kemal Atatürk, have raised the young Republic to a level of prosperity which makes every Turk feel that he has a country worth defending to the utmost. So the Turks showed no opposition when the age for conscription was reduced from twenty to eighteen, though their country was still neutral when that law was passed. Turkish men who elect to serve with the navy have to join for three years.

Turkey's position was perilous ever since the beginning of World War II, and Turkish tonnage had suffered so severely in the Black Sea that the Government had forbidden its merchant ships to sail in foreign waters. By July 1942 only two of the small Greek islands in the archipelago which fringes Turkey's western coast remained out of German hands; the Dodecanese and Rhodes were in Italian possession. But British and Free French occupation of Syria, British occupation of Irak, and the combined British and Russian move in Iran, gave Turkey potential support on three sides against German designs, and assured her communication with the Persian Gulf. These last facts were all in Russia's favour as regards her position in the Caucasus where, between the eastern shores of the Black Sea and the north-eastern frontier of Turkey, lie the greatest oilfields in the Soviet Union. Turkey's geographical situation has given her a nodal position between Europe, Asia, and Africa. Just as Britain can block the Baltic and North Sea countries from the Atlantic, so Turkey can block the Black Sea countries from the Mediterranean. This she did in the war of 1914-1918, and Russia's Black Sea Fleet was then cut off from the Allied navies of Britain and France. The route by the Persian Gulf and overland through Iran to the Black Sea ports had not then been

developed, so that the German-Turkish blockade of Russia, which the Allies never overcame, was effectual. It was, indeed, an important factor in the collapse of Tsarist Russia.¹

A Turkey hostile to the Allied nations in World War II would cut one of the life-lines from Britain to Russia. When, in World War I, Imperial Russia made efforts to get control of the Dardanelles, Turkey became apprehensive as to her neighbour's designs in the region of the Black Sea, and this to some extent aggravated her long-standing mistrust of Tsarist Russia. That Turkey's attitude towards Russia has now changed is evident from the fact that when the Turkish Government signed the treaty of friendship with Britain, it stated that even if Turkey became a co-belligerent with Britain, she would not enter into hostilities with Russia.

The Straits, of equal importance to these three Powers, were neutralised by the Convention of Lausanne, but by the later Convention of Montreux Turkey was empowered to fortify the Dardanelles, and this she has done by the erection of coastal batteries on both shores of the channel, while beyond on the coast of the Sea of Marmora extends the Chakmak Line, built to naval as well as military design. The Dardanelles were to be closed to naval fleets in war-time, and also under a "general or special threat of war," so long as Turkey herself was not a belligerent. An exception to this agreement provided for the passage through the Straits of warships which had become cut off from their bases. (This leaves a loophole for the escape of ships of the Russian Black Sea Fleet.) Provision was also made for the passage of ships carrying out operations in support of the Covenant of the League of Nations, and merchant

¹ H. W. Wilson, *Battleships in Action*, Vol. II (Sampson Low).

vessels of every nation were to pass through freely in time of war as in peace.

From all the foregoing facts it will be clear that for the sake of future peace it is essential that close collaboration should exist between Britain, the U.S.S.R., and Turkey.

XII

THE NORTHERN CONVOYS

SAILING through the gales of the North Atlantic without the aid of lights at night-time, in peril from mines, submarines, and air attacks, the men of the Red Ensign, protected by warships flying the White Ensign, brought from the workshops of England to the harbours of Russia tanks, planes, guns, and lorries. And they brought, too, on that 2,000-mile voyage, cargo supplies of wheat and sugar into the ports of the Great White North. All the supplies which Britain had promised Russia for the winter of 1941 were delivered. Freighter planes from England could not be flown in any numbers to the U.S.S.R. over German-occupied territory; only the sea-route could be used, so the burden on British shipping was immense. That life-line to Russia was flanked by the enemy-occupied coast of Norway, Trondhjem had become a German submarine base, and here, too, at one time were the *Tirpitz*, the *Luetzow*, and the *Hipper*. They would not have been there at all if the Naval Air Arm of England had been developed in pre-war years as the Royal Navy pressed that it should be. They would not have been there at all if so large a part of England's mighty battle fleet had not been scrapped, and if such "midsummer madness" as the Anglo-German Naval Agreement of 1935 had not empowered Germany to build submarines again. The sentimental policy of most parties, the unrealistic attitude of the electorate, not only cost England the lives of her seamen, but prevented Russia from getting war supplies from Britain in larger quantities and more quickly than she did. One thing we are resolved shall happen after this war,

and that is, British seamen themselves shall have more say in matters that touch them most vitally, and they themselves shall see that their lives are not shamefully sacrificed through the selfish interests or the sentimental ineptitude of others. As late as May 1942 British sailors and Russian soldiers suffered as a result of the naval disarmament policy of earlier years on the part of England; the largest Arctic convoy sent from Britain to Russia up to the beginning of July 1942 was subject to five days of attack from torpedoes, submarines, and dive-bombing, and all the air support that convoy had was provided by a few fighter planes from its ships. Every plane had to be abandoned after a crash, as the aircraft could not be recovered. Seven ships were lost, because we had not enough torpedo-bombers, as a result of the policy which had reduced the Naval Air Arm to a strength totally inadequate for its gigantic tasks.

The use of Murmansk for convoys had so increased by the summer that the Germans were set on destroying it by every means: finding that dive-bombing did not achieve this, they made high-altitude incendiary attacks on the port. But the co-operation between British fighter planes and Russian A.A. defences was such that the traffic in the harbour by the end of July was more than three times greater than it had been in the spring. The cargoes brought in from British ports had been sufficient to necessitate a large increase in the number of dockworkers at Murmansk. Considering the immense dangers and difficulties which confronted British sailors on their voyages to Archangel and Murmansk, the wonder is that they ever accomplished so much. The British Navy succeeded in making it very difficult for Germany to send supplies to the Finnish Front by the northern coast of Nor-

way and the Barents Sea. This, with the partial denial of the Baltic to the Germans through the pressure of the Red Fleet, is an instance of the value of Anglo-Soviet maritime co-operation in the far north. Owing to the difficulty of getting material sent from Germany to Finland by land, the sea route would have been invaluable to the Germans. Important help to Russia was given too when a British troopship brought a contingent of Canadians to Spitzbergen to guard that strategic archipelago in the Arctic Ocean. That same troopship evacuated 2,000 Soviet miners from Spitzbergen to Archangel. England's Naval Air Arm took part in the first joint Russo-British air attack, when on July 30th, 1941, the Arctic ports of Kirkenes and Petsamo were bombed by planes from British aircraft carriers.

Direct maritime collaboration between Britain and Russia, by which British ships sailed to Soviet ports, and Soviet cargo vessels sailed from Scottish ports with war material for the U.S.S.R., was made possible by the Anglo-Russian Trade Agreement signed on August 18th, 1941, whereby Britain granted a five-year credit of £10 million at 3½ per cent. interest for exchange of materials. Credit was given because Russia required from Britain more goods than Britain required from the U.S.S.R. During the visit of certain Soviet ships to British ports, the Lease-Lend arrangement was availed of for the fitting-up of Lewis guns in the Russian vessels. In such a spirit of co-operation and comradeship we have worked and fought together since June 1941; together we must go forward, there can be no such thing as a static society after this war. Either we progress or we retrogress. And retrogression, under modern conditions, will mean that we shall cease to survive.

Sea-power and air-power are co-efficient to-day,

and if the United Commonwealth, the United States, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, and China, will maintain after the war these combined forces in defence of peace, the chances of a Third World War will be reduced. The surest contribution that Britain can make towards Collective Security is by the maintenance of her maritime tradition, now strengthened by her great power on the ocean airways, and by ensuring that never again shall the lives of her splendid sailors and naval airmen be sacrificed through lack of warships or protective planes. The historian J. A. Williamson has well summarised the genius of the British people for seafaring and the effect of this on the national life when he wrote:

"The oceanic efforts of four centuries increased continuously in volume and effect. They proceeded from the energies of the English nation, and they reacted with important results upon its life. . . . Doctrines, laws, and treaties became parts of the texture of public thought. Shipping in all its aspects became a leading national industry."¹

In such a nation the Russian people can find a seaworthy ally. But Britain in her future maritime development can learn some things from the Red Navy. Radical changes in certain directions are required. The qualification for senior as for junior positions in naval administrative work must be based on one thing only—fitness for that work. In this connection we may quote the words of Lord Winster, formerly known as Commander Fletcher, and at one time Assistant to the First Lord of the Admiralty. In an interview given to Mr. A. J. Cummings, *News Chronicle*,² he said, "The Admiralty itself must be

tested not in terms of names and past reputations, but in the light of results." In Russia the administrative personnel of the Navy is continually viewed in the "light of results." In the U.S.S.R. Marine there is one acid test for the holding of office—ability to fulfil that office. After this war we may expect that seamen themselves will have more to say on this subject than has usually been the case with members of the "Silent Service." And they will, it is to be hoped, be in a position to ensure that the British people whom they have fed and protected, and provided—by their oil tankers—with their means of transport at home, shall not, by apathy or ignorance, ever again allow their naval and merchant Services to decline. The English people are proud of their fleets as the Russian people are of theirs, but the English must, as the Soviet citizens have done, come to make those fleets more truly their own, and the ships more truly those of the men who sail them. In this war there has not so far been any indication that a National Mercantile Marine is being built up.

The navy of the British Commonwealth must always have a wide safety margin if it is to make its fitting contribution to the preservation of general peace: that is one thing this war has made very clear. There must never again be the need for a series of Warship Weeks in the midst of a World War: like our Russian Allies, we must always be prepared. This is a costly necessity, but the Soviet Union did not hesitate in the pre-war years to face that cost. And in the long-run it is a cost which pays. Peace, which all rational men desire, is only maintained at a price, and after this war the price for the prevention of another war will be still higher. Together we can pay the price of peace.

"Our Commonwealth is a commonwealth of

¹ *The Ocean in English History*, p. 3 (Oxford University Press, 1941).

² Published in the *News Chronicle*, April 10th, 1942.

islands"¹; it is sea- and air-power which to-day link them together and link these islands with the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. To make those links endure, Britain must build up her sea-air strength; she must be strong along the whole Ocean Front so that she does not again, as in this war, suffer because the enemy may strike at one or more sections of that Front without warning. Surprise attacks will not bring us disasters if in the air and on the seas Britain, like her Russian Ally, strives to keep a sufficiency of those splendid air and sea forces which she has built up under compulsion of this Second World War.

In building our navies of the future it is likely that we shall have in mind the increasing tendency for naval warfare to assume a guerrilla character. Even now with the growing power of the air factor in ocean war, aircraft has been responsible for only 15 to 20 per cent. of the total loss of merchant shipping. Surface ships have been responsible for possibly 15 per cent. By far the highest percentage, over 50 per cent., has been due to the action of submarines, according to Admiral Sir Herbert Richmond.² The navies of the United Commonwealth with their round-the-world ocean routes, and the Soviet Republics with their seas and their great Polar ocean, will probably build a high proportion of destroyers, swift and small, and these will certainly, as the latest Japanese destroyers do, carry both bomber and fighter planes themselves. To meet the menace of the submarine which will increase, super-submarines will be created, and large flotillas of small surface craft will have to be maintained. There will be

concentration on the development of shore-based naval planes, for the significant American victories over the Japanese in the Coral Sea and off Midway Island showed that Naval Air Forces unaided by battleship action can decide the issue of a major engagement at sea. Sea-power, based in future on its Naval Air Force, will remain one of the determining factors in the issue of modern war.

President Roosevelt correctly estimated the position when he said: "The Axis Powers can never achieve their objective of world domination unless they first obtain control of the seas. This is their supreme purpose to-day, and to achieve it they must capture Great Britain."

The Battles of Britain and of the Baltic-Black Sea Fronts in Russia have been but phases in the one great struggle to-day, the Front against Fascism. The foundations of that Front are not the ships, planes, tanks, or guns, or even the factories where they are built. The foundations are the workers who forge these instruments which, in sufficiency, as well as winning wars will preserve peace. One thing this war has shown the world; it is not the "dreamy Slavs" who have been living in a world of fantasy. If the Russians had not subjected themselves to discipline and self-denial for years, if they had not made sacrifices for the common good, they could not have resisted the Teutonic Terror. It is well for us in England who have not yet known, as Continental peoples have, the horrors of a German army of occupation, that in the years when we were reducing our naval and air fleets to a ludicrously low level in the face of the rising menace of German expansion, every male citizen of the Soviet Union, when he had attained the age of 19, was liable for conscription to service for two years with one of the Forces. Otherwise Russian resistance would not have been what it

¹ Admiral Sir Herbert Richmond, *War at Sea To-day*, Oxford Pamphlets on World Affairs, No. 60 (Oxford University Press, 1942).

² Formerly Professor of Naval History, Cambridge.

has, and we, as well as Russia, would have been the worse for that.

We in England will never be able to play our full part in the liberation of the oppressed while we continue to be strangled with red tape. The strange part is, that it is red tape of our own making and tying. How easily the English people, despite their paradoxically anarchic individualism, smother themselves in bumbledom. If bumbledom had been blasted out of their national life when the bombs rocked them out of their day-dreaming, the people of England would not now be suffering so acutely from a sense of frustration. If they do not cut the red tape quickly, if they do not stop their self-strangulation, they will never breathe the full air of freedom themselves, nor help others to do so. Red tape has strangled so much national effort, but there are healthy signs that youth, aware of this, is going to press for changes.

The U.S.S.R., more than any other land to-day, is the country of youth. The Nazis have had their Youth Corps and their League of German Maidens, but it was not the spirit of youth, joy in living, the promise of a rich future, that animated the faces of the young in the pre-war years in the Reich. It needed no psychologist to mark the difference in appearance and behaviour between groups of Russian and groups of German schoolchildren. In England youth has assumed responsibilities in this war which were undreamt of in times of peace. The English, more than many peoples, are capable of rapid adaptation to environment; without that quality they could never have built up the British Empire. The English are resourceful, quick to take the initiative, and have always been capable, when the occasion demanded, of displaying those qualities in attack which the Russian guerrilla fighters have

shown in this war. In no instances have this resourcefulness and readiness to assume responsibility been more marked than with the youthful captains in convoys, whose tasks have been immense. Young city clerks have been on the bridge of many a ship to-day, and throughout the naval and mercantile fleets youth has responded magnificently to the calls which service at sea has made upon it. We in England must see that youth, which has done so much to keep our ocean life-lines clear, is given after the war the same place in the national life as it is in that of the Soviet Republics. A young Russian A.B. can play a considerable part in the political life of his country. This writer was told by a Russian rating in a British seaport about the young Red sailor A. Selesnov, who is a Deputy of the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R. "I have worked with him, and he is as good a man at sea as in the soviet," said the voyager from Murmansk. To English people it was heartening to know of the election to Parliament of Stoker W. J. Edwards, now representing Stepney Borough, the first member of the lower deck to become an M.P. in England.

A fine opportunity for raising a vigorous, disciplined body of sea-minded youth has arisen with the establishment of the Sea Cadet Corps, which from numbering 9,000 on the outbreak of this war, has now risen to over 50,000. On reaching the age of 15, cadets are expected to give an undertaking, supported by the consent of their parents, to join the Royal Navy later. Straight from their corps, cadets are to be found in most convoys engaged on telegraphy or signal work. The Service of the Royal Marines is one which attracts a high proportion of young recruits, as it does in Russia. These sea-soldiers of Britain whose motto is "By sea and by land," and who have been known as "the proudest

Corps in the world," defend naval bases, form landing parties, and provide the Navy with some of its most skilled gunners. In the capture of Gibraltar, in the raid at Zeebrugge, in the diversion at Madagascar, which made possible the capture of the harbour of Diego Suarez, the daring and skill of the Royal Marines have only been matched by that of the Russian Marines in the defence of Kronstadt and Sevastopol.

Something has been said here earlier about the work of women in connection with the Russian fleets. The work of the W.R.N.S. has shown that in England, too, women can play an indispensable part in maritime service, though it is to be hoped that the range of their activities will be considerably increased. They have, in this war, been engaged on the maintenance of ships and naval aircraft, engine-cleaning, painting, greasing, and repairing light metal work. They have manned steam picket-boats to take men out to their ships; they have taken spells of duty as cooks and mess stewards on depôt ships; they have worked ferry boats and loaded guns for the coastal vessels engaged against E-boats. And members of the W.R.N.S. have gone to Canada to form a similar organisation with the Royal Canadian Navy. The day may come when, as on some Russian cargo vessels, English women are found in ships of a British Mercantile Marine acting as chairmen at meetings for discussions on social and cultural subjects. The day may even come when as in the U.S.S.R. women hold office in naval administration. In inland navigation British women are not behind Russian ones, for those who have trained for work with the Grand Union Canal Carrying Company are now in charge of the barges, and are training fresh crews. On the Russian river Amur is a ship whose crew consists entirely of women.

Youth in the maritime services of England and in Russia will play a great part after this war in securing the freedom of the seas. The brotherhood of the ocean is the most international of all; seas do not divide sailors, they unite them. British and Soviet sailors have been comrades in the struggle against a tyranny which, like a typhoon, threatened to sweep over their shores. Together they faced the storm, together they must sail the calmer waters that will come when the mad fury of that storm has spent itself. Together they must build up out of the wreckage a world in which they can carry freely, to all men, the things which men need. Once and for all we, and all who form with us the Anti-Aggression Alliance, must make up our minds that neither force nor fear of it, neither blackmail nor bludgeoning, shall make us pursue any policy of appeasement again. We have eaten the bitter fruits of that policy in this Second World War. After this war the lights will go up and the ships will sail—but there will not be peace. It is within the power, however, of the United Nations to prevent a Third World War. "We shall certainly make it impossible for any German Government to make a total war again."¹

If we, all of us, really and truly do mean to fulfil those words, we must implement our intention with the force necessary to meet any attempts to break that intention. The difficulties that confront all reconstructionists are immense, for our age is one in which men tend to turn to one tyranny to liberate them from another. They will continue to do this until the need for it is removed. The need can only be removed by an immensely strong combination of peoples wielding the necessary sea and air power to enforce their joint will for peace. And the chances

¹ Air-Marshal Sir Arthur Harris, Chief of Bomber Command, in a broadcast to the German People, July 28th, 1942.

of such a combination being an enduring one can never be more than slight unless the national life of all its members is brought within the framework of economic socialism. Socialism, in itself even if universally adopted, may be no final guarantee against war, but the more widely that system is adopted, the less are the chances that wars will be waged for the sources of raw materials or for the monopoly of markets.

Russia by her planned economy has specialised in the production, distribution, and consumption of supplies over an area one-sixth of the globe. In that work, as we have seen, the Soviet Union's Maritime Services have played an immense part. "The present war has revealed the tremendous importance of the transport services to the life of a country or people. No sea-power, if it wishes to be independent, can dispense with a highly developed fleet and sea routes."¹ Three-fourths of Russia's frontiers are sea-washed; her Red Fleet and her Mercantile Marine together form a strong guardian of the life of her people within the first Socialist State in the world.

Britain, as the head of an Oceanic Commonwealth, has played in the past a greater part than any other people in the distribution of world products. The British, if they are a nation of shopkeepers, are also a nation of seafarers. And the British Navy is still the finest in the world.

The best contribution that Britain can make towards world reconstruction after this war is to maintain strong ocean and air fleets. Let her never forget how she has let down her own sailors, soldiers,

¹ N. Voznesensky, Chairman of the State Planning Committee, in his "Report to the Eighteenth All-Union Conference of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, February 18th, 1941." [This passage is taken from the Publisher's Note forming the Introduction to *U.S.S.R. Speaks for Itself*, No. 2, Agriculture and Transport (Lawrence & Wishart, 1941).]

and airmen by her policy of disarmament in the inter-war period. Let her think of her soldiers now, their bare backs burning and blistering in the streets of Singapore, as they work on road-making for the Japanese. Let the people of England never forget that *The Prince of Wales*, the ship of the Atlantic Charter, went down in the South China Sea because they, the English people, had failed to ensure that she had planes to protect her. We owe it to the memory of those sailors who perished with her, to every seaman who has given his life for us in this war, that these things shall never happen again.

London pride has been handed down to us, and more ships have sailed on the tide of its wide river than on any other in the world. The great port of London is as dear to the people of England as the port of Leningrad is to the people of Russia. The Estuary of the Thames is the open gateway to England, as the Gulf of Finland is to the U.S.S.R., and never again must the people of England at a time of crisis leave their capital and their principal port so ill-defended as it was in the days of Munich. Never again must the wives and children of sailors and dockyard workers be found roaming the countryside, as at Plymouth, for want of homes when the heart of their city was burning. Ports are the early casualties of war, and we in England have a duty to the seamen and dockers who maintain us through those ports to protect our harbours properly.

To our Allies also, we owe the duty of vigilance. Mr. Eden, in the House of Commons on June 11th, 1942, said of the Anglo-Russian Treaty, that it provided that, after this war, Britain and Russia would "collaborate with one another and with the other United Nations in the ensuing period of reconstruction on the basis of the principles set out in the Atlantic Charter." If England is to be an Ally who

can serve the common cause well and truly, she must, like Russia, have available the force to keep the peace. Her best force, as we have said, is her air- and sea-power.

It was by no accident that the Luftwaffe's first blows on Britain were aimed at her principal naval base, Scapa Flow, and that the first bombs to fall on Russia were directed at the U.S.S.R.'s main naval base, Sevastopol. It was in pursuance of the German plan for world domination that while Sevastopol was being most severely shelled, Malta was subjected to the most intensive air raids. But one thing the Germans overlooked, and that was the unity of purpose behind the Allied defenders of the Black Sea and the Mediterranean: "We have received messages of greeting from the garrison of Malta and other garrisons of our Allies which inspired us with vigour and multiplied our strength," declared Vice-Admiral Oktiabrski, commanding the naval defence of Sevastopol. Nowhere has the courage of British and of Russian people been more magnificent than in their sailors and the citizens of their seaports. This war has taught the people of Britain and the people of Russia that they need each other. Our seamen and their seamen have shown us how that need may be met. We must sail together. Full steam ahead.

PORT OF LONDON,
RUSSIAN NAVY DAY,
July 24th, 1942.

