



JOHN PIKE

New World (formerly Red Army) Theater Company stages excellent production of *Guys and Dolls*, called *Bezdelniki i Zhenshchiny* in Russian

THE CURTAIN RISES . . .

By J. B. PRIESTLEY

Moscow, June 30, 1960

I HAVE just returned from several hours of talk, tea and tobacco (neither very good yet) at the Writers' Club. This is not, of course, the building in the center of Moscow that I knew when I was here in 1945. It is part of a trade-union club, near the outskirts, that the writers are occupying until they can build their own place.

All the time I was there today, it was crowded and seemed to crackle with excited talk. There is, of course, far more English spoken here than there was at the end of World War II, but much of it is hard to understand; and though I have an excellent interpreter (my old acquaintance Professor Karpov), I must confess that at my age I am beginning to find such cataracts of talk rather fatiguing. Anywhere else, in fact, it would have been unendurable, but here in Russia, even the talk of writers, never my own favorite conversationalists, can be endured for four or five hours. For now we are back to the old Russian atmosphere of tea, tobacco and huge rambling speculative talk, very different from the atmosphere of Communism, with its semimilitary Teutonic air, its discipline, curt commands and parrot propaganda phrases, which was obviously so wrong for these Slavs.

They still cannot believe that we writers in the West do not assemble in clubs like this, to criticize one another's work, to form groups with a common philosophy, to issue manifestoes and challenges. They did these things long before the Bolshevik

Revolution, and now that the Politburo and the MVD are like an evil dream, they still do them, in the old Russian fashion. Fortunately, this self-grouping of Russian intellectuals and artists, so strange to us in the West, makes it easier for a visitor to understand what is happening here now. At first it all seems so confusing and clamorous that one is in despair; but then, after listening to representative types, a pattern begins to emerge.

First, however, we must remember what happened to the arts here during the Reds' regime. There were four periods. The first, just after the Revolution in 1917, was one of wild experiment, with Meyerhold in the theater and Mayakovsky among the poets, and the new Mass Man being expressed in the most eccentric individualistic fashion, while Lenin, whose own taste was conservative, shrugged his shoulders at these antics. Then the party said that this wild work would not do, that the arts must be understood and enjoyed by the workers, now faced with Five-Year Plans and much hard sacrifice.

There arrived the long second period, that of Socialist Realism, which meant in fact a technically conventional treatment of themes approved by the party. This produced the plays about correct "Soviet heroes," the novels about cement works, and pictures that looked like the duller exhibits of the British Royal Academy of 1882. The third period, very short, was ushered in by World War II, and

allowed the artist to glorify ordinary patriotic feeling, with much emphasis on great Russian leaders, so that Ivan the Terrible and Peter the Great surprisingly popped up in novels, histories, plays, films, as Marxist-Leninist-Stalinist heroes.

Then, in 1946, when the Politburo took the fateful wrong turn, there began the fourth, last and worst period. The artists were rigidly clamped onto the narrowest possible party line. Genuine creative men went into retreat, some of them abandoning their art in despair, as subservient hacks passed resolutions applauding the megalomaniac policy of the party bosses. Stalin was addressed in terms so fulsome that they would have embarrassed Genghis Khan. Almost all links with the Western World were severed. A country that had discovered everything, that had invented everything worth inventing, and that was now governed by men possessing a divine infallibility, did not need to import foreign works of art, to learn what the rest of the world was thinking and feeling, to refresh its own spirit at the universal fountain of human experience. The censorship was complete, the darkness almost total, until both were destroyed by the fury of war.

The first result of the liberation here, as everybody will remember, was a huge excited demand for anything foreign and Western, for books and plays, pictures, films, ballets and operas totally unlike the Cominform (*Continued on page 62*)

Start the Presses!

By ERWIN CANHAM

Moscow, 1960

IT SEEMS unreal, even now, to stroll out to the lobby in the shoddy prefab which passes by the name of the Hotel Metropole, and look at the newsstand. And listening to the radio doesn't make sense, either.

Freedom of expression in Russia is still in a very explosive stage. The dozen to 15 single-sheet newspapers somehow printed here (the number varies almost from day to day) illustrate the wild confusion of liberated Russian thought. With the exception of Alexander Viktorov's New Word (*Novoye Slovo*), they are violently opinionated partisan sheets.

But the Russians have also turned hungrily to the world from which they were formerly barred. They have a mixed diet. It includes the Paris edition of the New York Herald Tribune, the composite edition of the American Press (*Amerikanskaya Gazeta*)—the wartime world edition of the New York Times, Christian Science Monitor, San Francisco Chronicle and the Chicago Tribune) which is printed from plastic plates here in Moscow, and British and French papers, Switzerland's excellent *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, plus other representative dailies from all over the world.

American magazines are in great demand, particularly for their typical advertising. But the Russian editions of the popular U.S. magazines far outsell the English editions. Newsstands are loaded down with magazines such as Collier's (*Koliers*), Life (*Zhizn*), Time (*Vremya*), Newsweek (*Novosti Nedeli*), the Reader's Digest (*Chitatelskoye Obozreniye*) and the Saturday Evening Post (*Subbotnyaya Vyechernyaya Pochta*). Quick, the pocket-sized magazine, recently made its appearance, but only in the English version, and this has only a tenth of the circulation of Russia's own capsule news magazine, which oddly enough is called *Skoreye*, meaning Quicker.

Most striking of all is to read the measured cadences of Walter Lippmann, set in double-column 10-point down the front page of the New Word and the dramatic prose of Walter Winchell in the widely circulated Light of the World (*Svet Mira*), which in format looks like New York's Daily Mirror. Hollywood columns are very popular in all the papers that can get them. So is the comic-strip character *Seerotka Anya* (Little Orphan Annie), who reminds the Russians of the wanderings of their own tragic homeless children.

In short, the Russians are eager to read anything, eager to print their own personal and individual convictions, eager and exultant and undisciplined and exuberant in this heady air of freedom.

But let me begin the inconclusive and confused history of the postwar Russian press with the personal story of Alexander Viktorov. I first knew Alex when he was a minor press officer in the Soviet delegation at the Geneva Disarmament Conference in 1932. He was dark, slender, handsome, and looked more French or Polish than he did Russian.

At Geneva in those years Maxim Litvinov set the tone for the Soviets. It was a far cry from the days of Vishinsky, Molotov or Beria. In 1932, lots of old revolutionaries were still around. Among them Karl Radek, the famous Soviet publicist, Nikolai Krestinsky, Deputy People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs, and such old Bolsheviks as Rykov, Bukharin and Tomsky. All of them had been purged by the mid-thirties.

And so, we thought, was Viktorov. He simply disappeared overnight from his job as head of the American Section in the Foreign Office. His foreign friends were sorry at his fate, for we all liked him, found him intelligent, flexible, and filled with healthy but discreet doubts.

We had not suspected the iron in his character. For Alex had not been purged. Deeply disillusioned, he had gone underground in Russia. And he had stayed underground during all of the second World War, (*Continued on page 104*)

WALTER WINCHELL IN MOSCOW

Moscow, 1960

Mr. and Mrs. Russia:

This is my first column to you—the Russian people. And perhaps there is no more fitting start than to recapitulate here the lessons of the last 15 years—lessons which, we may now believe, have finally set a pattern for the future of mankind.

In April, 1945, at the San Francisco conference to write the UN charter—while World War II was still raging—the seeds of World War III were sown. The reason was painfully obvious: no major power was willing to yield its sovereign power—to make war—to a single world authority strong enough to keep the peace. From the very start, Stalin, the Red Czar, deprived the United Nations of its virility by hamstringing every noble move to achieve a great and lasting world peace.

Stalin's idea of peace was to avoid full-scale war while grabbing off one nation after the other in a mad orgy of Communist imperialism. All this the Soviets did in your name, in an attempt to make the world believe that they represented the masses of the great Russian people. But the West was never misled; the free nations did not believe that you, the Russian people, wanted to follow a policy of aggression. Neither did the West believe that war was inevitable. Stalin's policy, as it was implemented by the cynical madmen in his rubber-stamp Politburo, forced the free world to rearm. We carried a gun because you did.

Thereafter, we were both ruled by the fear of who would shoot first. The analogy was as simple and as terrible as this: if two mortal enemies each know that the other is armed with a pistol, both will reach for their guns at the slightest provocation. The West again and again offered the hand of friendship, arguing that coexistence was possible. But Stalin kept the Iron Curtain sealed and ultimately—deliberately—fired the first shot.

Who knows the result better than you? Today, in 1960, even after five years of peace, the world is just beginning to emerge from the searing crucible of World War III. The suffering is not yet ended. But Stalin and the Politburo are no more; Russia is no longer a vast concentration camp of 212,000,000 victims. Russia is free. You, the Russian people, are equal partners with all the nations of the world in the unending responsibility to keep the peace.

And this is the world's last chance.

We have made fleets and armies as obsolete as the weapon-carrying individuals of long ago. But remember this: even then, no decent citizen wanted to carry death at his hip; he was forced to—defend himself. Man had to become fully civilized to abandon reliance on force within his own community; this world of ours, we must hope and pray, has learned the same lesson.

Here is an example of what can be done: When the United States consisted of 13 separate units banded together under the Articles of Confederation, the founders of my country realized the arrangement would not last. By a miracle of compromise, they secured the ratification of the U.S. Constitution, by which all states agreed to be governed by powers delegated to the federal government.

This did not make a Virginian less a Virginian, or a Pennsylvanian less a Pennsylvanian. It did make them both Americans. When the great test of that theory came 74 years later, it was resolved in favor of the Union. And the Union was not saved by force, at Gettysburg; it was saved by the general acceptance of the concept born at the Constitutional Convention of 1787, by the decision that the same law—the Constitution—would continue to govern victor and vanquished alike. Permanent peace was won within the U.S. because it was clearly established that the federal government was the supreme power.

In this world of 1960 we have an exact parallel: it is the United Nations, which has the supreme power; and it is through that body that you, the Russian people, and we, the people of the Western World, must work to keep the peace. If we join together to better the lot of mankind, lasting peace—a great golden age, not war—is inevitable.