

WHAT AMERICANS ARE LEARNING

Corliss Lamont tells why the Soviets are able to wage a brilliant fight. "Popular notions" people are unlearning. What Harriman and Beaverbrook discovered. Today's prime need: cooperation.

"**W**E DISCOVERED," said W. Averell Harriman, head of the American mission to the Soviet Union, "that a lot of popular notions about these Russians were wrong." Mr. Harriman was broadcasting to the United States on October 12 from London, where he and Lord Beaverbrook, head of the British mission to Russia, had just arrived from Moscow.

"The Russian," Mr. Harriman went on to state, "has become a first-class mechanic in this last generation. . . . Out on the airfields, where much has to be done with little equipment, our American officers report—and I quote from one of them—that they have never seen such skill, ingenuity, resourcefulness and morale. The Russian mechanics work without shelter in sleet, rain, and wind an average of fourteen hours a day. Their pilots learn to fly American aircraft as quickly, as skillfully, as our own pilots or the British. And so we have our answer to why Hitler's time schedule has been dislocated. The clumsy Russian mujik has become a skilled mechanic."

In a radio address the same evening Lord Beaverbrook, an English press magnate formerly most hostile to Soviet Russia, stressed the efficiency of Soviet aircraft and engine factories and repeated Mr. Harriman's praise of Soviet pilots and mechanics. "Their pilots are of the very best," asserted Beaverbrook, "just as much experienced as any pilots anywhere. And the mechanics who service their aircraft compare in all respects with the mechanics of Great Britain and the United States. Indeed, the Russians have a genius for mechanization."

These remarks on the part of Mr. Harriman and Lord Beaverbrook, as official representatives of the American and British governments, serve to high-light the profound revision in American and English public opinion that has been going on in regard to the Soviet Union during the more than four months since the Nazi invasion of the USSR. I believe that there has been a favorable turn in public opinion concerning Russia much more far-reaching and fundamental than the unfavorable one that took place subsequent to the Nazi-Soviet non-aggression pact. And I venture to suggest that on this twenty-fourth anniversary of the Russian Revolution there exists a greater friendliness among the English-speaking peoples toward the Soviet Union than ever before in its history.

It is not simply individuals like Harriman

and Beaverbrook, with the advantage of a recent trip to the USSR, who are aware that the Russians have first-class factories, airplanes, pilots, and mechanics. It is also anyone and everyone who has followed the news of the Nazi-Soviet war, even in such conservative papers as the *New York Times* and the *New York Sun*, and who has thought through some of the more obvious implications of the situation. And no doubt many alert and intelligent Germans, reading between the lines of the Nazi High Command's communiques—not to mention hearing Hitler's own admissions of Russian strength—have reached similar conclusions about the industrial and technical accomplishments of the Soviet people.

To quote Lord Beaverbrook again, "Russia faces the greatest gathering of savage powers the world has ever known—Finland, Rumania, Hungary, Italy, and Germany over all, all banded together in murder, theft, and arson." Yet month after month the Soviet Union has waged against this unprecedented aggregation of aggression a strong and brilliant defensive battle that has left the most hard-boiled military men abroad agape with admiration. However, you can't stand off Hitler's Luftwaffe and panzer divisions merely with stout hearts and shotguns. And everyone knows, therefore, that from the first Nazi onslaught the Soviet armies have possessed up-to-date and mechanized equipment, in large

quantity and of excellent quality, with which to combat the most highly mechanized attacking force ever assembled in history.

But where did these hard-hitting Soviet tanks, artillery, airplanes, machine guns, trucks, and warships come from? Where, indeed, if not from those very factories so long described by ninety-nine percent of the American press as hopelessly inefficient and bogged down in general confusion? And what does the mass production of such equipment imply about the Russian workers if not that they are well trained and thoroughly competent in modern industrial techniques? And what does the effective operation and servicing of such equipment under the terrific stress of war demonstrate if not that Soviet tank drivers, gunners, plane pilots, mechanics, and the rest have mastered their jobs in practice as well as theory? So we are back, having followed our own route of common-sense reasoning, to where we started with Mr. Harriman and Lord Beaverbrook.

The logical implications of Soviet resistance during the campaign of 1941 go even further and deeper than I have indicated. Soviet defense industries and defense workers cannot and do not function in a vacuum. They must be integrated with the entire economic system of the USSR; the health and progress of one sector in that system is necessarily bound up with the successful functioning of the whole. And in fact it is the general achievements of the great Five-Year Plans starting in 1928 that provide the key to Soviet economic and military power today. Socialist planning in Soviet Russia was not, after all, just a lot of Red smoke. It had ample substance and solidity, as Hitler has been finding out at the cost of millions of men in casualties and billions of dollars in materiel.

For both the creation of socialism and the purposes of defense the most important accomplishments of the Five Year Plans have been the building of a heavy industrial base, the improvement of transportation, the mechanization and collectivization of agriculture, the distribution of economic developments throughout the country, and the technical education of the population. The stress on heavy industry was essential for the manufacture of armaments and for making the country largely independent of the capitalist world in case of attack. It necessitated enormous sacrifices on the part of the Soviet people and a deliberate foregoing of the maximum returns possible in the field of consumption



goods—things like shoes, clothing, furniture, kitchen utensils, and the thousand and one other articles that make up the pattern of everyday living. By the middle of the Second Five Year Plan, however, these consumers' goods were pouring out of the factories in vastly increased quantities. At the same time, as full collectivization of the farms was achieved, the best harvests in Russian history proceeded to take place and scores of millions of Soviet peasants learned how to handle modern machinery. The all-round standard of living rose immensely.

But as the danger of war became more intense from 1939 on, the Soviets again concentrated on heavy industry and particularly on the defense production sector. Huge material reserves of everything from food to coal were piled up at strategic points throughout the land. In the summer of 1940 the working day, by recommendation of the trade unions, was lengthened in general from the usual six or seven hours to eight; whereupon certain liberals abroad raised their usual howl about the principles of socialism being betrayed. They might just as well have claimed that Premier Stalin's placing the Moscow area in a state of siege during the recent all-out Nazi offensive was a violation of democracy. It is now plain for all to see that the various internal measures of the past few years to step up production and tighten discipline in the USSR were fully justified.

As for transportation, everyone remembers how often it was said that this was the irreparably "weak link" in the Soviet economic order and how often it was predicted that it would break down disastrously under the strain of war conditions. Yet Soviet transport, both by railway and otherwise, has made a brilliant record for itself during the last four months. Competent observers everywhere have admitted that the remarkable Soviet defensive effort could not have been maintained without an efficiently functioning transportation system behind the lines. Just now comes the significant news that the Russians have completed, along the northwestern shore of the Caspian Sea, a new railroad that links the great oil center of Baku with northern Russia through the city of Astrakhan. Thus even if the Nazis capture Rostov and cut the main trunk line from Baku, there remains a railroad route—as well as Soviet shipping in the Caspian itself—by which the oil of the Caucasus can be sent north.

Since Hitler's October attack on Moscow most American commentators have discovered for the first time that the Soviet Union possesses vast economic reserves to the east of European Russia and are acknowledging that "in all probability the Russian armies will be able to keep on fighting even if Moscow, Leningrad, and the Ukraine fall to the invaders. The fact is, of course, that for the past fifteen years the Soviet planners have been effecting a tremendous redistribution of economic life in the USSR and have succeeded in doing away with the top-heavy concentration of industry in western Russia that existed

under the czarist regime. And today it is generally recognized that Siberia, which most Americans have always regarded as a cold and wind-swept wasteland, has in its two richest areas alone, those of the Urals and the Kuznets Basin, about twice as much industrial production as the whole of old czarist Russia.

All this economic development, however, and all the splendid modern equipment of the Red Army, would avail little against the Nazis if the Soviet Union were lacking in morale and leadership. Here again the actual course of the conflict has disproved any number of misconceptions about conditions in the USSR. The Soviet people have rallied to the defense of their socialist republic with an ardor and determination unexcelled in the annals of heroism. Daily this is proved anew by the fighting spirit of the Russian armies, by the activity of the guerrilla bands, by the civilian defenders of Leningrad and Moscow, and by the relentless prosecution of the scorched earth policy.

At the same time leadership in the army and government has been fully equal to the great crisis imposed upon it. Events have not borne out the American liberals' lament that the Moscow Trials and the general purges of 1937 and 1938, admittedly most regrettable necessities, had fatally weakened Soviet leadership. It now becomes clearer than ever that those trials and purges got rid of a threatening fascist fifth column in the USSR. Every other non-fascist nation in Europe had a fifth column; and unfortunately Soviet Russia, still in the throes of a tremendous revolutionary transformation, was no exception to the rule. But to cite a recent statement by Mr. Joseph E. Davies, former US ambassador to Russia, "When the democracies of the world indulged in wishful thinking and slept in false security, the Soviet Union cleansed its house of treason."

The existence of a large-scale conspiracy to overthrow the Soviet government and surrender important Russian territories to the fascist enemy certainly constituted a serious setback for democracy in the USSR. Indeed, it is obvious that the whole atmosphere prevailing in Europe and Asia over the last decade was unfavorable for the development of democracy *everywhere*. The constant threat and actual carrying out of fascist aggression, with its inevitable accompaniments of fifth columnists, spies, and general nervousness, was distinctly not a helpful factor for the happy flourishing of democracy. Yet in spite of these handicaps both internal and external, Soviet democracy in general has made very great progress. From my own trips to the USSR in 1932 and 1938 I would say that full economic, racial, and cultural democracy has been established, that there is equality between the sexes and that there is freedom of religious worship. Though in my own opinion political democracy has lagged behind the other forms, it has made enormous strides in comparison with czarist times.

Turning to some of the questions raised by Soviet foreign policy from 1939 to 1941, I

hardly think I need expand on the falsity of the charges that there was ever a Nazi-Soviet alliance or that Soviet socialism and fascism are essentially the same. As for the steps Russia took along its western frontier to strengthen its defenses—the incorporation in the USSR of the White Russian and Ukrainian portions of Poland, the Baltic states, Bessarabia, and part of Finland—every amateur strategist in the United States, that is to say practically the entire population over ten years of age, can now understand how necessary these new Soviet territories were in serving as a buffer against Hitler's first surprise onslaught. I would add that when Great Britain and the Soviet Union jointly marched into Iran to forestall a Nazi coup and to improve their position in the Near East, practically all the newspapers and all the people in America that had condemned the earlier actions of the USSR approved and praised the expedition into Iran. The moral is, of course, that Russia's moves in the West were in general made for the same reasons as the Anglo-Soviet move into Iran.

And so it goes. The military "experts," high government officials in England and America, and conservative opinion in general are now accepting as true point after point that people like myself have been making about the USSR for years. The other day a Republican friend of mine admitted that I had been right on a lot of things concerning the Soviet Union, but claimed that I must have had "secret information" about the situation there. I could not refrain from laughter. For the readily ascertainable truth is that the facts that I and others brought back from Soviet Russia were all of the most public variety and accessible to anyone whatsoever who took the trouble to make a careful study of what was going on.

The real explanation of my friend's bewilderment is that *the American people were sold a false bill of goods on Russia* by writers, tourists, diplomats, newspapers, and all sorts of commentators whose anti-Soviet prejudice was so bitter that they could not and would not recognize a fact when they saw one. All those malicious stories about Soviet weakness in industrial production, economic organization, military power, and morale have one by one gone by the board during these months of magnificent resistance on the part of the Russians.

It is possible, if not probable, that in the future there will again take place an organized attempt to mislead public opinion in this country concerning the Soviet Union. But if we as a people are able to learn sufficiently from the lessons of the recent past, that attempt will not succeed. For the well-being of both America and Russia, for the sake of international peace and of all mankind, it is essential that these two great nations, the United States and the USSR, should continue to cooperate after the defeat of Hitler as closely as they are cooperating today. The peace-loving peoples of the earth cannot again afford the folly of disunity and the tragedy of misunderstanding.

CORLISS LAMONT.

WHAT RUSSIA HAS MEANT TO BRITAIN

Claude Cockburn surveys four months of the war. "Inspiration and unification" of the people's forces. The need for vigilance. The impact on production.

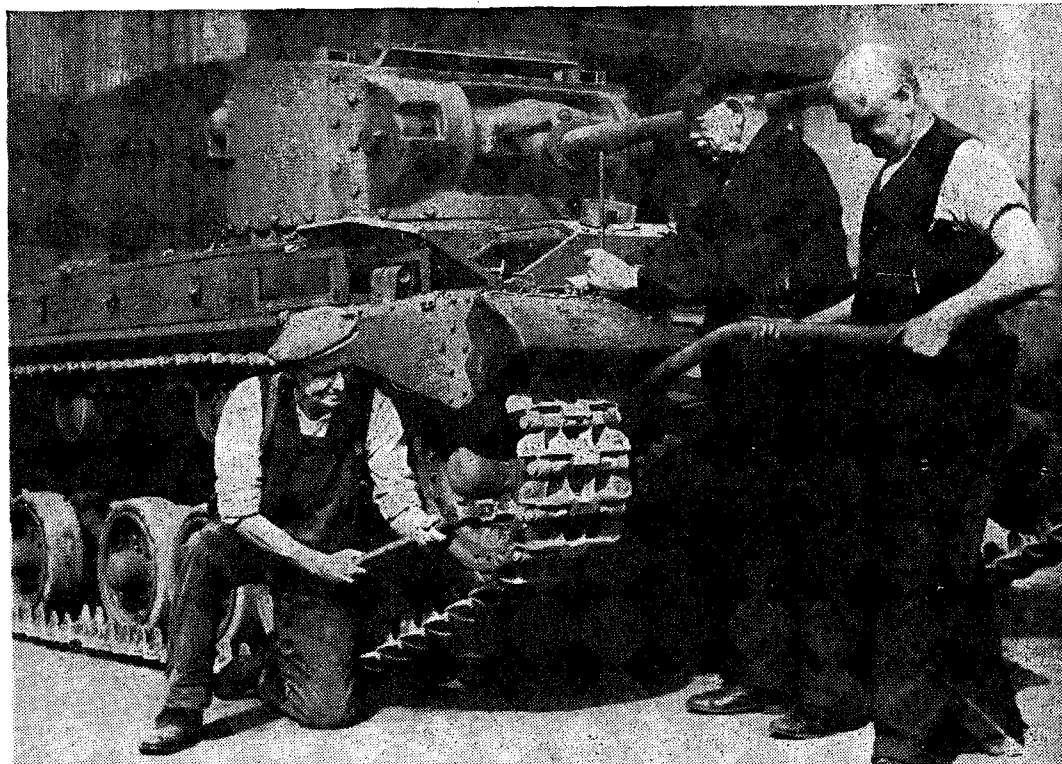
London (by cable).

THIS is a good opportunity to check back and see what the mighty resistance of the Soviet Union has achieved at the other end of the common front, that is to say, in Britain itself. Probably you could sum up the achievement in two words—inspiration and unification. About the inspiration, nobody can have any doubt as to its grandeur and effectiveness. It is hard now to recall the exact mood of the British people in the first weeks of June 1941. There had been the disappointments of the second Libyan campaign, the failure in the Balkans, and the loss of Crete. I think it is true to say that particularly in the factories the mood was one ranging from cynicism and even indifference, to a sort of dull uncertainty, suspicion, and above all, lack of self-confidence. As I have reported in a much earlier dispatch the effect of the Soviet resistance to the Hitler attack was instantaneous and enormous. And it can be said emphatically that it has been growing and deepening ever since.

It is difficult to analyze this inspiration very exactly. Of course, it is true that at the very beginning there was in it a good deal of the complacency of which we have heard so much. There were naturally plenty of people who thought with a sigh of relief that now the burden of the war had been taken over by somebody else. I am speaking of the people who just felt that as a personal relief, not those who actively desired the extermination of both the Nazi and Soviet forces. This complacency, however, has not long endured in face of the demonstration afforded in Russia of what the military power of Germany and the enslaved continent really amounts to, and the heroism of Soviet resistance and the huge sacrifices made by the Soviet people for the common cause.

THE FACT of the nationwide education for the opening of the second front in the West, and the fact that this is almost universally recognized as one of the greatest upsurges of public opinion which this country has seen for at least a generation, are themselves proof that complacency is by no means a common feature of the public mind in Britain today. The inspiration of the Russian resistance draws its strength from the fact that now for the first time the man and woman in the street and in the factory in Britain have been convinced that this now is a life and death struggle of the common people of the world. And equally important is that they have been convinced that given determination, energy, unity, and first rate leadership, the common people can after all not only fight but defeat Hitlerism.

The degree of unification of Britain's forces resulting from the stand of the Soviet Union is even more concretely in evidence. You will have noted innumerable examples of the process



BRITISH WORKERS go all-out in the famous Tanks-for-Russia Week

in reports from this country in the past four months. I have in front of me two items of news which happen to be characteristic and which could be paralleled almost any day of any week. Both are recorded by "industrial and general information" news service. The first states: "History was made in Oxford on Tuesday when the Soviet flag could be seen flying from the ancient Carfax Tower in the center of the city in honor of the Mayor's Aid Russia Week. On the same day in the canteen of a famous automobile works a meeting was sponsored by the management on the subject of 'Russia, our Ally' which was addressed by a prominent local Communist and passed a resolution to be sent to the engineering workers of Leningrad and Moscow saying, 'Your boundless courage and heroic stand inspire us to renewed endeavor and we pledge ourselves to produce everything in our power to further the fight of the British and Soviet peoples so that victory may be achieved in the shortest possible time.'"

THE OTHER ITEM is as follows: "War workers in six northern counties are to meet on November 8 to discuss production at the Albert Hall, Manchester. Lord Beaverbrook will be one of the speakers. More than 1,000 branches of the Lancashire, Cheshire, and North Wales Federation of Trades Councils have been circularized and delegates will attend armed with full practical data regarding the particular work in their areas. Mr. Munro, secretary of the Manchester and Salford Trade Council,

stated in an interview: 'We want to discover all the snags in output and let Lord Beaverbrook know about them at first hand so that they can be rectified.'"

THESE, as I say, are typical news items nowadays and it is only with an effort that one realizes how totally incredible either of them would have been four months ago. You must understand of course that this is a continuing process, that it did not occur all at once and is not by any means at the point towards which it is moving. One must emphasize—with the production committees as a principal example—that this unity in action is absolutely indispensable to the working and speeding up of the British war machine; that the potential increase in output of the war machine is very much greater than the majority of people imagine; and that the process is under way precisely because of the resistance, sacrifice, and heroism of the Soviet forces. I do not need to tell you that this process is going on despite all sorts of attempts to delay and disrupt it. The situation today is one which calls for the most untiring vigilance on the part of the British people if they are to translate into reality the new hopes which have sprung up among them. It is in many ways an exceedingly dangerous situation politically as well as militarily. But the point is that an ever increasing number of people both understand the need for that vigilance and have the inspiration and hope which will enable them to maintain it.

CLAUDE COCKBURN.