STALIN'S GRANDCHILDREN

By KLAUS MEHNERT

Since the publication of our article "Shoulder Straps—And Then!" (February 1944), which dealt with the course Bolshevikism has taken during the last few years, much has happened that allows the "—And Then!" to be seen in a clearer light. In the following, we have singled out one problem—that of the younger Soviet generation—to use it for the analysis of some of the psychological consequences of the war in the USSR.

The author has studied the problems of Soviet youth for fifteen years and written a book and numerous articles about it. As a foreign correspondent he spent several months in the years between 1929 and 1936 in student dormitories and youth camps in the Soviet Union, and he was acquainted with many young Russians. Since leaving the USSR he has kept up with developments among Soviet youth by following its literature, as it is represented by books, newspapers such as the "Komsomolskaya Pravda" and "Pionerskaya Pravda," and magazines such as "Smena," "Vejaty," and "Ogonyok."

It often happens in political life that reality changes more rapidly than our ideas about it. The world as a whole still has ideas of Soviet youth which held good for the thirties. Our essay is an attempt to bring these ideas up-to-date.

A

The outbreak of war in 1941 there lived in the Soviet Union, within the borders of 1939, some 100,000,000 people who were born after the Revolution of 1917. The age structure of Soviet youth was at that time:

Up to the age of 9 years 46 millions
From 10 to 14 years 17 millions
From 15 to 18 years 15 millions
From 19 to 25 years 22 millions

Never before in the history of Russia and hardly ever in the history of any other state has youth played so important a part as it does today in the Soviet Union. The war has terribly decimated the ranks of the middle generation, the men from 25 to 45; and the older generation has very little to say. Now and again press and radio mention letters written by an elderly father to his son serving in the Red Army, or letters he had received from his son. But otherwise hardly anything is ever heard about the old people in the country. And this is only natural. In the first place, comparatively few old people have survived the strenuous events since 1914; and secondly, the two main tasks set by the war—to fight and to produce—must be carried out chiefly by the younger generation.

When speaking of the working youth of the Soviet Union, there are two points to be borne in mind.

(1) The proportion of youth in the population and its share in the state's total production is greater than in any other state. The shortage in manpower, which has become particularly acute since the start of the almost continuous offensives in the summer of 1943 with their huge casualties, has led to the mobilization of millions of children for economic life. In his book One World, Wendell Willkie describes his visit to the USSR in the autumn of 1942, long before the complete mobilization of manpower which has taken place since. Yet even then Willkie saw children of ten working 66 hours a week in the airplane factory over which he was shown. After finding no men of military age, except the director, in the kolkhoz (collectivized village) he visited, Willkie remarked: "The wives and children of the soldiers feed the country."
YOUTH MEANS GIRLS

(2) Soviet working youth consists mainly of girls. This is especially true in the field of agriculture. According to Soviet statistics, 81 per cent of all tractor drivers, for example, are women (Bolshevik, No. 5, 1944, p. 34). The majority of them belong to the younger generation.

A letter addressed to Stalin by the kolkhoz women of a single province (Tambov) and reprinted in the Izvestiya (17.6.43) contains the following passage:

You, Comrade Stalin, know that many kolkhoz chairmen have gone to the front. Without hesitation, their posts were taken over by us women. In our province women have filled the following posts:

111 village soviet chairmen
408 kolkhoz chairmen
3,056 heads of tractor brigades
2,867 heads of cattle farms
17,273 group leaders
3,032 members of kolkhoz committees
1,110 chairmen of examination committees
3,235 stable hands...

and more than 50,000 other leading or special positions in the kolkhozes of our province.

Not only in agriculture but in all other spheres of economic life has the proportion of women risen in an unparalleled manner. In the field of transport, for instance, it is 90 per cent, and even in the oil industry with its great demands on physical exertion it is 50 per cent (Mainichi from Moscow, 10.3.44). To appreciate the significance of this, one must remember that the Russian woman has always been known for her capacity for hard work.

To give an approximate idea of the present age distribution among the two sexes in the younger generation behind the front we present the following figures which we have worked out on the basis of all material and factors (mobilization, evacuation to Germany, death, capture, etc.) known to us, but with no guarantee for accuracy:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10 to 14</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 to 18</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 to 25</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In most other countries the family and the school are the main pillars of education. Not so in the Soviet Union. During the first eighteen years of its rule, Bolshevism systematically weakened family influence and regarded schools and youth organizations as the true props of education. This led to such catastrophic consequences that the Soviets attempted to consolidate the family again during the thirties and to place it as a third, equal factor beside the other two. But this period lasted only six years. The family has fallen back into a state of disintegration for reasons which are to be found above all in the effects of the war, and the forming of the younger generation is once again almost completely in the hands of schools and youth organizations.

An examination of these two institutions is particularly topical since both of them underwent a series of important changes during the last few months, in the course of which a number of previously hidden facts have come to light.

FOUR SCHOOL REFORMS

In the winter of 1943/44, Soviet schools entered upon a new phase. The most important measures by which this phase is to be distinguished from the previous one are: (1) a new system of school marks, (2) the end of coeducation, (3) new rules for pupils, and (4) new rules affecting the visiting of cinemas and theaters by school-children.

At first sight these changes do not look especially interesting. But in the Soviet Union things rarely seem interesting at first sight. In contrast to the USA, for example, where national problems are discussed in public, that which is problematical in the USSR is only revealed to the observer upon closer study. For officially there are no problems in the state of the Bolsheviks. Officially, everything is wonderful and runs smoothly. In the first few years after the Revolution, some problems were still acknowledged. Now, however, that the Bolsheviks have triumphed completely and have done away with the old classes—by "liquidating" the bourgeoisie and "dekulakizing" the farmers—there is, according to Marxist ideas, no longer ground for problems of any kind. If we are to believe Soviet accounts, the Soviet state, Soviet economy, Soviet education—indeed, the entire life of the Soviet Union runs like a perfectly constructed machine. It is true that when a machine is not lubricated properly it does not run so well. But that does not imply a problem. The machine itself and its construction remain perfect. All that is needed is to add some lubricating oil, and the machine runs as smoothly as ever.
the eyes of the Bolsheviks, the reforms in the field of education, too, are nothing but fresh lubricating oil for a perfect machine. But are we to take their word for it?

GOOD OR 4?

A new decree states that from now on school marks are not to be expressed with the words “excellent, good, satisfactory, unsatisfactory, bad” but by the figures 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1. Obviously the difference is not great. Is it not a matter of utter indifference or, at most, of taste whether the mark is called “good” or “4”? One is surprised to find this change proclaimed as a “measure possessing significance of the first order” and as one of the most important among the new school reforms. Radio Irkutsk had the following to say (24.2.44):

Since the new five-point system replaced the words “good, satisfactory, etc.” in October, it has become evident that this system, which was in force in the old Russian schools for many decades, makes it possible to mark more accurately and in this way to keep a better check on the pupil’s knowledge.

If the mayor of a town attempted to do away with a shortage of electricity by introducing new words to replace the expressions “volt” and “ampere,” he would be regarded as crazy. But the Soviets are not crazy. How then is this reform and the great importance accorded to it to be understood? The Soviets provide no explanation. For any explanation would mean the recognition of the fact that a problem had existed. And there must be no problems. The machine is perfect, it only requires some fresh lubricant, in this case a new system of marking. Not a word is said as to how this new system is to help the schools and why it possesses a “significance of the first order.” We shall return to this question later.

EXAMINATIONS DISCOVERED

This is not the first time in the field of education that the Soviets have proclaimed the return to a prerevolutionary measure as an important innovation and reform. To give an example: after the victory of Bolshevism in Russia, the system of examinations formerly customary in Russia’s education was abolished. For fifteen years there were no examinations of any kind in the Soviet Union. The soul of the child, so it was said, was not to be harmed by so reactionary an institution. The system favored was that of “Progressive Education,” imported from America, which left the child to its own devices as much as possible and which trusted in the child’s innate good qualities.

Suddenly, on August 25, 1932, a decree of the Central Committee of the Party stipulated that, starting with 1933, examinations were to be introduced in Soviet schools. It was admitted that, lacking the stimulus of examinations, the standard of schoolwork had deteriorated deplorably. The Soviet press enthusiastically lauded this reform and called examinations “a tool for training the architects of Socialism.”

In the autumn of 1933, when visiting some schools in Moscow, I asked the children how they felt about the introduction of examinations. They told me that the examinations were a wonderful innovation. Although they were not exactly a pleasure, they said, their introduction had immediately led to better achievements on the part of the pupils. They were oblivious of the fact that the system was nothing but the revival of an institution that had existed previously in Tsarist Russia and that was customary throughout the rest of the world.

Here we find an essential difference between the reintroduction of examinations in 1933 and that of the five-point system in 1943. In 1933 the Soviets had dug up a measure the absence of which had admittedly had a disastrous effect on the level of scholastic achievements, as the hopes placed in the innate qualities of the child had not been fulfilled. In 1943, however, a “reform” was carried out which was of a purely formal nature and did not affect conditions as such.

There is yet another difference. When examinations were reintroduced in the
schools, it was claimed that examinations in the Soviet state would differ fundamentally from those in the Tsarist Empire. It turned out later that, actually, there was no essential difference between the Soviet examinations and those of the old days. But the pretence was maintained that they were an innovation. In 1944, however, the introduction of the five-point system is commended—as we have seen from the quotation of Radio Irkutsk—as an institution that proved its worth in Tsarist times.

THE END OF COEDUCATION

On the path of retrogressive "reforms" the abolishment of coeducation in Soviet schools is a particularly interesting step. When, after the Revolution, coeducation replaced the old system with its strict segregation of the sexes, it was celebrated as a great victory over the reactionary spirit of Tsarism and as a symbol of the equality of all human beings. The Soviets stated that they wanted to eradicate the differences not only between the classes but also between the sexes. And while women took their place beside men as workers in all walks of life, boys and girls were accorded equal treatment in the schools and youth organizations.

Now a complete about-face has been executed. The end of coeducation "is an important stage in the development of the Soviet school," declared the conference of directors of Moscow girls' schools (Komsomolskaya Pravda, 4.3.44). And at the Fifth Meeting of the Supreme Council of the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic, G. V. Perov, the Deputy Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars, stated (Pravda, 5.3.44):

The introduction of classes separated according to the sexes makes it possible to carry out education according to the physical attributes of the sexes and to secure the absolutely necessary discipline of the students. In the boys' schools it has facilitated the carrying out of military training.

NEW RULES OF BEHAVIOR

The next two reforms deal with the behavior of youth in and out of school. The "Twenty New Rules" of which, in his speech mentioned above, G. V. Perov declared that they had to be carried out "unconditionally as an obligatory demand of the state," call for regular attendance at school; punctual homework; proper conduct at school, at home, in public; and particularly for respect toward the teacher. In his comment on this last point, A. Mostovoi, director of the 330th school for boys in Moscow, writes:

What the rules require is a reverent (pochtitielyi) behavior toward the teacher—not just a courteous or correct one, but precisely a reverent behavior, an absolute submission to the orders of the teacher (Investiga, 5.4.44).

This is strange language in a country that has long prided itself on having freed the younger generation from the tyranny of adults.

Another reform is contained in the new decree of the People's Commissariat for Education on movie and theater attendance:

Pupils under the age of sixteen are forbidden to visit movies on week days without permission of the head of the school. School directors are enjoined to permit pupils to visit movies and theaters only after school hours and in organized groups accompanied by adults, teachers, or youth leaders. Before granting permission, they must consider the scholastic achievements and conduct of each pupil, his preoccupation with school and homework, as well as the suitability of the film for the demands of education (Tass).

This measure, too, sounds surprising in a country that used to glory in the freedom of its education and, incidentally, will not be easy to enforce, as can be seen from the following report from the city of Kirov appearing in the Komsomolskaya Pravda, the central organ of the Communist Youth Organization, on February 27, 1944, i.e., weeks after the promulgation of the decree:

Class was over. Swinging their satchels, the pupils of the Eighth Middle School ran out on to the road. Some went home, others stood around undecidedly: where should they spend the rest of the day?

"Let's go to the movies! There is a good picture on today," Yura Berzink and Volodya Shlayev suggested.

Now the children are at the Progress Theater. Quite a few schoolchildren have arrived there already. Yura Okhapkin, a pupil of the fifth
class, has not been to school for five days, but he never misses a film.

The children loiter about on the sidewalks, outside the cinema, in the lobby, in front of the box office. Some are hawking cigarettes, others offer their services for buying tickets, others again just do mischief.

One little fellow, who can hardly reach up to the cashier's window, holds up a three-ruble note: "Auntie, a ticket."

The kind Auntie cashier takes the money without hesitation. Another Auntie—the ticket collector—obligingly lets the schoolchildren pass into the audience.

CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

If we look at the four reforms, we find that they all deal in one way or another with the problem of behavior and discipline both in school and out. The necessity for passing these decrees indicates that something is not as it should be with the youth of the USSR. This is confirmed by countless statements made in press and radio and of which we quote two examples.

(1) One of the best-known Soviet educationalists, A. Protopopova, published an article on January 16, 1944, entitled "Obedience" (Povinoveniye) in the Koms. Pravda, in which she urgently demands "a bolder and more widespread application of punishment," explaining:

Exemption from punishment demoralizes the pupil's will, it corrupts him, frees him of the inalterable necessity of concentrating upon the tasks he has been set. Punishment promotes obedience.

A pupil has not done his task once, twice, three times. What is one to do with him when talking to him, admonitions, explanations, do not help? Punish him, by all means. A pupil has broken the rules of conduct. What is one to do, when remarks and explanations do not help? Punish him, by all means. Perhaps even punish him the first time.

Comrade Protopopova advises the employment of "the rich arsenal of punishments" available in Soviet education and answers her own questions: "Why has the question of punishment become so urgent? Why is there so much talk about punishment?" with the words: "The truth is that, according to our practical experience in school, punishments often have but little effect."

She then goes on to describe how the customary school punishments do not exert the desired effect upon the modern young people in the Soviet Union because they no longer take them seriously. She suggests the following remedy:

Everywhere an interest should be taken in the marks given for a pupil's behavior, and these marks

Mother: "How naughty you are! I shall ask the school to keep an eye on your manners."

Teacher: "How naughty you are! I shall call the attention of your parents to your manners."

(Crocodile, No. 11/12, 1943)

In other words, Comrade Protopopova has no other remedy to suggest than to threaten the younger generation that its marks of conduct in school will accompany it throughout life as an ineradicable stamp. And this in a political system which during the initial period of its existence absolutely rejected the employment of punishment in school as an infringement upon the soul of the child.

MAJOR BORZENKO IS SURPRISED

(2) In the Koms. Pravda of March 2, 1944, Major Borzenko relates his experience upon visiting the Boys' School No. 425 in the Stalin district of Moscow:

I entered the Ninth Class. I entered it with all my decorations and medals. But many of the pupils did not rise although politeness and discipline should have demanded it. I asked the pupils what they intended to become after the war, and I discovered that only the sons of officers intended entering the war academy. A giant of a boy, who had grown a mustache, told me with his hands in his pockets and in a tone which brooked no contradiction: "The war will soon be ended and hence it is useless to deal with questions of the war." Some of the other pupils agreed with this opinion.

This scene did not take place somewhere in America where soldiers are of not much account except in war time, but in the Soviet Union, where the Red Army has for twenty-five years been surrounded by a nimbus of propaganda. Nor did it take place in some forgotten corner of the USSR but in its capital and, what is more, in the Stalin model district. And finally it did not happen to just any old soldier but to a celebrated officer who bears the highest title of honor, "Hero of the Soviet Union,"
and has also made a name for himself as an author.

KOMSOMOL

The Komsomol (the word is composed of the first syllables of the Russian words for Communist Youth Association) is the largest youth organization in the world. Its membership is composed of young people between the ages of fourteen and twenty-two. Closely connected with the Komsomol is the Pioneer Organization, whose members are between the ages of ten and fifteen. The following approximate membership figures indicate the growth of the Komsomol:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Membership</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1918</td>
<td>22,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1922</td>
<td>235,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1924</td>
<td>500,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1925</td>
<td>1,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1927</td>
<td>2,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>5,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1932</td>
<td>6,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>11,000,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The significance of the Komsomol is to be found in the facts that first, its members are the future members of the Communist Party, and secondly, that it represents the sole legal political organization of a youth which is at present at the peak of its importance. Since the number of adolescent workers in the towns and in the country is much larger than that of adult workers, the Komsomol has gained very much in weight in comparison to the Party. N. N. Romanov, Secretary of the Central Committee of the Komsomol, recently declared that the Komsomol must "safeguard the fulfillment of state tasks, especially in those places where there are no organizations of the Party" (Koms. Pravda, 12.4.44.). And N. M. Kalinin, who holds more or less the position of President of the Soviet Union, said:

In the villages there is at present no greater organization than the Komsomol. The members of the Komsomol are no longer the merry fellows who used to march through the villages playing the harmonica—they bear a great responsibility and must look after the life of the villages during the war (Koms. Pravda, 12.12.43).

In view of the extraordinary role played by youth in production and war, statements such as these are no more than justified. But what does it look like inside the Komsomol?

RAPID TURNOVER

Few figures have been published on the membership standing of the Komsomol during the last three years. It seems that at the outbreak of war its membership amounted to 11 millions. Of these, several millions have been eliminated from the active work of the organization through death, capture, or serious wounds. They were replaced by more than five million new members (Koms. Pravda, 12.3.44). If we assume that the losses and the new gains in members have more or less balanced each other, about half the membership of the Komsomol would consist today of young people who have joined it since 1941. Especially in the smallest units of the Komsomol—the cells in the villages and individual factories—as well as in the next highest organs, the rayon (i.e., county) organs, one third of the work of the organization had to be placed in the hands of youngsters who joined the Komsomol since the outbreak of war (Koms. Pravda, 12.4.44). Many of these proved themselves incapable and had to be replaced. In 1943, for example, in the Province of Novosibirsk 1,500 secretaries of local organizations, i.e., about half of all existing ones, and forty-three of the fifty-two secretaries of the provincial headquarters of the Komsomol, were changed (Koms. Pravda, 4.3.44).

In former times it was only tested Komsomol members of long standing who were allowed to rise to the position of a rayon secretary. Nowadays, however, the Komsomol cannot wait. Seminaries for rayon-committee secretaries have therefore been established. The Koms. Pravda writes about these secretaries (26.1.44):

They have only recently joined the leadership of the organization. Almost half of all the secretaries were elected in 1943, some of them even as recently as two to three months ago. They possess neither experience nor the necessary knowledge.

For the current work of the Komsomol and for the daily contact with the millions of its members the local secretaries are, of course, far more important than the central organ in Moscow. The war has given rise to countless new problems which in most cases must be solved locally as they cannot wait for a decision from the provincial capital, much less from Moscow. The Koms. Pravda of April 12, 1944, stated quite clearly that the success of the Komsomol's work is in the last analysis determined by the work of the local organization of the Komsomol. All this amounts to youth itself having to solve the problems of youth.

"GLOOMY OLD MEN"

During my first few visits to the Soviet Union I was surprised to see how trusting
the young people were, how ready to accept anything they were told. They felt everything they possessed in the way of schools, vacation homes, and future prospects to be a gift of the Revolution. The young men and girls who streamed into the Komsomol, mostly from the industrial suburbs and villages, looked full of confidence upon the leaders of the Party and the Komsomol, who had brought all this about. Many had contributed, in one way or another, to the victory of Bolshevism, had made sacrifices for it.

Meanwhile, the aspect has changed: to the present younger Soviet generation, the Revolution and the Civil War are no longer part of their personal experiences but subjects for history lessons. This generation has not fought for Bolshevism. It no longer feels the old confidence in the hitherto dominating type of Komsomol functionary. Millions of members of the Komsomol have gone through years of education in schools and, one-sided as this education was, it could not but develop the brains of these young people. Adolescents who have absorbed a middle-school or even a university education no longer look upon the leaders of the Party and the Komsomol with the same naive respect as their elder brothers did who were not yet able to read and write. The war had shifted countless semieducated youngsters from schoolrooms into the process of production and has raised in their minds many new questions which would never have troubled them had they continued on their normal course. By learning to think, the younger generation has also acquired a certain measure of skepticism, and it is inclined to look critically upon the ordinary type of Komsomol leader, some of whom are intellectually far inferior to these young people.

An open-letter written by Yelena Vartanova, the Secretary of the Kobstomol District Committee in Moscow, reads (Koms. Pravda, 20.2.44):

"Nowadays, when the younger generation starts upon its independent path of life at an early age, the task of education must be more sharply defined. . . . In the factory, there are a lot of young men and girls with a middle-school education. They may perhaps have little experience of life and ideological firmness, but in any case they are people with a certain amount of education and culture.

This new youth places higher demands upon its leaders: they must correspond at least outwardly to its new spiritual and mental level. For that reason Vartanova turns against an anonymous Komsomol secretary employed at a factory in her district:

"He has stopped being a youth leader. . . . He has somehow become gloomy. He is not a Komsomol functionary but an old man!"

Although this secretary is a good Bolshevik and conscientiously sees to it that his group of workers punctually fulfills the production quota allotted to it, "it is not enough simply to set a good example in work to lead the younger generation" (Koms. Pravda, 7.3.44).

The time has passed when the Party possessed such an aura of authority that each of its functionaries could lay claim to the respect of the younger generation simply by the fact that he was wearing the Party or Komsomol badge.

The anonymous Komsomol leader in Yelena Vartanova’s letter was in her opinion dismissed with justification because “he has not kept up with life, and he obstructs the Komsomol organization in its creative and full-blooded life.” She has purposely not given the real name of the secretary, as her intention is not a personal accusation but one of a general character.

So Komsomol leaders who have helped Bolshevism to gain its victory are now being accused of “obstructing the Komsomol organization in its creative and full-blooded life.” They are regarded as “gloomy old men,” indeed, almost as reactionaries, whose authority rests upon their former great services, services which are for the present youth of the Soviet Union very much a thing of the past.

LACK OF CONFIDENCE

In “Shoulder Straps—And Then?” we pointed to this possibility of a conflict between the older and the younger generation in the USSR. The symptoms indicating this have meanwhile grown in number. Among them is one document in particular to which we shall turn immediately. In order to appreciate its significance one must bear in mind that until recently the Komsomol played an important political role and that, corresponding to the increase in the weight of youth in the war-time Soviet Union, the weight of the Komsomol has increased tremendously during the last few years. It was only six months ago that Kalinin said: “The Komsomol is the most vital part of the people and bears the entire
responsibility of production" (Koms. Pravda, 12.12.43). Should the Party suddenly attempt to deprive the Komsomol of some of its influence, this would be an indication of its distrust toward the Komsomol. This attempt is now in full progress.

At the beginning of April 1944, the twelfth plenary meeting of the Central Committee of the Komsomol took place. It declared the most important result of its meeting to have been its decree "Concerning Measures toward the Improvement of the Work of the Komsomol in the Schools." This decree (the full wording was published in the Koms. Pravda, 9.4.44) sets the Komsomol one central task for the future, namely, "to support the organs of education, the school directors, and teachers in instructing and educating the children." The decree defines the future position of the Komsomol as follows:

The plenary meeting deems it necessary to resolve:

(a) that teachers, regardless of the fact whether they belong to the Komsomol or not, be present at all student-Komsomol meetings and be allowed to participate in their work;

(b) that in examining a student's application for membership in the Komsomol, the teachers' opinion of him be taken into consideration;

(c) that the school director have the right to suspend a mistaken resolution of the school-Komsomol organization.

The further improvement of the scholastic achievements of students depends largely on an improvement in discipline and the introduction of the strictest possible order in the school. The decisive role in this belongs to the teacher. Only a lack of comprehension for this fact can explain that some Komsomol organizations have permitted criticism of teachers in their meetings.

The Komsomol organization at the school and the student members of the Komsomol are prohibited from interfering with the work of the teachers and from criticizing the latter at the Komsomol meetings, student meetings or in wall notices.

In his long speech at the plenary meeting, N. A. Mikhailov, Secretary of the Central Committee of the Komsomol, declared emphatically:

What secrets could the Komsomol organization have for the teacher who, as a rule, knows the strong and weak side of every student far better and possesses a much greater knowledge of all questions of education? (Koms. Pravda, 11.4.44).

In other words, the Komsomol is to become not much more than an assistant taskmaster and whip to aid the teacher—a steep decline from its former powerful position when, on an equal footing with the teachers, it shared in the development of the younger generation. The very formulations of the decree are a blow to the Komsomol's prestige and would have been impossible a few years ago. Realizing that this must cause a good deal of apprehension and discontent among the Komsomol's most active members, Mikhailov implored them to understand "that the increase of the teacher's authority and the improvement of order in the schools is a dire necessity and absolutely unavoidable," and he requested all Komsomol members "to reach literally every student and to explain the meaning of the reforms to the young people."

This then is what happened: on the one hand, the war has tremendously increased the role of the Komsomol; on the other, the Komsomol is showing so many signs of unruliness and lack of discipline that the Party is getting seriously alarmed and has begun to take countermeasures. It is shifting responsibility onto the teachers, who are government employees and hence more to be relied on in fulfilling orders.

To round off the picture we must add that the Pioneer Organization is also not working as it should. In the same speech, Mikhailov makes the strange confession that it is not equal to its tasks "of instilling the children with devoted loyalty for their country and for the Bolshevist Party." So we learn from one of the secretaries of the Komsomol's Central Committee that devotion and loyalty to country and party do not by any means come naturally to Soviet youth, that the instilling of the children with them is a task, a task, moreover, to which the Party's own youth organization is not equal.

THE CROCODILE SPEAKS UP

Up to now we have been looking at the situation in school and Komsomol. We shall now see that in youth's attitude toward work, too, everything is not as it should be. While the Soviet press is telling the world every day that the younger generation has so great a love for Stalin as well as for its Soviet country that it has been seized by an unparalleled enthusiasm for work, the same press contains daily proof of the contrary. Sometimes these proofs are even in rhyme as, for instance, a poem published in the magazine Crocodile (No. 41, 1943), in which a young female office employee speaks to a male visitor to her office:
The agitator—he is the one at whom we must continue to direct our attention, if we seriously wish to improve the political work among the masses (Koms. Pravda, 13.4.44).

The Party itself always stresses the indispensability of agitators for the carrying out of economic tasks. In their work, the agitators should exploit "the entire arsenal of Bolshevist agitation, lectures, discussions, books, magazines, newspapers, wall newspapers, placards, posters, hit tunes, folk songs, fairy tales" (Pravda, 26.3.44). As an illustration of what happens when there are no agitators, we quote the following example.

Forty Komsomol agitators were ordered to proceed to one lumber camp in the province of Arkhangelsk. But for various reasons only five of them showed up after a long delay. "And what was the result?" exclaims the Koms. Pravda (9.2.44), "two thirds of the woodcutters and drivers did not fill their quotas."

The trouble is that today agitation no longer helps much. All the catchwords and slogans have worn off and have lost their effectiveness. Even the campaign to rouse feelings of revenge against the Germans which we discussed in "The Science of Hatred" (January 1943), has apparently not borne the desired fruit and is becoming more difficult with the diminishing extent of German-occupied Soviet territory. At present the Party has placed more hopes in mass competitions among the workers:

Above all it is essential that all male and female workers, engineers, technicians, and employees participate in the competitions... The factory committees must see to it that there is not a single male or female worker at the factories who has not undertaken concrete obligations toward increasing production, toward fulfilling and exceeding the tasks set the factory (V. V. Kuznetsov, President of the Central Council of Trade Unions; Trud, 14.3.44).

Hence the so-called norms of work, which used to play so great a part in the past, are in reality no longer valid. Every day the largest possible amount of work is to be squeezed out of every worker. The forced mass competitions—which take place in public so that the production of each individual can always be checked—is at the same time to provide the Party with the possibility of keeping an eye on the young people in the factory just as the "Twenty Rules" are expected to enable it to supervise the schoolchildren twenty-four hours a day. In his book One World, Wendell Willkie, who professes to be a great admirer of the USSR, writes after his visit to that
country that the Soviet methods of exploiting and paying laborers would please the most antisocial-minded American capitalists.

AND THE REASONS?

Our examination of Soviet youth today has brought to light so many problems that we are justified in inquiring as to their cause. How can we explain that, twenty-seven years after the victory of the Soviet system, Soviet youth is passing through a crisis of this kind? In every state, the younger generation presents certain problems, especially in war time. Hence we shall not deal with the morals of Soviet youth, the question of conjugal faithfulness on the part of soldiers’ wives, for example, which has appeared in the Soviet press, or that of the increasing number of food thefts. These are war phenomena. But the problems of Soviet youth which we mentioned before differ in principle from those of other countries. In the USA, for instance, the problem of juvenile delinquency has become quite acute, as is shown in our article “America Speaks.” But in the USA this is a scarcely surprising consequence of the influence of “Progressive Education,” which permits the younger generation to grow up almost without restrictions. Moreover, America has very little of a tradition of discipline. The word “discipline” itself has for most Americans a disagreeable sound.

In the Soviet Union, however, the period of liberal education only lasted from 1918 to 1933. Since then it has been replaced by a system which puts great emphasis on discipline and takes youth firmly in hand. When staying in Soviet youth organizations or camps during the early thirties, I was always surprised—especially in comparison to the far more self-willed German youth—to see how easy it was to harmonize a group of young Russians and to make them obey and behave in an orderly manner. Furthermore, no state has emphasized more loudly than the Bolshevik state that it was identical with the youth of its country.

To explain the refractory spirit of Soviet youth it is not enough to say: the fathers and elder brothers of Soviet youth are at the front or have fallen, and their mothers and older sisters are working in factories. Doubtless this is the case. Families have been rent apart in a manner probably unparalleled in history. In its urge to squeeze the last drop out of its decreasing reserves of manpower, the state cannot pay any regard to family life. Thus, for instance, growing numbers of women laborers in industry and agriculture are induced—“to avoid unnecessary traveling back and forth,” as Radio Irkutsk put it—to sleep at their places of work, so that even in the evenings and at night the children are not under the supervision of their mothers.

This war-time disruption of family life; the consequences of the evacuation of millions of people; the mobilization of numerous teachers; the destruction of many school buildings by the war or their employment for other purposes—all these reasons for the growing lack of discipline must not be overlooked. Yet it would appear to us that Soviet youth, by reason of its character and its previous education with the emphasis on discipline and collective life, should have been able to overcome this danger. Hence we believe that the cause for this increasing refractoriness must have deeper roots.

THE MEANING OF THE WAR

We must ask our readers to bear in mind the fact that this article deals with the psychology of human beings. This is why the reasons for the crisis in Soviet youth cannot be given in hard figures but only through the patient observation and analysis of psychological factors.

During the first period of their rule the Bolsheviks tried to enforce all the principles of their doctrine. True to their avowed materialism, economic production was put above everything else. Private life was renounced and replaced by a collective one. Private emotions, such as individual love or romanticism, were accused of hindering the growth of collective production and collective conscience. The family was to be replaced by the “commune”—I myself visited such communes and published the diary of one of them.

But gradually it was found that the people were not yet sufficiently “mature” for all these Bolshevist ideals and, being the realist he is, Stalin made a large number of concessions. The family was reintroduced, the communes were abolished, books and plays once again dealt with private emotions, Shakespeare was put on the stage, pretty dresses for women were encouraged, romance was no longer ridiculed. The people took to all this like fish to water. They knew, of course, that Stalin had never denounced the original Bolshevist aims as being wrong and
that he considered these changes only as temporary concessions to the deplorable immaturity of the people, a detour to an unchanged goal. But they did not mind particularly, they were grateful for what they had and enjoyed it while they could. They did not bother their heads about doctrines.

Then came the war.

When you are lying at the front and waiting tensely every minute for what is going to happen, one possibility being that of your imminent death, then your re-think and re-feel many things which perhaps never occupied your mind in the years of peace; you re-think these things not only in your head but in your whole self, your heart, your soul. . . . You think about the meaning of Russia, love, loyalty, happiness. And everything appears different to you from the way it did before, even two years ago.

This is how a speaker at an important meeting of the official Writers’ Association in Moscow explained the emotions of the soldiers at the front to his listeners (Novy Mir, 1943, No. 4).

By facing millions of young Russian soldiers every day with the question of life or death, the war has forced them to get down to the essential issues of human existence. Much sooner and far more clearly than if there had been no war, these young Russians have begun to sense the discrepancy between the true values of life and Bolshevism. Even far behind the front, where the war has not been experienced in the form of actual fighting, it has inflicted countless shocks of the severest kind which have deeply stirred up the life and the conscience of the people.

At first the psychological consequences of war were less noticeable at the front. Here war fed the war. The individual was ruled by iron discipline. He was only part of his company, his division; and his days were filled with his life-and-death struggle. He had no chance to give expression to whatever problems may have beset him. Behind the front, however, it is different. For the young people at home, the war does not mean stricter ties as it does for the soldiers at the front but, on the contrary, greater independence by reducing the effective influence of family and school and by giving millions of young people—as a result of their inclusion in the process of production—their own income and a correspondingly greater self-confidence. Hence it is on the home front that we have found the greatest evidence of the existing crisis.

EXPLORING YOUTH

The Party is fully aware of the fact that the problems of the country’s younger generation cannot be solved by the measures enumerated so far. It has noticed with alarm how, under the influence of developments since the outbreak of the war, youth has lost its bearings and become restless. With its vast experience in mass psychology the Party realizes that the growing lack of discipline is, in the last analysis, an expression of youth’s unfulfilled desires and obscure emotions, which are foreign to the reality of the Bolshevist state and do not find expression within the structure of Bolshevism. Fearing that these desires and emotions may crystallize in a manner dangerous to Bolshevism, the Party is endeavoring to give them definite directions of its own choosing.

The Soviet press provides many proofs that the psychology and emotional life of Stalin’s grandchildren has, of late, undergone such changes that the Party leaders are at a loss to comprehend it. The Party is constantly urging its own and the Komsomol’s functionaries to study anew the sentiments and ideas of the younger generation. It has lauded the custom of the “Komsomol Fridays” and similar arrangements by which “the Committee Members of the Komsomol Organizers of the factories can study youth, its troubles, requirements, and endeavors more deeply” (Pravda, 10.12.43). “We must endeavor to know what is going on in the schools and in the hearts of the students, and we must occupy ourselves with them more frequently,” said Mikhailov at the last plenary meeting of the Komsomol (Koms. Pravda, 11.4.44); and on another occasion it was reported:

When a conference was held at a Moscow factory on the subject of books dealing with the problems of love, faithfulness, and friendship, it was discussed for many days after in the factory and at the homes of the workers. In this way the Komsomol leaders found out a lot more about the needs and interests of youth (Koms. Pravda, 19.2.44).
The very fact that the Bolsheviks find it so urgently necessary to study the mentality of their grandchildren seems to us to be of paramount importance. It clearly reveals that the generations have grown apart and do not think the same thoughts.

At the factories and in the kolkhozes all over the Soviet Union, youth has found new interests and ideas which are so foreign to the Party and Komsomol that they must first be studied. These studies sometimes lead to surprising results. On April 22, 1944, for instance, Radio Moscow saw itself induced to appeal for a fight against superstition, against "magicians and wizards," and this in a country which has raised its youth for a quarter of a century in strict materialism.

SHALLOW ROOTS

One of the underlying causes of the intrinsic instability of Soviet youth is a peculiarity to be found only in the case of this youth.

The Soviet state is very young. Not only in the sense that it was born from a revolution that occurred less than twenty-seven years ago, but also because this revolution consciously broke with the past, in contrast to the National-Socialist revolution, which consciously took up the threads of German history. In 1941, Soviet society was like a large tree with very shallow roots. The first months of the war showed convincingly that with these shallow roots the tree might not withstand the raging storm. Hence the Bolsheviks have, during the last three years, been making frantic efforts to drive the roots more deeply into the soil of Russia. Realizing that Bolshevik slogans and quotations from Marx and Lenin were not enough to fire an army to fight unto death, the Party threw them overboard and appealed to the force of patriotism innate in every man. There can, however, be no patriotism without reverence for one's country's past and its symbols.

Let us return once more to the revival of the five-point system of school marks, which seemed so incomprehensible at first sight. We saw that the best the Soviets could say about this system was that it had proved its merit for many decades in Tsarist times. In recalling such other symbols as shoulder straps, regimental flags, Ivan the Terrible, etc., which the Bolsheviks first detested and abolished and then suddenly restored to honor—dealt with in detail in our article "Shoulder Straps—And Then!"—we realize that the new marking system is part of the general appeal to the past and the pride in Russian history.

Not until later times will it be possible to tell how much of the Red Army's performance has actually been due to Stalin's revival of historical symbols. We expect that history will attribute a very large part of the Soviet fighting spirit to the inherent instinct for defense to be found in every living creature and particularly in a young nation like Russia which has such good health that it has even survived a quarter of a century of Bolshevism. Certainly, the appeal to history must not be underestimated as a stimulus for fighting; but one can hardly assume that it has become a decisive source of strength within so short a time. One must bear in mind that the turn toward history in the Soviet system of education did not commence until June 1935, on the basis of a decree of the Central Committee of the Party of May 16, 1934. It was some time before it could take effect. To begin with, teachers had to be trained to give lessons in history, for the teachers themselves had grown up without any knowledge of history. Consequently, the teaching of history did not begin to play an important role until just before the outbreak of war.

YOUTH WITHOUT HISTORY

During the thirties, I read a Soviet novel, Our Youth, written by Kin, at that time still quite a young author (he was born in 1903). Its hero is a young Komsomol member by the name of Besais. I copied out the author's description of the hero, as it could have been applied to many of the young Soviet Russians I knew at that time:

The world was a simple matter for Besais. He believed that the world revolution would come anyhow the day after tomorrow, if not tomorrow. He did not worry; he knew no problems and kept no diary. And when he was told in the club that the merchant Smirnov had been shot the night before, he simply said: "Well, what of it? That's quite right," for he knew no other use for merchants. He took everything that happened around him for granted. He was neither surprised nor shocked by bread queues, typhus, and night-patrols in the streets. All that was as much a matter of course as day and night. For him the period before the Revolution was a legend like the Old Testament, and Nicholas II was as much to him as King Nebuchadnezzar—so many curious things had happened in this world! All that did not concern him. The only things that still clung to his memory out of the past were the policeman who used to stand opposite the bank, and the letter Yat, abolished after the Revolution, that
had bothered him in the village school in those
days. He renounced God, the kind, bearded God,
with whom he had spent the first fourteen years
of his life, easily and without any shattering of
soul. There was nothing special in that. We
simply decided that there was no God. "He is
not there," he said, in the way one speaks of
someone who had left the room. He experienced
terrible things, and yet he was only a boy. Cos-
acks came in the night; by dawn they had killed
three hundred people. Helping to put them in
their coffins was, at first disagreeable to Besais,
but he got used to it. "That's nothing special," he
said to himself. The Reds killed the Whites
and the Whites the Reds; it was all very simple.
Governments came and went, nailed decrees and
proclamations on the fences, gave the streets new
names, erected triumphal arches. Life was naked,
laid bare to the last root, and seemed extraordinar-
ily plain and simple. Only the most indispensable
and fundamental words remained. Once Besais
got hold of Dostoyevsky's Crime and Punishment;
when he had finished the book he was very as-
tonished. "Hell," he said, "what a lot of talk
about an old woman!"

HECUBA AND SOVIET YOUTH

To a certain extent, every younger gen-
eration starts from the beginning again.
But never has the negation of the past and
the desire to make a new start been as
radical as in the case of the Bolsheviks. Besais
had at least had fourteen years with
God, but when Soviet youth went to war
in 1941 it had only spent a fraction of this
time with Russia's history. How can one
expect the appeal to the heroes of this
history to make any deep impression on the
young Russians?

The great names of Russian history may
have an effect upon the small remainder of
people in the Soviet Union who belonged to
the upper classes in the days before the
Revolution and who grew up in close touch
with the Russian past, just as they have
not failed during the last two years to have
a certain effect upon the Russian intel-
ligentia living abroad and on the young
Russian emigrants who have been educated
in the spirit of Russian history. But it is
not for the benefit of people like these that
the Soviet Union is reviving Russia's past.

When the German leaders appeal to the
boys and girls of Germany with names
like Arminius or Barbarossa and other
heroes of German history, this appeal is
effective because the National-Socialists have
always proclaimed themselves their heirs
and because German youth has always
grown up with reverence for their names
and the ideals they represent, has learned
poems and read books about them. But
when young Soviet citizens are suddenly
encouraged to commit heroic deeds by dec-
orations named after the Tsarist admirals
Ushakov (d.1817) and Nakhimov (d.1855),
whose very names not one in a thousand
young Russians had ever heard until two
years ago, we must ask with Hamlet:

What's Hecuba to him or he to Hecuba,
That should weep for her?

And how can we possibly expect the
hundreds of thousands of soldiers of Tartar,
Usbek, Turkman and other non-Russian
stock to become inflamed with the desire to
fight for Bolshevism by an appeal to the
memory of those Russian figures of the past
who conquered their forbears?

Indeed, the Soviet leaders' endeavors to
win over Soviet youth by the revival of
symbols liquidated by the Bolsheviks years
before this youth was born can only be
explained by perplexity, dearth of ideas,
and the desperate hope that these symbols
might help to satisfy the yearning in the
hearts of youth.

HIDDEN WORLD

The Soviet tree is further weakened by
the fact that its roots, in addition to being
shallow, all grow in one direction only—
along the official lines of the Party. Until
recently, the Bolsheviks not only refuted
history before 1917: they also acknowledged
later developments in the rest of the world
only in so far as they agreed with the Bol-
shevist conception. The power of the Bol-
sheviks rested upon the fact that no ideas
contradictory to Bolshevism were allowed to
arise among the people, especially among the
younger generation. They sought to achieve
this by ruthlessly eliminating any ideas that
did not fit into the official lines as well as
the propagators of such ideas; also by con-
demning the inhabitants of their realm to a
constant primitive struggle for existence and
by suppressing all such interests lying beyond
the sphere of the Party as family, church,
and private property. The struggle for a
bare existence does away with most prob-
lems. The harder it is, the worse off people
are, the more similar do they become to
each other and the deeper do their dreams
retreat into the innermost recesses of their
souls. And those of the dreams and dream-
ers that still rose to the surface were prompt-
ly liquidated.

No ideas from abroad which might en-
danger the Soviet system were admitted into
the country. The number of foreigners
entering the Soviet Union was tiny, and the
possibility of their coming into contact with the common people was very limited. Just as tiny was the number of Russians allowed to travel abroad. To be given a komandirovka to a foreign country was a distinction, but a dangerous distinction. Afterwards such persons were treated with suspicion. This was the experience, for example, of two leading dramatists, Kirshon (born in 1902) and Afinogenov (born in 1904). In the early thirties and as a reward for their successful literary activity, they were given permission to spend some time in European countries. I met them in Berlin and saw them quite often. It was interesting to observe the impression made by Europe upon these young authors who had grown up entirely under the heavy pressure of Bolshevism. In his play Bread, Kirshon reproduced this impression. There is a scene in which two young Communists meet, one of whom, called Rayevsky—who has been decorated with the “Order of the Red Flag” for his deeds during the Civil War—has just returned from abroad. Let us quote a few lines:

Rayevsky: I’m exasperated by our stupid, arrogant attitude toward everything we don’t know.

Mikhailov: You must be neurasthenic!

Rayevsky: I wish you were the first to say that. Abroad there’s enough that one can learn. I’d like to kill all the fatheads who could see and hear nothing in Europe beyond the foxtrot.

Mikhailov: Were you in Germany?

Rayevsky: In Berlin, Hamburg, Dresden. The country is working like a glistening machine. When your aeroplane leaves Königsberg, Germany lies before you like the open works of a clock. The voice of the engines is never silent; the earth trembles with the roar of dozens of underground lines. That’s worth experiencing, isn’t it?

Olga: Is it light in the towns at night?

Rayevsky: In some Berlin streets you can’t read because of the brilliance of the electric lamps. There are buildings flooded with light from top to bottom. Above one of the houses in the Friedrichstrasse a wineglass suddenly gleams, a bottle flares up, and champagne sparkles against the dark sky.

Kirshon and Afinogenov were not to enjoy their fame for long. Some time after their return they were ignominiously expelled from the Soviet Writers’ Association and liquidated—whether only in an ideological sense or in a physical sense too, we do not know. At any rate, we have never read another printed line by them again.

THE BROKEN FORM

In this manner, youth had been forced by every possible means into the form decreed by the Party. There was no possibility of having a life outside of this form. This was recently formulated as follows in the euphemistic language of Soviet propaganda by K. Trenev in an article “Lenin and the Younger Generation” published in the Moscow press and reprinted in the Shanghai Novaya Zhizn on January 25, 1944:

The fortunate conditions of Soviet life have freed our youth from the morbid contradiction of idea and reality. The most ardent and most rosy dreams of young people can be fulfilled in the Soviet Union where youth is the master of its own destiny.

Again and again youth was told that the Soviet Union was all that youth could desire and that there was no such thing as a problem. But this so-called unity of idea and reality which was apparently brought about by the coercion of the younger generation, this outwardly apparently quite unproblematical existence, was exposed by the war. The demands placed upon the entire personality by war are tremendous. Especially at the front, where every soldier is faced daily with the most profound of all problems, the mystery of death, man grows conscious of his intrinsic value, which does not depend on the “process of production” and similar Marxist constructions. The stupefying effect of the Bolshevist formulas vanishes, and the Soviet citizen experiences the liberation from the chains of a Weltanschauung built up entirely on the material side of life. Paradoxical as it may sound, in the face of death Soviet youth is awakening to life.

The unnatural values for the appreciation of which Bolshevism has been trying to train them for so many years are disappearing entirely from their horizon. They make no sense in the face of death and are being replaced—at least for the time being—by values which have nothing whatever to do with Bolshevism. This is revealed by a glance at the most recent Soviet poetry.

By poetry we naturally do not mean the so to speak official poetry written by orders from above, a good example of which is the new Soviet anthem. What we mean is true lyrical poetry, which expresses the innermost feelings of the writer. In this poetry there is no mention of Suvorov and Dmitry Donskoi, of shoulder straps and patriarchs, of Five Year Plans, kolkhozes, or Soviets. The poems move around the eternal centers of all lyrical poetry—love, nature, friendship, beauty.
The most popular poem in Russia today is entitled “Wait for Me” and was written by Konstantin Simonov. It consists of the simple, moving words a soldier says to the woman he loves. They end:

How I have survived will know
Only I and you,
Just because you waited as
No one else could do.

Simonov, one of the leading among young Soviet authors, has written many other poems of a predominantly personal and nonpolitical character. We quote excerpts from some of his best-known recent verses:

And I desire that every day,
That every hour, and every fight,
You’d follow like a shadow; nay,
That you would share with me my bread,
And share my suffering, to tears;
That you be blinded when I go blind,
And cold when I am to cold resigned;
That yours would also be my fears
And yours the wrath that clouds my head;
That all the words in your lips design
Would be just fled from mine.

Because of sorrow on my part
That I may not again embrace you:
While parted, I shall not disgrace you
With any weakness of my heart.
Not warmed by any chance caress,
No farewell spoken before death,
I shall forever feel the trace
Of your dear lips, in perfect faith.

But at the moment when the last grenade
Already has been thrust into your hand,
And in a flash, a mental picture must be made
Of everything we left behind our present stand:
You will not then recall the country, vast,
About which you have learned and where you traveled,
You rather will recall your native land
As in your childhood you beheld it first:
The plot of ground on which three burches tarry,
A distant road beyond the little wood,
The river with the creaking ferry,
The sandy strand topped by an ivy hood;
That is where fortune gave us birth,
Where until death, for all our lives, we found
That little bit of ground
That holds for us the signs of all the earth.

(Translated by Eva Kraumaleff)

“OUR RECORD”

A young Soviet writer who is often quoted and held up as an ideal representative of Soviet literature is Vassily Grossman. In the winter of 1942-43 Grossman was in Stalingrad and wrote a number of sketches there which were later published in a book entitled Stalingrad. The sketch “The Stalingrad Army” is dated January 1, 1943, and was thus written at the highest pitch of the battle. In it Grossman describes the following scene.

He was sitting with a detachment of Red Army men in a Stalingrad cellar. It was evening. Above, a heavy bombardment was going on. He writes:

The Red soldiers wound up the gramophone.

“Which one are you putting on?” one of them asked. Immediately several other voices answered:

“Put on our record, you know the one we mean.”

When a curious thing happened. While the soldier was looking for the record, I was thinking: how nice it would be to hear my beloved Irish Table Song in this ruined, black cellar. And suddenly a solemn melancholy voice was actually singing the song:

“The storm is raging outside. . . .”

It was obvious that the Red soldiers liked the song very much. They were all sitting in silence. Ten times they repeated the same part:

“Milady death, we beseech you to wait at the door. . . .”

These words, this simple and inspired music by Beethoven, sounded indescribably powerful here. This was probably one of my deepest impressions of the whole war. In war, man experiences many great, joyful, bitter feelings, he experiences hatred and longing, pain and fear, love, compassion, revenge. But rarely are men visited in war by melancholy. In these words, in this music by a sorrowful heart, in this gently mocking request: “Milady death, we beseech you to wait at the door. . . .” there was an indescribable poignancy, a wonderful melancholy.

And here, as never before, I rejoiced at the great force of true art, at the fact that soldiers who have spent three months facing death in this destroyed, disfigured building that had not been surrendered to the Fascists, listened as solemnly to this Beethoven song as if it were divine service.

Is it not interesting that the Red soldiers in the Stalingrad cellar spoke of a record of a Beethoven song, which has nothing whatever in common with Bolshevism and Soviet reality, as “our record”? And that a Bolshevist author regards the listening to this music as “one of the deepest impressions of the whole war”? Apparently Grossman never even realized that at bottom he is spreading anti-Bolshevist propaganda here. Like so many of his colleagues he; who thinks of himself as a good Communist, cannot but turn to non-Bolshevik realms when describing the reactions of modern Soviet youth. But the following case shows that the Party was quick to realize the dangers inherent in such a trend and alert enough to take countermeasures.

DUSYA WINS

Among the three or four leading writers of children’s books in the Soviet Union is Leo Kassil, whose works have enjoyed great popularity among Russian children for many
years. Last year he brought out a collection of war stories entitled *There Are Such People*, in which he describes various types of men he found at the front. The hero of the second of these stories is Semyon, the member of a submarine crew, whose phenomenal sense of hearing, besides being of inestimable value to his submarine, is an object of pride for the whole fleet. During an enemy operation, Semyon's eardrum is damaged by the explosion of a depth charge, and he is deaf when he arrives at the hospital. To him the loss of his hearing is as painful as the loss of a hand to a virtuoso. At the hospital he is visited by Dusya, a waitress in the canteen, whom he has loved for some time without ever having discovered any sign of love on her part. As she knows that he cannot hear her, she confesses to someone else who happens to be present that she returns Semyon's love. This confession penetrates Semyon's deafness, and the sudden joy gives him back his hearing.

Happy ending.

We are not interested here in whether this is possible or not from a medical point of view. What does interest us, however, is that Kassil, in giving his hero back his hearing, motivates this with a purely personal, intimate experience. That which overcomes Semyon's deafness and makes him once again a valuable crew member of a submarine is neither the thought of Stalin, nor veneration for the late Admiral Ushakov, nor faith in the Five Year Plan, nor a picture of Karl Marx—it is a loving word from Dusya, the canteen waitress.

Kassil's collection contains other stories, too, in which the significance of personal emotions is described. In the life of the officer Batygin, for instance, a letter he receives from his wife after a long interval plays a decisive role, changing his entire life.

The most interesting fact about Kassil's book is that the Soviet leaders have taken it as an opportunity to make a sharp attack on the whole trend it represents. In the issue No. 11/12 of the well-known literary magazine *Oktyabr*, which went to press on March 1, 1944, there is a scathing attack by M. Helfand on Kassil and his book (pp. 165-171). Since *Oktyabr* is one of the leading literary magazines in the USSR and expresses far more than the private opinions of Comrade Helfand, this attack is tantamount to a command to Soviet writers telling them how they are not to write. That Kassil should have dared so strongly to emphasize personal emotions in the life of the soldier, that he should have endowed spiritual experiences so far removed from Bolshevist reality with so decisive a power, is regarded as an unforgivable sin on Kassil's part, and a stream of abuse is directed against him.

Kassil is by no means the only one who is attacked in this way. Another influential literary magazine, *Novy Mir*, accuses Boris Pasternak of similar crimes, a man whose works were hitherto considered almost classics of modern Soviet poetry. In its issue No. 7-8, 1943, the magazine severely censures his recent verses for the over-emphasis they put on the purely personal angle as the decisive factor for the behavior of the Russian soldier at the front.

**PULLING IN THE REINS**

During the last few months there were many other indications that the Bolsheviks are afraid of having, out of consideration for the war effort, gone too far in loosening the iron grip in which youth was hitherto held by them. In his speech which we quoted above, N. N. Romanov, the Secretary of the Central Committee of the Komsomol, had to admit that even those of the Komsomol officials who have been in leading positions for a number of years "lack the necessary political training." Hence Bolshevism has suddenly been thrust into the foreground again. At a Komsomol meeting in Moscow the reproach of "poor ideological education" was raised against the Komsomol of the Moscow State University and other colleges and the demand made: "The thorough study of Marxist-Leninist theories by all students must be enforced" (*Koms. Pravda*, 14.3.44). For "Marxism-Leninism is the science of sciences" (*Koms. Pravda*, 29.3.44).

Immediately after the meeting, the Komsomol organizations in town and country set about the practical application of the resolutions made at the meeting. A flood of lectures and discussions was poured forth in the Komsomol. Since Moscow's example is followed by the rest of the country, it is interesting to study the themes proposed for discussion in the Komsomol meetings in that city:

- Soviet pedagogy as the science of Communist education for the rising generation;
- Marx and Engels on the education of the all-round man;
- Lenin and Stalin on the education of Soviet youth;
Subjects and method of the Communist education of Soviet youth, etc. (Koms. Pravda, 21.4.44).

It has been a long time since such themes have appeared in so concentrated a form. Moreover, in a recent speech Kalinin demanded that Russian history as well as other subjects of human knowledge be, more than hitherto, presented from the point of view of Marxism-Leninism (Propagandist, 1944, No. 2). But the younger generation does not seem to be displaying much interest in this:

Insufficient attention is being devoted among the students to the questions of education toward Communist morals. Discussions and lectures on these topics are but rarely arranged, and sometimes they are of a poor intellectual level, so that they do not interest and captivate the young people (leading article in the Koms. Pravda, 12.4.44).

And how else than by an astonishing estrangement between state and youth is it to be explained that after twenty-seven years of Bolshevism and three years of war the same leading article must raise the following demand:

The main task of the Komsomol students' organization consists in acquainting all schoolchildren with the great aims in whose name our people are fighting, and in awakening in every student the desire to participate in this struggle.

Earlier in the war, in order to prevent Soviet youth from recognizing the fundamental discrepancy between Bolshevism and its own new spiritual life, the Soviet leaders abolished the institution of political commissars in the Red Army. Those commissars had been entrusted with the task of watching over the ideological purity of the Communist attitude of officers and men. Apparently the Party felt that the further carrying on of their work would have revealed that discrepancy only too clearly. But perhaps the Party has by now changed its mind again.

With their psychological skill, the Bolsheviks succeeded temporarily in turning the new emotions of youth into channels of patriotism, a feeling that is of positive benefit to Bolshevism in present circumstances. But evidently the Bolsheviks have recognized a fact which we stressed in "Shoulder Straps—And Then?", namely, that in doing so they have chosen a dangerous path; for they have released forces that might easily turn against them once the younger generation has become aware of these forces and their discrepancy with Bolshevism as well as with the artificial symbols promoted by the Bolsheviks.

The difficulties they are experiencing with their own younger generation must necessarily affect the Bolsheviks' attitude toward the further course of the war. Although Soviet youth has not yet found a form in which to express its new spirit in a politically effective manner and in one which might threaten the hegemony of the Party, the potential energy of this youth is serious enough for the Party to view the consequences of the Army's return after the close of hostilities with apprehension. Demobilization is a serious problem for any country, and the Bolshevik leaders have often enough proclaimed that the return of the Army from the front during the Great War speeded up the internal collapse of the state.

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The pendulum of public opinion is always inclined to swing from one extreme to the other. While the world did not have a very high opinion of Soviet youth up to the outbreak of the German-Soviet war and saw weaknesses everywhere, it has now completely reversed its opinion, at least in the Allied and neutral countries. The fact that the Soviet Union did not collapse in the first year of war and has had a comeback in the second and third has induced most people no longer to see any weaknesses whatever in the Soviet system and its youth. One view is as unjustified as the other.

We do not deny that the façade of the Soviet state appears impressive, with the Red Army back on the Pruth and with Stalin's dark figure seemingly overshadowing even those of Churchill and Roosevelt in the council of the Allies. Many readers will be surprised to find in this article evidence of various cracks behind this façade, and we might add that we, too, were surprised by the number and size of the cracks which emerged in the course of our analysis. But it is the task of the student of world affairs to take no façade for granted.

We have spoken mainly of Soviet youth at home. The men at the front are always more silent. But there are enough indications that the attitude of the young people at home and at the front is not too different and that both are experiencing a crisis. We do not say that this crisis will destroy the Soviet structure. We do not know. Nor can we predict whether Soviet youth will continue on the path outlined in this article or veer back into the fold of
Bolshevism. But we do say that there is a crisis, more serious now that the Red armies are on the Pruth than when they were still on the Volga. And it would be strange if there were none. Great wars always give birth to new ideas and new conditions, and the Soviet state is in the midst of the greatest war in history. A crisis could only have been avoided if youth and state, grandfathers and grandchildren, had been essentially identical. But this, as we have seen, is not the case. It is true that the grandchildren have, so far, not been allowed to express those of their ideas which could not be harmonized with the dogmas of Bolshevism. Moreover, their thoughts are probably still so overshadowed by these dogmas that they do not yet know where the new trends are leading them. But even the Soviet press with all its supervision and censorship cannot hide the fact that the younger Soviet generation is in a state of fermentation. So, after all, the Soviet state is not a perfect machine that only needs to be lubricated now and again, but a machine whose problematical nature the young Soviet people are beginning vaguely to perceive.

Soviet youth has not simply suddenly become unruly in the same sense as the youth of every country is, to a certain extent, unruly. Soviet youth has become unruly because it looks at the Soviet reality surrounding it with other eyes than three years ago, and because it is governed by emotions and ideas, yearnings and forebodings, which have no intrinsic relationship to Bolshevism and its state.

CARTOON OF THE MONTH

By SAPAJOU

The Finishing Touches Before the Election