

THE "RUSSIAN PROBLEM" IS OUR PROBLEM

IT IS CLEAR to all observers that the path to international understanding is heavily strewn with obstacles. Probably no single international relationship is as important today as that between Russia and the United States. For this reason, it may be helpful to examine Russian-American relationships more closely.

In the years to come the United States will be the principal exponent of private enterprise and a relatively free economy. Russia will be the principal exponent of socialism and of an economic order in which there is more centralized and collective planning. If we in the United States make a success of our kind of system, such success is likely to have a profound influence on the Russian system, tending to pull Russia in the direction of more civil liberties and greater political democracy. If, on the other hand, the United States fails with consequent unemployment, made work, and dole, the Russians cannot be blamed for pointing out that private enterprise has failed. Rightly or wrongly, they will deduce that democracy will not work. As a result it is likely that Russia will move in more totalitarian directions and there will be a widening gulf in understanding between the two countries.

We do not have to accept the Russian economic order to understand Russia and the Russian people. It is very important, how-

ever, that each nation really comprehends the other's goals and aspirations. It is especially important that we discover the common elements in these goals. It is important that we deal fairly with each other in the press and in public discussion. In the past in America the press and much of our education have stressed the sharp differences between Russia and the United States. Little effort has been made to point out the common elements in our two social structures. Generally speaking the discussions of Russia have been clouded by such color words as "communism" and "regimentation."

It is commonly said in America that Russia is not a democratic country. The Russians, however, consider themselves not only a democracy, but the highest form of democracy. They no doubt hold that their implementation is different but that their goals in human welfare are much the same. For one thing, in the United States we have opportunity for widespread experimentation. The Russians evidently feel that they have arrived at a pattern of operation and are giving it general application. In the last analysis both patterns of economic organization must stand the test of time and experience. Prejudice, propaganda, distortion, and name-calling will contribute nothing to the determination of the relative effectiveness of the two patterns, but they will contribute heavily to misunderstandings between the two nations.

Education has a most important responsibility in bringing about understanding between Russia and the United States. We can help by calm, sympathetic discussion of Russia, her people, and her problems. We can help children and young people to find the common elements in the two social structures. We can help them by preserving an open-minded attitude towards economic successes and failures in the two nations. If we take

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"The Changing World" department of EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP returns to the magazine this month with Ernest O. Melby as editor. Mr. Melby, who is dean of the School of Education at New York University, New York City, begins his series of discussions on current affairs important to school people with an analysis of this country's relation to Russia and the urgent need for greater understanding between these two modern powers.

"You know," said Mary (Miss Newbury), "I want to tell you something that will amuse you. When I first started to teach, I was scared to death of you. I had an idea you'd come in my room and tell me what to do and what not to do—in a very nice way, of course, but forcefully—then leave and come back later to see if I'd carried out your orders. (You'd probably call them 'suggestions' but I'd know what you meant.) I had no idea

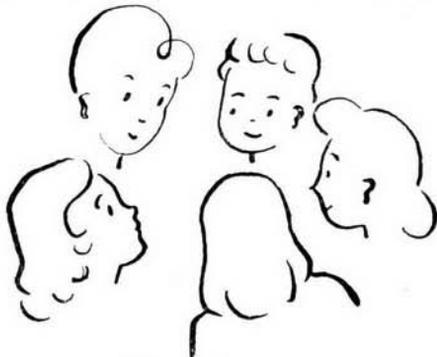


"It'll amuse you"

we'd start with meetings of teachers to discuss our problems, then try to help each other find solutions. I don't know what I'd have done without the help you and the other teachers have given me. For example, I'd never in the world have been able to do anything with that housing unit if you and the others

hadn't told me about materials and people who can help, and how to take trips, and where to go, and all those things that went into carrying out the plans the youngsters and I had made. And then there's all the help you gave earlier on how to plan. Honestly, I was so scared the first few days I was about to quit teaching. Funny, isn't it?"

"You know," said Alice (Miss Oldum), "I want to tell you something that will amuse you. I used to do the sort of classroom visit-



"We talk things over"

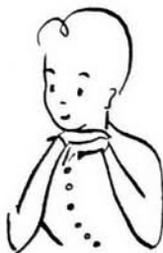
ing you described. I'd make 'suggestions,' then go back to see if they'd been followed. I hated it, but I thought that's what a super-

visor had to do. Then you taught me a lesson."

"I taught you?" exclaimed Mary.

"Yes. You remember the first day we had cokes together? I had just decided to quit being a supervisor. As we talked, I discovered we could get along very well as two people, not merely as a teacher and a supervisor. It occurred to me that if several of us could meet as people to discuss our common problems, we might find that we'd help each other. As you know, we tried it. It works. And now, instead of hating my job as supervisor, I enjoy every minute of it."

And she did.



"It'll amuse you"

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attitudes of sympathy and understanding towards one another we both have much to learn. We can do all these things by utilizing the rapidly increasing supply of books, pictures, and materials which help us to know Russia better. We can provide materials about the United States which will help Russian education to present accurate information about our country and its problems. We not only *can* do these things, but we *must* do them for the peace of the world depends upon our success in the endeavor.

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