

their lot and went my own way in life. After secondary school I entered a University for medical training. These years of study brought into my life extraordinary experiences and events that shaped my destiny. One of these was my work in Dr. Fridtjof Nansen's organisation, which was feeding Russian students during the years of famine. This activity involved me in tragic happenings: two years later I was arrested, but before I came up for trial I ran away with a false passport with which I lived dangerously for years. Later I confessed to the O.G.P.U. what I had done, but was pardoned, and permitted to keep my falsely-acquired name.

After many vicissitudes of life I started afresh, and went boldly in for motor-cycle sports and at the same time entered the Institute of Engineering. From this moment there began the most adventurous and daring era of my life. I became a well-known sportswoman in Soviet Russia: alone on my motor-cycle I crossed all Russia from Leningrad to Tiflis in the autumn rains and mud in twelve days; took part in

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I AM A WOMAN FROM
SOVIET RUSSIA

I AM A WOMAN FROM SOVIET RUSSIA

by

BARBARA MOORE-PATALEEWA

“With the help of Christ, out of this chaos will be born a race of men and women—utterly incorruptible and perfectly unafraid. To them, moral values will be above price and they will look into the eyes of life and into the eyes of death with equal and uncompromising courage”.

(*St. Seraphim of Sarov* said about Russia over hundred years ago.)

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THIS BOOK I DEDICATE
TO
THE GREAT RUSSIAN PEOPLE
WHO HAVE PASSED THROUGH EVERYTHING
AND TO
THE SOVIET LEADERS
WHO LED THOSE PEOPLE TO THE HEIGHTS
—WHERE THEY NOW STAND

PREFACE

I AM NOT A professional writer, oh, no! In fact even my English is far from being correct. That is why I had such difficulty in writing this book. There were many moments in the last six months when I would stop and move no further for the want of an expression or for the lack of purely grammatical ease with which to proceed with this book. I had nobody to help me and only one intimate friend who time from time would sacrifice two or three hours of his precious time to correct my mistakes. Only the mistakes but not the style, that is why this book is so different to other ones written in English! I hope it is readable!

Another thing is, that in spite of my imperfect English, I have been in great demand for the last 12 months and four or five days a week I went out, and still go, to different parts of England to give talks about Soviet Russia, which left me very little time to write this book. I can say, therefore, that it was done on trains and buses, and whilst waiting at the stations, but mainly during the hours late at night, as in any case, I only sleep four hours a-night!

What made me write this book? A very simple fact: the desperation over the volumes of labour by persons who hated or feared Soviet Russia, and whose creations adorned (and still adorn) the shelves of numerous public libraries and kiosks of Great Britain. With few exceptions, those books were written by people who have either lived in Tsarist Russia and run away after the Revolution, or by those who visited my country, and finding their dislike for it, decided to express it loudly! Some are by former spies to old or new Russia and finally—just by a pack of journalists who knew how to serve their ever greedy public, in the years preceding June 22nd 1941!

I have been unhappy too many times when reading those books or hearing someone expressing their views after acquainting themselves with Soviet Russia via those books.

As soon as I came to England for the first time in 1934, I was virtually hunted for the purposes of giving some material or even writing my autobiography in Russian, to be translated.

I declined to do this. No money tempted me either and not because I had plenty of it!

Years passed. Things changed. Books are still written about Russia—but how differently now! I am very happy about it, of course. But I thought that a mere switch over from slander to admiration is not enough. I wish the English people, who in their vast majority, have a genuine desire to understand Russia—to know more of the life and people there in the period from 1917–1936, when the new Stalin Constitution came into being. As since then the Soviet Union became a Democracy, only of a more true type than those in the West. But it is the years of 1917–1936—that “dark” period, which still requires “clarification”!

Now, I attempt to give this clarification by describing my own life. Many others in Russia have “passed through everything” and so did I, with only the difference, that I bore no malice for the tragic occurrences and sufferings I experienced. Because I understood, that when a big forest is cut down—the chips are bound to fly about. I was one of those fragments, who survived, in order, perhaps, to tell this narrative.

I have put here everything openly and frankly. Most names, with the exception of those not belonging to Soviet citizens—are recorded in full. I do not spare myself either. I thought that truth, though often bitter, is better than a glittering lie. I must make an apology, though, to all those thousands of people who know me now, for the not absolutely correct autobiographical information I have given them when asked or even pressed to do so. I had reasons for that, and in any case, this book would not be so interesting to read if they had already known all about me!

I have written this my autobiography with the sole intention and great hope that it will contribute to a further real understanding of the new world—Soviet Russia.

I have also found that a good number of people in Great Britain would not read books on Russia that have been written by the so-called “admirers” of the Soviet Union, taking such books as direct propaganda! Now, this book of mine can be read by them without any fear of being “proselytised”! It is not “conversion” I wish to induce, but a real, human understanding of Soviet Russia. Because it shows both sides of the medal, but which will make them think twice before pronouncing their opinions of the U.S.S.R. They might even find, if they are fair enough, that the rest of the world contributed greatly to the difficult, hard and sometimes even cruel life Russia had from 1917 to 1936. But the Russians have such an intense desire to be friendly with this outside world that, I am sure, they have forgotten the things of the past.

I hope too that readers will discern that my occasional expression of opinion and observations of other countries, England included, are not my desire to criticise and belittle them! I like English people very much, but I cannot be blind to some aspects of their life which differ to those of Soviet Russia! But in any case, I do not believe in continual back-patting, this will not serve any useful purpose at the time we live in. I wished to point out those things only which are definitely incompatible with Russia, mainly in the social and economic senses. So much will be required very soon in order to meet the post-war situation, when co-operation between most countries starts. Such co-operation will not proceed far unless the English who, though isolated from the continent geographically but actually part of it, realise that they cannot make Russia accept their standard of values.

Besides I do not believe that English people are so "touchy" that they cannot take any sort of criticism of themselves, without spoiling the "entente cordiale"! They must be as brave as the Russians were, when for years not one kind word was written about anything in their country,—and most of it was even untrue!

I am told from all quarters that one should not attempt to say too harsh things about Germany, Italy and others, as it might jeopardise the peace to come.

It strikes me that the projected friendship of the peoples of this world is going to be so uncertain and as gentle as a fragile glass that could break into pieces from any slight pressure. Such a friendship is worthless and does not pave the solid way for future peace and happiness. And though I object to Vansittartism, I am not for a sentimental praising and closed-eyes attitude to reality either; this is artificial and will not work.

One word about the publisher.

Some people on hearing that I was writing my autobiography, immediately inquired who would be the publisher. "Victor Gollancz," was my answer. "What a pity, it would have been better to have chosen a publisher not so 'Left'"—they would say! I, therefore, wish to state here the following.

Mr. Gollancz is one of the very few publishers who has been brave enough to publish some true material about Soviet Russia, at a time when most of the mighty press were only too busy with printing the poisonous propaganda about that land.

That is why I chose Mr. Victor Gollancz.

BARBARA MOORE-PATALEEWA.

Mansfield, Nottinghamshire.

November, 1942.

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PROLOGUE

IN MY VISION of Soviet Russia—this vast land with its great mass of people—it always appears to me as one huge beehive. Russians, like industrious bees, under one queen bee, which is Stalin,—are continually working, re-building the old world and constructing a new one—to their own liking.

But just when they began to feel, that their efforts at last started to bring the desired results—one day there came a bear from the neighbouring forest, who was known for its liking for honey. He approached the beehive, ruthlessly tore away its walls and started to eat the contents greedily. Bees, out of instinct primarily—bitterly attacked him, stinging him all over. He was stronger at first, and enraged went on destroying all their work,—in a kind of aggressive self-defence. But soon their numerous stings finished the giant; with a loud groan he fell and soon died.

Poor bees! Many of them perished too, but those who remained started at once to build anew their honeycomb.

When a child in Russia I witnessed such a scene, which was for ever impressed on my mind. Would this analogy work once again? Yes, it will work, and no magicians will be required to put the great beehive into proper order again.