

THE COALITION GATHERS STRENGTH

The peoples of the world find fascism's Achilles' heel. The growing cordiality of the anti-Axis nations. Joseph Starobin traces the development of USA-USSR relations.

THE truly historic events announced last week: the consolidation and extension of the Anglo-Soviet alliance and the agreement between our own country and the Soviet Union, achieved through Mr. Molotov's visits to London and Washington, come as the most fitting, dramatic commemoration of June 22, 1941. At the close of a year which is at once so terrible in its tragedy and yet so encouraging for the future of all humanity, it becomes possible to look back at the vast reorientation in American thinking; and one of the most encouraging aspects of all is the increased understanding of what is meant by the coalition of United Nations.

The realization that we are one nation among allies, that to win this war we depend upon our allies just as much as they depend upon us, that the ultimate peace hangs on continuing and deepening the cordiality of the alliance which is essential for winning the war—these are concepts which have been steadily ripening in the American mind over the past twelve months. This process represents not only the obliteration of the whole isolationist era, but it heralds America's real coming-of-age in world affairs. It opens up the perspective that the American people will fulfill those democratic, world-liberating impulses that flow from our history and heritage.

The concept of coalition has a number of implications, and I am thinking of them for the moment with reference to the Soviet Union. Coalition means first of all that we are bound to our allies by a clear recognition of national interest. The emergence of a Hitler-dominated Europe, bent on world conquest, in alliance with a fascist Japan, bent on enslaving the entire Far East, represented a threat to our own and to Soviet Russia's existence as nations. Recognition of this threat and common interest in defeating it lies at the heart of the fast emerging Soviet-American alliance. Failure to eradicate the fascist triplice, or injury to our alliance with Russia, becomes injury to ourselves and our national interest. That is primary.

Secondly, the concept of coalition implies a harmonious strategic outlook on the course of the war. This does not necessarily mean a mathematical equality of sacrifice; in fact the "second front" campaign never did presuppose that we had to give exactly of our manpower or territory as did Russia and China—for a number of historical and geographical reasons that was unlikely—but it did presuppose a unified conception of the war. It presupposed agreement on which was the main enemy, and it meant common efforts to defeat that main enemy as soon as possible, efforts which, though "divided in space, must not be divided in time," as Maxim Litvinov phrased it in February.

Thirdly, the concept of coalition implies not only diplomatic rapprochement between governments but also between peoples, the growth of a close sympathy, the interchange of ideas and experience, a mutual discovery. And finally, coalition implies that the harmonious view of the war's strategy and concerted efforts to win it shall be carried over into the peace.

BY NOW this sounds elementary. And yet the record of the year will show that agreement on these concepts has developed slowly, with hesitations sometimes unconscious. This agreement is still developing as the war teaches us all the hardest lessons, although last week's events have given this process a tremendous impetus. *But the important fact is that the concept of coalition has developed.* And it is all the more breathtaking since the coalition of the United Nations is itself something unique under the sun; it marks the great

advance from the co-existence of the capitalist and the socialist systems to their active cooperation.

THE initial and chief obstacle to the growth of coalition lay in the widespread belief that the Soviet Union would only be a temporary, transitory factor in the war, a belief which had carried over from a generation of ignorance and malice. It is no secret that even among our highest officials it was seriously held that the Red Army would be knocked out of the struggle in a matter of weeks. If you reread the newspapers of those early months you come across speculations which today seem absurd and bizarre, speculations about the stability of the Soviet government, about the loyalties of the Soviet peasant and soldier, about the future of Stalin's leadership.

Even after November 7, when Stalin expressed confidence in the outcome of the battle for Moscow and projected victory within a year, the *New York Times* considered it timely to editorialize that the USSR was on the verge of defeat. That editorial, with all the authority that the *Times* carries, sought to apologize in advance for the relatively little aid that had been extended to Russia at the time; it seemed eager to wash its hands of the situation, not without an overtone of smugness.

This initial underestimation of Soviet power gave rise to two tendencies. One was the outright pro-fascist opinion, such as Lindbergh's, that victory would rest with Germany, and that we, according to Herbert Hoover, must build up our military resources only to be in the best bargaining position in the inevitable stalemate between ourselves and the Axis.

The other viewpoint, which proved the decisive one, and subsequently underwent its own evolution, declared that a German victory over Russia must be prevented, if at all possible. It was recognized that a Hitler conquest of Russia would strike us a blow that might prove impossible to nullify. Immediately after June 22, in fact, you will find a curious demand in the *New York Times*—curious in the light of its later extreme caution—for the opening of a second front.

But as the summer's battles wore on, it came to be realized that even if the Red Army could not long remain in the field, at least it was wearing the Nazis down. Russia was to be helped—either directly or by helping Great Britain and then letting the British follow their own conscience—but it was assumed that the war would enter a kind of stalemate until at some point in 1944, the superior economic and military strength of the western nations, especially the United States, would decide the outcome. It would be an American victory, an American peace, and consequently an American century would follow.

The applause in the press and official circles for Russia's great stand became increasingly less begrudging, but in essence the view still prevailed that the Soviet people were being of service to the West—say, on a much vaster scale than Greece or Yugoslavia. At one particularly difficult moment, the *Times* devoted an editorial of consolation to the British people, who were already then demanding a second front. The battles on the Eastern Front were not, in this newspaper's opinion, decisive for the war. There would be "other years, other battles." Britain was losing her last remaining ally on the continent, but after all, she was gaining an ally across the Atlantic.

BUT the dynamic of the global struggle intervened; the realities soon transformed this attitude. It so happened that the Soviet's great winter offensive coincided with Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor. This juncture forms a vital turning

point in the growth of the coalition. The conclusion of the period of the Red Army's defensive resistance, the unrolling of its powerful winter drive, which first revealed the fissures in the Reichswehr, began to hammer home the idea that the USSR was a powerful and *enduring* factor in the war.

Japan's attack on us, while part of her age-old scheme of dominating eastern Asia, was timed to relieve the Axis at a critical moment. In striking at us, Japan was striking with and for Hitler, as the President declared at the time. Japan was striking to divert our aid from Russia, which had been decided upon at the Moscow conference at the end of September. Japan was striking to prevent the consolidation of the coalition. The strategy of our enemies brought home to us the urgency of a world strategy of our own. The war's logic and its deeper tides were disclosing the bed-rock community of interest between ourselves and Russia.

In a sense, Pearl Harbor proved to be a test of Soviet-American relations, and once the test was passed, those relations were greatly strengthened. The issue arose as to whether the USSR would now attack Japan, or give us bases from which to carry the attack forward. Mr. Litvinov, who had just arrived, argued that the higher interests of the coalition made it essential that the USSR concentrate her main activity in Europe, and avoid any risk of position in the Far East. That this view prevailed, except for the appeasement forces, testified to the fact that most Americans were beginning to see the war as a whole. They were grasping a common strategic view of the war, a fundamental thing.

BUT even this stride soon appeared inadequate. Despite the inauguration of the United Nations and the Soviet Union's signature of the Atlantic Charter, the beginnings that were made in fulfilling the Moscow protocol, the new year disclosed a considerable disparity on strategy. The idea that the war would be decided in 1944 had changed to 1943. As to whether the Eastern Front would be the scene of decision was not yet clear. On this latter question, it appears that the highest official circles agreed during Churchill's visit in December that defeating Hitler was primary. It also appears, in retrospect, that the emphasis on 1943 was given the widest currency in Mr. Churchill's speeches to our Congress and the Canadian parliament. In the meantime, however, on the crest of their great offensive, Soviet spokesmen were emphasizing the importance of 1942 as the year of probable decision. And they stressed the importance of concerting our efforts with theirs this spring and this summer—not at some distant time. A second front, coinciding with the hammer blows of the Red Army, could crush the Nazi military machine, but it had to come in time. And time, said the Soviet ambassador, is a treacherous ally, who works for either side.

Again, the logic of war proved stronger than abstract calculations and wish-fulfillments. It so happened that the Red Army's offensive reached its peak simultaneously with our setbacks in the Far East. This contrast settled many questions, and gave the coalition another move ahead. The sweep and grandeur of the Soviet effort not only eliminated doubts about the permanence of the Soviet Union's participation in the war, but made it clear that the Eastern Front—far from being secondary—was likely to be decisive. In commenting on the war's developments in January, the New York *Herald Tribune* remarked that the Soviet front was still the "front of great battles and great hopes."

And the way Singapore was defended by contrast could only discredit even further those "whiskey-swilling planters and military birds of passage" of a vanishing era, whose friends in London happened to be the same people that were opposing the ever swelling British demand for action.

After Singapore, the people of our own country as well as of Britain began to experience a deep revulsion at every thought of waiting, no matter how watchful. General Mac-

Arthur at Bataan came to symbolize the kind of resistance Americans demanded; Jimmy Doolittle over Tokyo came to symbolize the offensive spirit our people applauded. And as the Pacific tide of war ebbed to the shores of India and Australia, it became clear that action in Europe was the road that opened to world victory. From March onward our newspapers have been full of the increasing recognition that 1942, and not some future time, is the time to act. Our labor movement, inspired also by what the British people were doing, took an increasingly active role in making a second front possible—both by its matchless production records and by its vocal support to the call for "taking the offensive."

AND more and more it came to be realized that the Russians, as Quentin Reynolds put it as early as November, were "our kind of people." "It is impossible to live long here," he wrote in *Collier's* of November 8, "without coming to love the people of Russia. They are decent, home-loving people, and you could take a slice of them and drop them in our Midwest and within a few weeks you wouldn't be able to distinguish them from our own decent, law-abiding citizens. I haven't been in Russia long, but I've been here long enough to learn that these are our kind of people." The process of discovering Russia, which the President touched off by recalling in September that after all, our own constitution, like the Soviet one, separates church and state, had by April gone very much further. More and more it came to be realized that the Soviet attitude toward the family, toward the individual, toward industrial technique, toward the homeland stems from a faith in science and the common man similar to our own. And Vice-President Henry A. Wallace deepened the growth of coalition when he pointed out in his recent address that the Russian Revolution is in the mainstream of the people's revolutions of which our own, 150 years ago, formed the first.

Not only has the myth of Soviet "totalitarianism" been undermined and largely interred, but a basis has been laid for that close cooperation and interchange of which Molotov's visit is but a great beginning.

SIX or eight months ago it was possible for certain anti-Axis papers to doubt whether Moscow's battle was fateful for our nation; recently, we all watched the struggle for Kharkov with bated breath and eagerness for our own action. Eight months ago, it was possible to quibble over whether Russia was our ally; recently, Archibald MacLeish in his speech to the newspaper publishers included as one of the earmarks of treasonous propaganda the effort to undermine our faith in the USSR. In October Walter Lippmann was almost alone among capitalist commentators when he grasped the essence of coalition in a remarkable passage: "The Russian resistance," he wrote, "rests on the view that this struggle will not be decided by pitched battles, but by the mobilization of the superior resources of the anti-Hitler coalition. Thus the Russian resistance is not suicidal, but rational, provided that we, the least vulnerable member of the coalition, do in fact mobilize our power. The Russians, we now see, are not the dreaming Slavs of the romantic legends, but when put to the test, they are as realistic as they are brave. The most powerful support we can give them now, at this moment is to prove by our acts that we are mobilizing our power, not partially, not twenty-five per cent of it, but all of it that can be mobilized." Six months later Donald Nelson assured us that this mobilization had exceeded expectations, and the War Production Board was curtailing its post-1942 planning.

No, Americans are not the decadent people of the Hitlerian slander but, when put to the test, they will be as brave and realistic as our Soviet allies. We have passed the first stages of the test. After the President's meeting with Molotov, the whole world, our own people above all, awaits the climax that will ensure victory.

JOSEPH STAROBIN.



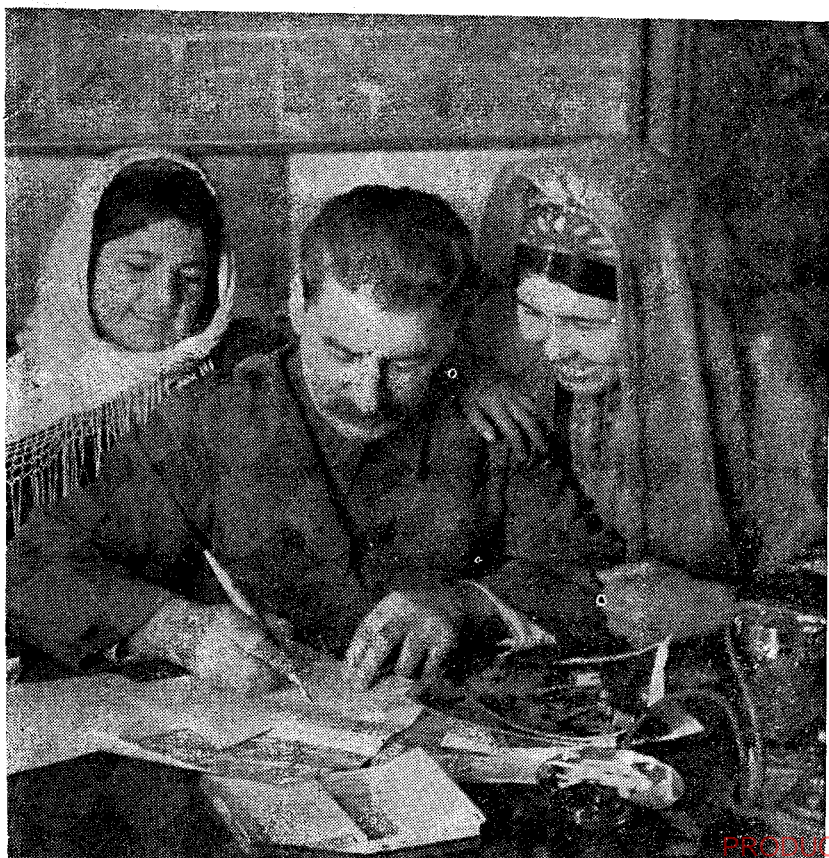
SECRET BALLOT: Premier Stalin casts his ballot in the election for the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. The Soviet Constitution guarantees the secret ballot.



PEOPLE'S LEADERS: Foreign Affairs Commissar Molotov (who recently visited the US) Stalin, and Ambassador to the US Litvinov, take a stroll in Kremlin Square.

OUR ALLY'S PREMIER

UNITED NATIONS: Two delegates from the collective farms in Tajikistan and Turkmenia, two of the sixteen Soviet Republics, meet with Joseph Stalin in Moscow.



SVETLANA and PA: Premier Stalin and his small daughter in an informal moment in the country. The date is 1937, the sentiment timeless.

