

Verbundkatalog Kalliope

In: The Message. 30.9.1943.

Cities in the News. Moscow.

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1943-09-30

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CITIES IN THE NEWS MOSCOW

By T/S KLAUS MANN.

"What I like about Leningrad is—St. Petersburg."

Thus a French visitor—the great novelist Andre Gide—summed up his impressions of the former Russian capital. What he meant to say is that in Leningrad one senses everywhere the charm and grandeur of the past, the glorious and bloody memories of the Czarist regime.

The city is comparatively new—a purposeful and artificial structure, built in the eighteenth century by Peter the Great, who felt that Russia needed "a window to the Baltic." He transferred his court and administration from Moscow to Petrograd, and, in doing so, performed a gesture of vast political significance. His purpose was to shift the center of his empire away from the East, away from Asia, toward the West—toward Europe. The new capital was conceived as the token and focus of a modern, enlightened spirit—an up-to-date, first-class metropolis that could compete with London, Paris and Vienna.

But Leningrad is not St. Petersburg; since 1918 the city has lost its glamor. It has become a rather provincial place; its monuments appear covered with a melancholy patina, its spacious avenues and fine mansions seem to be haunted by the ghosts of long-forgotten royalties and whimsical bureaucrats. Leningrad today has the nostalgic charm and placid dignity of certain Scandinavian sceneries. It resembles Helsinki and Stockholm more than it resembles Moscow, which is only 400 miles away.

Moscow is different. Deeper rooted in the Russian soil than Leningrad and at the same time closer to the currents of our time, she seems at once much younger and much older than her sister city. Moscow was not planned and constructed by an ambitious monarch. She developed her character throughout the centuries—changing as she grew but never losing her unmistakable identity and unique position. Moscow is today what she has always been: the "holy mother city," the true heart of Russia.

The Russian soul is profound and problematical—full of enigmas and contradictions. How could the heart of Russia—her capital—be lovely and elegant? Some travelers found Moscow an ugly city. Maybe it is; it certainly is not pretty. There are cities whose innate coloring seems to be bright and sweet, and there are others which appear dark by nature. Moscow is a dark city. The very sky over Moscow gives the impression of darkness and density. It's a grim sky—a metallic sky, as it were.

Moscow is a hard city, too—made of age-old stone and modern, flexible steel.

But I think it's a mistake to call Moscow ugly. It has a strong, authentic fascination—a grave, compelling splendor of its own. Besides, it offers one of the most striking architectural views to be found anywhere in the world—the Red Square in front of the Kremlin.

To any Russian—no matter what his political point of view or social background—the Kremlin means much more than a historic monument or the seat of the administration; it means a national shrine, the mystic symbol of Russia's greatness and magnificence. "Above Moscow, there is nothing but the Kremlin," an old Russian saying goes. "Above the Kremlin, nothing but the sky."

The Kremlin is not a building in the style of other royal palaces. It's a vast, complex structure, almost a town in itself with its many wings, courtyards, churches and towers; a gigantic fortress surrounded by heavy walls; a majestic and exotic panorama with its multitude of pillars, arches, statues and gilded domes—all of different shapes and sizes, many of them adorned with grotesque frescoes of sacred subjects painted on golden ground.

Outside of the Kremlin, but adjacent to its walls, Lenin's mausoleum is situated—facing the wilderness of the Red Square. There rests, under massive cubes of gray, polished stones, exhibited under glass, the mummified body of the man who spent most of his life in exile and then returned to change the face of his country. People come from the most distant parts

of the Soviet Union to pay homage to this shriveled, wax-like figure which was once their liberator and tyrant, their scourge and idol, their demon and "Little Father."

This is Asia. The glaring pomp of the Kremlin, the vast dimensions of the Red Square, the macabre cult of an embalmed corpse—all this would be inconceivable in the sphere of Western civilization. The city of Moscow has Asiatic features.

But it has other features as well—qualities and aspects which the Russians like to call "American," which means to them: dynamic, streamlined, modern and efficient. There is a hard-working, sturdy Moscow that grows rapidly and is always active, full of new projects and exciting spectacles; the Moscow of big parades, dramatic rallies, popular competitions. Every new venture and accomplishment—the building of a new apartment house or the opening of a scientific congress—assumes here the character of a national triumph. The construction of a subway system is an event of thrilling significance—discussed by everybody, with naive enthusiasm. People in Moscow have asked me—quite seriously and in a slightly patronizing fashion—if I had ever seen such a subway before. When I tried to tell them that there are subways also in places like New York, London, Berlin and Paris, they shrugged their shoulders and exchanged skeptical glances.

The people of Moscow are friendly and hospitable, but inclined to treat foreigners (especially non-Communists) somewhat condescendingly—feeling sorry for them, as it were. They show you their theaters and department stores, their museums and factories—always suggesting, with a sympathetic smile, that such wonderful things must make an overwhelming impression on a visitor who comes from the capitalistic wilderness. The utmost admiration is always

expected from you, which can become rather embarrassing. But then, there are many things to admire—the "Parks of Culture," for instance; those colorful places of relaxation and athletic training; half-amusement area, half-gymnasium; with open theaters and restaurants, dance halls, swimming pools, and all kinds of attractions—including fairly tall, alarming-looking towers from which the lads parachute to the ground, just for the fun of it.

Here we see a Moscow that plays and laughs—a youthful city, all self-assurance and vitality. This laughing strength proves its solidity when challenged by an aggressor. The very boys who practiced parachuting in the "Parks of Culture" were maybe destined to meet Hitler's hordes, somewhere between the Baltic and the Black sea. The men and women whose pride in Moscow's subway struck me as naive and ignorant, displayed an almost miraculous stamina and tenacity when it came to defending their native soil and their beloved city.

Moscow does not surrender. Napoleon conquered it and yet found it invincible. As for the would-be Napoleon from Berchtesgaden, he didn't even get as far as his French model. His march was stopped before he could see the towers of the Kremlin. His sham-glory fades away, while Russia's "Mother City," with unabated power, continues to live, to strive, to change, to struggle—laden with history, pregnant with future; one of the focal points of things past and of things to come.

Lucky Seventh Down

Sept. 30