

OUR car pulled up in a village near the front somewhere in Spain. It was Nov. 7, 1937. The stone wall next to the big, desolate church had "Viva la URSS" scribbled over it. The keeper of the inn, a typical Castiliano, wiry, keen-eyed, sized us up, greeted us affectionately. "Anything I have is yours," he said. "What will you drink?" He called over some oldsters in the place. "Rusos," he said and they grouped about us, smiling toothlessly, shaking hands, hugging us. "Viva la URSS," one of them said. I tried to explain we were a group of Americans, not Russians, but they smiled knowingly. The peasants were always mistaking Americans for the big, blond Russians. "The drinks are on the house," the innkeeper said. "The people of our great sister republic, la URSS, have a birthday today." He made a little impromptu speech. "Myself," he said, "I am a follower of Bakunin. My father and grandfather were before me. But nowadays—I salute our brave friend, la URSS. We fight in a common cause." Soon the villagers poured in from all over town; mostly old men and women, some with children they had routed out of bed for the occasion. One young woman held a child, about four, saying to him, "Look. Rusos. Friends of Spain."

A gray-head started a flamenco about the Soviet airmen who won the Spanish skies back from the Junkers and Capronis. I'll never forget the scene: the graybeards of the village, the dingy little bar with the flickering lamp over the few bottles left on the shelves, the shutters barred so no tell-tale ray would help the marauders overhead, and the great sense of kinship these people had for the land that they had been told for years was anathema.

I recall thinking, in that inn, about our own Americans. Did they understand what "la URSS" stood for? When would they? The Soviet Union then was twenty years old. Two decades, and what had we of America learned of that vast land, that magnificent people? I reflected how long it had taken me to learn about "la URSS."

I remember in 1917 Russia meant a bear in the colored news-cartoons they used to paste on store windows; the bear wore a military cap, had long claws, and was wrestling with a mustachioed man wearing a spiked helmet labeled "Der Kaiser." That was sometime during public school days. That was Russia of the czars: we knew it for pogroms, Siberia, Rasputin, a somber land of ice, snow, mujiks, and royalty.

Nobody ever mentioned it in high school: that was 1918 to 1921. Not one professor mentioned it in college: that was 1921 to 1925. There it was on the map, that big, sprawling, mysterious stretch of land that jutted far into Europe, reached from the White Sea to the Black Sea, hurdled the Urals into Asia, abutted China, and ended a few miles from America. We learned to call St. Petersburg, Petrograd; and then we learned to call it Leningrad. There were four other cities, I recall: Moscow, Odessa, Omsk, Vladivostok. And that was about all.

The Truth Does Come

BY JOSEPH NORTH

Oh, there were news stories in the hometown press about that country, but they were so confused and confusing, so scattered, that no definite impression remained except perhaps a few words like "dictatorship of the proletariat," "famine," "relief," "Red Army."

About 1927 I remember the argument we had in the newsroom of a smalltown Pennsylvania paper, when the Soviet Union proposed total disarmament of all nations as a means of halting war. What a jeering hubbub went up about it. The city editor muttered "Damn fools." The college-bred police reporter said "Visionaries." The editorial writer said "Demagogic." The cub-reporter said "Why not?"

The counsel of the young republic went unheeded: the disarmament conferences were misnomers. The arms piled up until Hitler emerged from under them.

Then I remember reading of the Five Year Plans. The city editor sneered. The editorial writer said "Incompetents."

TEN YEARS LATER I watched the Soviet chatos shoot the famed Messerschmitts out of the skies over Spain. The people of Madrid never tired of telling you how the enemy planes used to appear daily, almost on a set hour, and dip down to strafe the civilians on the streets. And one day, swooping out of a bank of clouds where they had been hiding in wait, the chatos shot twenty-six fascist planes out of the sky. That ended strafing in Madrid. I saw chatos in action many a time, and watched the vaunted Messerschmitts turn and scuttle across the sky. But then I watched, too, the tragedy and betrayal of the "Non-intervention Committee." Watched a nation go down when it could have won. Watched the great lands of America and Britain and France stand aside and allow this gallant people to be chained by the common enemy of all these powers. The Spanish press used to say if Spain was defeated, world war was inevitable. A few months after Madrid was handed over to Franco, there was Munich. And a few months after Munich came World War II.

And always, during those tragic days, warning, urging, pleading, explaining "Peace is indivisible," at the League of Nations, at the various international conferences, from every possible rostrum, was the Soviet Union.

Well, now history will be determined by other means. It could have been easier, but

let the past go. The debate now can only be carried on with guns. Now war is indivisible. It's every free country against the powers that seek to enslave the world. That's clear, I believe, to the overwhelming majority of Americans.

I thought of this at the great meeting for Russian War Relief last week in Madison Square Garden. The vast hall was packed with 23,000 representative Americans. The men who came to the platform typified practically every stratum of the populace. The simple, stirring statements of such men as Paul Muni, Benny Goodman, Richard Wright, John Green. The eloquent, straight-shooting words of the former ambassador to the Soviet Union, Joseph E. Davies. The expressions of confidence in the Soviet Union, the admiration and gratitude for its tremendous resistance. "Russia," Mr. Davies said, "will continue to fight, in front of Moscow, behind Moscow, behind the Urals, and behind the German lines." And his pledge: "We will keep faith with those who die in our common cause."

All this reminded me of the impromptu, tiny meeting in that little inn near Madrid, back in 1937. That, too, had tremendous significance, "I salute our brave friend, la URSS. We fight in a common cause," the little Castilian had said. And now here, four years later, in Madison Square Garden, the same words, the same admiration, the same reality.

Yes, for millions of Americans truth has come after twenty-four years. True, many have still to learn. But the truth is coming. Truth does not always burst upon you with a blinding flash. It slogs and wades through mud and blood, through tears and strife, but it gets there.

Millions of Americans today have come to see the identity of this nation's destiny with that of the Soviet Union; that if the great land of the Soviets is overrun by Hitler's vandals, we in America fight with our backs to the wall, fight a losing fight.

However, this November 7, we pledge that cannot, will not, happen. The free peoples of the United States, of Great Britain, of the Soviet Union, together, will never let it happen.

"We fight in a common cause," they said in Madrid, they say in New York. "We will keep faith," Mr. Davies said.

We will keep faith.

THEY FREED OLD RUSSIA'S NATIONS

Lenin and Stalin developed the program that liberated some two hundred diverse nationalities. Why the formerly oppressed peoples are ready to fight to the death. The national character of this war.

Moscow, Oct. 21 (AP).—While the Red Army fought back against German forces at the approaches of Moscow, scientific and artistic circles in the capital met last night in the State Museum to celebrate the 800th anniversary of the birth of literature of the Soviet Republic of Azerbaijan, Tass, official news agency, reported today.

THE above news item deserves to be treasured. It tells as eloquently as mere words can what this war is about. While the Nazi hordes were howling at the approaches to Moscow, men within the city were speaking quietly of ancient things, paying tribute to the century-old culture of another people hundreds of miles away. An imperishable symbol. Yes, this is what the war is about: that culture and the freedom of nations may not perish, that their fires may be relit where they have been blotted out. This is why the peoples of the Soviet Union, of conquered Europe, of Britain, China, and the United States are fighting.

What do most Americans know about Azerbaijan? They think of it as a vague distant place with an Oriental name; perhaps they know that its capital is Baku, center of the Soviet oil industry, and that means a great deal these days. The history of Azerbaijan literature is 800 years old. But the history of *free* Azerbaijan is less than a quarter century old. And the story of free Azerbaijan and of the other free nations of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics has a direct bearing on the titanic world struggle now taking place. This story is inseparably bound up with the names of two men, Vladimir Ilyitch Lenin and Joseph Stalin.

Modern independence struggles are associated with the names of great liberators: Washington, Bolivar, Toussaint L'Ouverture, Garibaldi, Sun Yat-sen, Masaryk. But Lenin and Stalin liberated not one nation, but many, and by combining this with social liberation, gave a new dimension to national freedom. It was to the defense of their *individual national identities* that Stalin, himself a son of the formerly oppressed nation of Georgia, summoned the diverse peoples of the Soviet Union when he said in his broadcast of July 3, on the eve of our own Independence Day:

"He [the enemy] is out to restore the rule of landlords, to restore czarism, to destroy national culture, and the national state existence of the Russians, Ukrainians, Byelorussians, Lithuanians, Letts, Estonians, Uzbeks, Tatars, Moldavians, Georgians, Armenians, Azerbaijanians, and the other free peoples of the Soviet Union, to Germanize them, to convert them into the slaves of German princes and barons."

For us Americans this linking together of many nationalities is especially meaningful. For in addition to the other things we

have in common with the USSR, there is this: no other two countries have within their borders as many different national groups as the United States and the Soviet Union. There is, however, this important difference: in the Soviet Union most of these national groups constitute genuine nations; they are social, political, and cultural entities in specific geographic areas. In the United States, with the single exception of the Negro people, the national groups are not separate nations, but all make their contributions as part of the life and culture of the common American nation. Unfortunately, even though we are not a multi-national state such as were czarist Russia and the Austro-Hungarian empire, we have our share of national strife, of incitement against the foreign-born, of anti-Semitism—not to mention the treatment accorded those citizens whose skins happen to be black. And that is why Americans ought to be particularly interested in the manner in which the enormously complicated national problem has been solved in the Soviet Union.

In contrast to other tendencies in the pre-war Socialist and labor movement of Europe, Lenin, Stalin, and the Bolsheviks firmly upheld the right to self-determination, that is, the right of subject nations to political separation. Lenin and Stalin pointed out that the working class could not achieve freedom without championing the liberation movements of oppressed nations. This did not mean that separation was in every case desirable, but what had to be supported, they maintained, was the *right* of nations freely to determine whether to lead separate existences or to unite with other peoples.



Lenin and Stalin forged the theory of the national question in the crucible of the teachings of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels. The founders of scientific Communism were consistent internationalists and irreconcilable opponents of the capitalist order. But being historical materialists, they took the view that capitalism was progressive in relation to feudalism and that the breakdown of feudal walls and the evolution of free capitalist nations was indispensable to the growth, awakening, and ultimate emancipation of the working class. In 1848 Marx and Engels, who had already published the *Communist Manifesto*, supported and actively participated in the German bourgeois revolution which furthered the national unification of the German states; at the same time they excoriated the vacillations of the bourgeoisie and its surrender to feudal-monarchist reaction. And it is significant that in the inaugural address which Marx delivered in 1864 to the meeting in London which established the first world organization of labor, the International Workingmen's Association (First International), he took the occasion to denounce "the shameless approval, mock sympathy, or idiotic indifference with which the upper classes of Europe witnessed the mountain fortress of the Caucasus falling a prey to, and heroic Poland being assassinated by Russia."

"No people oppressing other peoples can be free," wrote Engels in 1872, a dictum which Lenin was fond of quoting. It was in this spirit that Marx and Engels supported the North in the war which made possible the national unification of the United States on