

A VARIED SELECTION

TEACH YOURSELF MUSIC, King Palmer, 6/9 posted. This book is aimed at smoothing out the difficulties that impede those who want to make or create music but who have not learnt it in their childhood.

PACIFIC HORIZONS, Christopher Lloyd, 16/3 posted. Based on original records, this book is the story of the exploration of the Pacific and the great voyagers who achieved it.

LINK OF TWO HEARTS, George Sava, 10/3 posted. Mr. Sava at his crisp and fluent best in this new tale of life in Britain and Australia told in a form that is both entertaining and unusual.

MISS LINSEY AND PA, Stella Gibbons, 7/3 posted. A new printing of this delightfully witty tale of humans and their imperfections by the author of "Cold Comfort Farm."

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RUSSIA MEANS PEOPLE

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passengers: it is an act of faith and the symbol of an idea.

Most of us by now are beginning to have an inkling that the words "democracy" and "liberty" mean one thing in Russia and something quite different here. But it goes deeper than that. Even the simplest words are misleading. The word "factory," one would have thought, was concrete enough; yet we have already seen that it means one thing in Coventry and quite another thing in Sverdlovsk. In Archangel during the war I was amazed to see an amiable and serious-minded Russian signals officer violently assault a lend-lease wireless-set (designed for tanks) with a three-pound hammer. It was not sabotage. It was simply that the British demonstrator had said that the set would stand up to anything, and the



"Deliberate assault and battery"

Red Army major was sceptical. Of course the wireless set broke. And when the outraged Englishman protested that standing up to anything did not include deliberate assault and battery, his Russian opposite number retorted drily that in the Red Army it had to, because if the set broke down in a battle the first thing the Russian operator would do would be to hammer at it with the butt-end of his Tommy-gun to make it go.

It is the same, as I have said, all the way through. It is the same with every word and every conception. Words are relative things, not absolutes. And it is when we insist on regarding them as absolutes, as meaning the same thing everywhere, in all countries and at all times, that we go so badly astray.

Products of Character

There are plenty of things we most of us dislike about Russia to-day, but what never seems to occur to us at all is to ask whether these things which we dislike—as well as the things we like—may not have something to do with the Russian people themselves. We can blame the censorship of ideas and the existence of the secret police on Stalin. But 30 years ago we were blaming exactly the same things on the Tsar. I should have thought, however, that confronted with something which we regard as evil and which has existed in Russia for several centuries and survived the most sweeping revolution in history, the obvious conclusion would be that it must have something to do with the character of the people. I imagine the real reason why we never seem to draw this simple and elementary conclusion is because we simply cannot conceive of any people putting up with an autocracy, with a censorship, and with a secret police, of their own free will.

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