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ВАША БОРЬБА - НАША БОРЬБА: АНГЛО-СОВЕТСКИЙ СОЮЗ ВО ВТОРОЙ МИРОВОЙ ВОЙНЕ

Резюме

В статье рассматриваются англо-советские отношения в ходе Второй мировой войны. В то время как межгосударственные отношения и военное сотрудничество являются контекстом, акцент делается на том, как эти отношения работали на местном уровне в Соединенном Королевстве, концентрируясь в основном, но не исключительно на промышленном центре Манчестере. Особенное внимание уделяется сбору денежных средств, предпринятом британским народом для того, что отправить медикаменты, еду и одежду в СССР. Подчеркивается роль англо-советских комитетов дружбы при мэриях и британо-советских объединенных комитетов, Российского фонда г-жи Черчилль и женских организаций. На заводах увеличение производимой продукции имело большое значение для того, чтобы поддержать не только британские, но и советские силы: контакты между жителями Коатбриджа (Шотландия) и Ленинграда, Манчестера и Москвы и наконец Ковентри и Сталинграда стали прообразом последующих связей между городами. Ковентри и Сталинград выковали первое в англо-советских отношениях городское партнерство.

Ключевые слова: Вторая мировая война, Манчестер, Ленинград, англо-советские отношения, комитеты дружбы.

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**YOUR FIGHT IS OUR FIGHT:
THE ANGLO-SOVIET ALLIANCE DURING WORLD WAR II**

Abstract

This article examines the Anglo-Soviet relationship during World War II. While intergovernmental relations and military cooperation provide the context, the focus is on how this relationship operated at the local level in the UK, concentrating mostly but not exclusively on the industrial city of Manchester. Particular attention is paid to the raising of money by British people to send medical aid, food and clothing to the USSR. Here the role of Lord Mayors' Anglo-Soviet Friendship Committees and British Soviet Unity Committees, Mrs Churchill's Fund for Russia and of women's organisations is stressed. In the factories of Manchester raising war production, to supply not only British but also Soviet forces was especially important. People-to-people contacts such as between Coatbridge (Scotland) and Leningrad, Manchester and Moscow and finally Coventry and Stalingrad, suggest the beginnings of city-to-city links. Coventry and Stalingrad forged the first in Anglo-Soviet relations city partnership in 1944.

Key words: World War II, Manchester, Leningrad, Anglo-Soviet relationship, Friendship Committees.

In the evening of the 22nd June 1941, in reaction to the German invasion of the USSR earlier that day, Prime Minister Winston Churchill, gave a BBC radio broadcast¹. He stated that,

¹Transcript of a speech by Winston Churchill broadcast on 'The Home Service Programme' (BBC radio), 9pm, Sunday 22 June 1941 (BBK/C/87). *The Churchill Centre website*, <http://www.winstonchurchill.org/resources/speeches/1941-1945-war-leader/the-fourth-climacteric>

“No one has been a more consistent opponent of Communism than I have for the last 25 years. I will unsay no word that I have spoken about it; but all this fades away before the spectacle which is now unfolded. The past, with its crimes, its follies and its tragedies, flashes away. I see the Russian soldiers standing on the threshold of their native land, guarding the fields which their fathers have tilled from time immemorial.”

He recalled Britain and Russia’s joint fight against Germany earlier in the C20th and declared that Hitler’s, “invasion of Russia is no more than a prelude to an attempted invasion of the British Isles” and stressed that once again Britain and the USSR had a joint fight this time against Nazism. Past Anglo-Soviet rivalries and tensions were for the moment at least put to one side and Churchill a veteran anti-Bolshevik struck a new note,

“Any man or State who fights against Nazism, will have our aid. Any man or State who marches with Hitler is our foe. . . . It follows, therefore, that we shall give whatever help we can to Russia and the Russian people. We shall appeal to all our friends and Allies in every part of the world to take the same course and to pursue it as we shall, faithfully and steadfastly to the end.”

Further that, “We have offered the Government of Soviet Russian any technical or economic assistance which is in our power, and which is likely to be of service to them.“ The first formal step in the British-Soviet wartime alliance came on 12th July 1941 when Britain’s ambassador Stafford Cripps and soviet foreign minister Vyacheslav Molotov signed an *Anglo-Soviet Agreement* in Moscow. Then on 26th May 1942, the new British foreign secretary Sir Anthony Eden and Molotov signed the *Twenty-Year Mutual Assistance Agreement Between the United Kingdom and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics*, in London. Crucially, the treaty stipulated that neither side would seek an armistice or peace with Germany or its Axis allies without the consent of the other and so Britain’s and the USSR’s survival were now inextricably linked.

THE FOCUS OF THIS PAPER

The creation of the Anglo-Soviet alliance, intergovernmental relations and military cooperation provide the context for this paper. However, it will not dwell on these issues, but rather it focuses on the under-researched question of

the promotion and operation of the Anglo-Soviet alliance in the everyday lives, homes, factories and meeting halls of Britain. The message from government was clear: their fight is our fight and together we will win. In his *Memoirs* the Soviet Ambassador to Britain Ivan Maisky, recorded that within days of the Nazi invasion, "It was as though a great spontaneous tide had suddenly flooded into the doors of the Soviet Embassy"². A tide of letters expressing goodwill and friendship towards the USSR. This paper examines the financial aid and gifts donated by the British people to the USSR; the *British-Soviet Unity Committees* (also called *Anglo-Soviet Unity* or *Friendship Committees*) and the operation of friendship activities at the civic level. Finally, it looks at the British-Soviet alliance in the work place, on the "production front". Examples of how this peoples-level alliance operated are mostly drawn from Manchester an industrial, textile and port city in northwest England; the Midland industrial city of Coventry and the Scottish steel towns of Airdrie and Coatbridge; some national-level activities will also be discussed.

SOURCES

This paper's Manchester focus is possible because the *Working Class Movements Library* (WCML) in Salford and the *Manchester County Archives* (MCA) both hold documents, letters and programmes for events relating to Anglo-Soviet relations and activities during WWII. The Minutes of the *Metropolitan-Vickers Works Committee* are held by the WCML. *Metropolitan-Vickers* (also known as *Metrovicks* or *Metrovick*) was a heavy electrical engineering company in Trafford Park in Manchester that was vital to the British war effort. The *Works Committee* comprised representatives of the management, trade unions and workers, its role was to discuss issues and concerns facing the factory, so its minutes provide an insight into *Metrovicks* at war. The committee discussed such concerns as raising production, producing war materials and raising funds for the USSR. *Metrovicks* also published its own company histories, which detail the company's development and activities. The role, attitude and activities of workers and trade unionists to the alliance with the USSR, is captured in the minutes and documents of the *Stretford Trades Council* and the *Manchester and District Trades Council* located in the *Manchester County Archive*. The minutes and letters of the *Metrovicks Works Committee* and the *Trades Councils* are private, unpublished documents reflecting their practical concerns at the time.

²Ivan Maisky, *Memoirs of a Soviet Ambassador. The War 1939-43*, Hutchinson: London, 1967. Trans Andrew Rothstein.

The publications and leaflets of the *National Council for British-Soviet Unity* are available in the WCML and information about this organisation and its local committees was also found in the *Manchester Guardian* newspaper.

The *Ministry of Information* (MoI) headed from July 1941 by Churchill's close friend Brendan Bracken a former newspaper man, was responsible for British propaganda at home and abroad, which included controlling news and information. Churchill's broadcast on 22nd July 1941 set the tone, Stalin the bogeyman of the 1930s became Uncle Joe, the benevolent leader of a valiant people³. The soviet peoples were now typically described in speeches, newspaper articles and newsreels as "patriotic", "heroic", "brave", and "valiant" in their "titanic" struggle against the Nazi invader. An internal BBC memo dated 10th July 1941 reveals that Lady Violet Bonham Carter a BBC Governor and Maisky had both suggested that the BBC should broadcast about Russia's cultural achievements rather than its political history⁴. Newsreels, especially the *Pathé Gazette*, shown in cinemas, illustrate how the USSR and the Anglo-Soviet alliance were presented to people in Britain during the war. In July 1941 the *Pathé Gazette* showed Maisky speaking in English about the strength of the Soviet army in a newsreel interspersed with soviet film of soviet paratroopers, tanks and ships⁵. Maisky was an adept propagandist for the cause of the Anglo-Soviet alliance, appearing in newsreels, making speeches and giving press interviews. His five-volume memoirs published in the 1960s include a volume

³British Universities Film & Video Council, *Film 8. Images of the Soviet Union at War 1941-1945*. <http://bufc.ac.uk/newsonscreen/learnmore/videos-and-dvds>. The film explores the role played by British newsreels in creating and reflecting the growth of pro-Russian feeling in Britain during the Second World War. Also see BBC memo dated 10th July 1941, showing programming decisions about the USSR on the BBC website, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/archive/ussr/6723.shtml>

⁴BBC internal memo dated 10th July 1941, *BBC website*, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/archive/ussr/6723.shtml>

⁵"Soviet Ambassador on the Red Army", *Pathé Gazette*, 3rd July 1941, <http://www.britishpathe.com/video/m-maisky-soviet-ambassador>. See also "Tanks for Russia", *Pathé Gazette*, <http://www.britishpathe.com/video/tanks-for-russia-1>

"Mr Maisky's warning", *Pathé Gazette*, 3rd April 1943, <http://www.britishpathe.com/video/mr-maiskys-warning/query/Maisky>

"Supplies for Russia." *British Pathé*, 16th October 1941, <http://www.britishpathe.com/video/supplies-in-russia-aka-supplies-for-russia>

"Lenin Memorial unveiled" *British Pathé*, 27 April 1942, <http://www.britishpathe.com/video/lenin-memorial-unveiled/query/Mrs+Maisky+Lenin>

devoted to his time as Soviet Ambassador to Britain, 1932-1943 and provides a soviet-eye view of the war-time alliance in Britain⁶.

FINANCIAL AID AND GIFTS TO THE USSR

1941: Donations arrive at the Soviet Embassy

In Britain the alliance with the USSR unleashed an outpouring of public support for the much-needed ally. The Soviet Embassy in London received hundreds of letters each day, these expressions of friendship and solidarity often included individual gifts to support the soviet people. In some but by no mean all cases, financial aid reflected support for the USSR that pre-dated the wartime alliance. For example, Maisky recorded that just a few days after the Nazi invasion of the USSR, the embassy received a £60,000-cheque from the *Miners Federation of Great Britain*, in gratitude for the £1,000,000 donated by the USSR to British strikers during the 1926 general strike⁷. The Soviet Embassy received contributions, “in a continuous and expanding stream, from trade unions, from the most varied organisations, institutions, groups and individuals. There were co-operative societies, schools, factories, small workshops, editorial office of newspapers, artists’ societies, cinema staff and officials of various Ministries”⁸. Government ministers Lord Woolton and Sir Archibald Sinclair each brought cheques for £1,500 raised by their staff to the Soviet Embassy. For the Ambassador the countless financial gifts from individuals: workmen, farmers, shop keepers, intellectuals, housewives, sailors, policemen, school-children were an expression of “their sympathy for the Soviet people”⁹. The Soviet Embassy also replied to the letters, so that the minutes of a

⁶Ivan Maisky, *Memoirs of a Soviet Ambassador. The War 1939-43*, Hutchinson: London, 1967. Trans Andrew Rothstein. Maisky had lived in exile in London 1912-17, when he met British left-wing intellectuals such as George Bernard Shaw, H. G. Wells and Beatrice Webb, who went on to be members of the *Society of Cultural Relations with the USSR*. During the war he was responsible for normalising relations between the USSR and Poland, and campaigned for Britain to open a second front in Europe. He was arrested in 1953 two weeks before Stalin’s death and sentenced to six years imprisonment for espionage, released and fully rehabilitated in 1955.

⁷Ivan Maisky, *Memoirs of a Soviet Ambassador. The War 1939-43*, Hutchinson: London, 1967. Trans Andrew Rothstein. p.317.

⁸Ivan Maisky, *Memoirs of a Soviet Ambassador. The War 1939-43*, Hutchinson: London, 1967. Trans Andrew Rothstein. p.318.

⁹Ivan Maisky, *Memoirs of a Soviet Ambassador. The War 1939-43*, Hutchinson: London, 1967. Trans Andrew Rothstein. p.318.

special meeting held by the *Stretford Trades Council* on October 2nd 1941, noted that they had received a, “Letter from Comrade I. Maisky replying to a letter of sympathy with and support of U.S.S.R.”¹⁰.

Organisations raising money for the USSR

The *National Anglo-Soviet Fund for Medical Aid* was set up on 28th July 1941 and was one of the first organisations with the stated aim of raising money for the USSR. Its chair was Dr. Hewlett Johnson (1874-1966), a Marxist, Anglican priest who since 1931 had served as the dean of Canterbury Cathedral. He was also the chair of the *Society for Cultural Relations with the USSR* (SCR) founded by British intellectuals in 1924. He had visited the USSR in 1934 and 1937 and had earned the nickname the *Red Dean* for his unwavering support of the Soviet Union. Although he never joined the *Communist Party of Great Britain* (CPGB) Johnson was an editor of its newspaper, the *Daily Worker*, which had been banned in January 1941 due to its opposition to the war. In an appeal letter sent to *The Times* newspaper on 13th October 1941, he wrote of the heroic soviet people and stressed the shared Anglo-Soviet struggle,

“At this moment in this the greatest crisis of the war, when our Soviet comrades in arms stand with their backs to the wall, fighting to the death not only for their own land and way of living but not less surely for ours may we appeal personally to our own countrymen to show by every means that sympathy and action can devise our own complete solidarity with the heroic Soviet people and army in their titanic struggle”¹¹.

In a letter to his fellow *Daily Worker* editor Professor J. B. S. Haldane on 2nd October 1941, Johnson expressed concern that while the *British Red Cross* had made £250,000 available to the USSR that there should be a separate fund for Russia. That, “one of the chief objectives of the Fund; to show that the whole moral weight of this country is behind the Soviet Union in its resistance to

¹⁰Stretford Trades Council, “Minutes of Special Meetings held on October 2nd 1941”, MCA.

¹¹Hewlett Johnson letter to The Times, 13th October 1941, in Letters from the National Anglo-Soviet Medical Aid Fund to J B S Haldane, The JBS Haldane Papers, Haldane Box 25, *UCL Archives*, <http://archives.ucl.ac.uk/Dserve/dserve.exe?dsqIni=Dserve.ini&dsqApp=Archive&dsqDb=Catalog&dsqCmd=NaviTree.tcl&dsqField=RefNo&dsqItem=HALDANE/4/4/19#HERE>.

Nazi aggression and tyranny”¹². After the war Johnson was awarded the Order of the *Red Banner of Labour* for his work as chair of the *Joint Committee for Soviet Aid*, in 1948 he became the head of the *Great Britain-USSR Friendship Organisation* and in 1951 was awarded the *Stalin International Peace Prize*.

Other fund raising organisations included the *Fund for the Relief of Women and Children in Soviet Russia* founded in October 1941 whose secretary was Mrs. Henry Martin and the *Fine Arts Fund*, founded in December 1941 by the actress, *Labour Party* supporter and SCR member Sybil Thorndyke. These organisations were competing with each other not only for funds but also to procure items for the USSR, including medical equipment and medicines that were already in short supply in the United Kingdom. In 1939, the *British Red Cross* and *St John's Ambulance* had created a *Joint War Organisation* to co-ordinate their activities. In 1942, the *Joint War Organisation* created an *Aid to Russia Fund* and worked with the *Trades Union Congress*, the *National Council of Labour* and the *Mineworkers Federation* to raise money to buy and supply warm clothing and blankets and medical supplies, including portable X-ray units, motor X-ray units, ambulances, medicines, medical equipment, and first aid kits for the USSR.

Red Cross Aid to Russia Fund, the Mrs. Churchill Fund and Madam Maisky

In 1942, Mrs. Clementine Churchill the prime minister's wife was appointed chair of *Red Cross Aid to Russia Fund*, which quickly became known as *Mrs Churchill's Fund*. The Soviet ambassador's wife Agnes A. Maiskaya, who was usually called Mme. or Mrs. Maisky in the British press, became the head of a new fund attached to the Soviet Embassy in aid of the *Red Cross of the USSR*¹³. The collection of monies from the British public was therefore headed by the prime minister's wife while information on what the USSR needed came from the *Soviet Red Cross* and the *Army Surgeon's Department* through Mme. Maisky. These women's roles and working relationship were only made possible and indeed promoted by the changed intergovernmental relationship of the wartime

¹²Hewlett Johnson letter to Haldane, 2nd October 1941, in Letters from the National Anglo-Soviet Medical Aid Fund to J B S Haldane, The JBS Haldane Papers, Haldane Box 25, *UCL Archives*, <http://archives.ucl.ac.uk/Dserve/dserve.exe?dsqIni=Dserve.ini&dsqApp=Archive&dsqDb=Catalog&dsqCmd=NaviTree.tcl&dsqField=RefNo&dsqItem=HALDANE/4/4/19#HERE>

¹³Ivan Maisky, *Memoirs of a Soviet Ambassador. The War 1939-43*, Hutchinson: London, 1967. Trans Andrew Rothstein. p.320.

alliance. Clementine Churchill gave public speeches and radio broadcasts extolling the British people to raise funds for Russia. Mme. Maisky also became a well-known public figure¹⁴ through her radio appeals, visits to factories around the country and attendance at fund raising events. Soviet Embassy staff and families administered the contributions arriving from the British public and arranged the transport of *Red Cross* cargoes onto convoys to the USSR. The wartime shortages in Britain made meeting soviet needs very challenging. For example, Moscow via Mme. Maisky requested 200 tons of glucose but the British authorities could only supply 100 tons. When Lord Woolton visited Mme. Maisky to give the £1,500-cheque from his staff, she complained about the shortfall in glucose, Woolton promised and a few days later the 100 tons arrived from the *Ministry of Food*. In his *Memoirs* Ambassador Maisky noted that this 100 tons was the last reserve of glucose in Britain and that Woolton had, “some unpleasantness to put up with” as a result of his action¹⁵. By the end of the war the *Red Cross Aid to Russia Fund* had raised around eight million pounds for Russia¹⁶. In 1945 Clementine Churchill spent six weeks touring the USSR as a guest of the *Soviet Red Cross*, visiting places that had benefited from the medical equipment and supplies funded by the British people. In recognition of her work Mrs Churchill was awarded the *Order of the Red Banner of Labour*. On her return Clementine Churchill wrote a 60-page account of journey called *My Visit to Russia*¹⁷, which was sold in 1945 for one shilling to raise more money for the *Red Cross Aid to Russia Fund*.

BRITISH-SOVIET UNITY COMMITTEES – THE CIVIC LEVEL OF THE ALLIANCE

British-Soviet Unity committees

The *Movement for British-Soviet Unity* rapidly developed with *British-Soviet Unity* committees or *Anglo-Soviet Unity* or *Anglo-Soviet Friendship* committees being set up across the country. These committees typically enjoyed civic patronage, in cities they were chaired by lord mayors or in Scotland by

¹⁴News Briefs. *British Pathé*, 27 April 1942, <http://www.britishpathe.com/video/news-briefs-6/query/Madam+Maisky>

¹⁵Ivan Maisky, *Memoirs of a Soviet Ambassador. The War 1939-43*, Hutchinson: London, 1967. Trans Andrew Rothstein. p.232.

¹⁶“Aid to Russia Fund”, The British Red Cross, Caring on the Home Front website, <http://www.caringonthehomefront.org.uk/search-the-library/aid-to-russia-fund/>

¹⁷Clementine Churchill, *My Visit to Russia*, Hutchinson & Co. Ltd. of London, 1945. Published in the USSR, Moia poezdka v SSSR.

provosts. Committee members came from across the political spectrum and included religious leaders, business people, trade unionists, ex-service men, and representatives of co-operatives and educational bodies. A *National Council for British-Soviet Unity* was set up by local committees at a national conference in London in February 1942¹⁸. The Bishop of Chelmsford was the head of the *National Council for British-Soviet Unity* and at the beginning of 1942 he wrote in the communist party journal *Labour Monthly*, that, “God has thrown Russia and Britain into one another’s arms” and that, “We are suffering and bleeding together, aiding one another in every possible way, in a great common cause. Apart from our united contribution to world settlement, we have much to give one another and much to learn from one another”¹⁹. According to the *National Council*, “. . .if British-Soviet Unity is to be enduring and fully effective close friendship must be established between the people of our country and the Soviet people. It is the great purpose of the Movement to promote such friendship – friendship based on knowledge, mutual aid, and complete understanding”²⁰. The committees raised funds for medical aid for the USSR and engaged in activities designed to promote British-Soviet friendship and understanding. These included, “colourful demonstrations and processions, conferences and meetings, pageants and concerts; film shows for both adults and children, talks to army units and war workers; photographic exhibitions, the sale of books and pamphlets; lectures and discussion classes and *Aid to Russia Weeks*”²¹.

Manchester’s Anglo-Soviet Friendship Committee: Knowledge and fundraising

Manchester was one of the first British towns to set up a *British-Soviet Unity committee* known as the *Manchester Anglo-Russian Friendship Committee*, headed by the Lord Mayor. The Manchester committee co-ordinated the activities of 18 committees organised in different areas of the city. The committee in the Withington area of Manchester for example was chaired by a Conservative Mrs Gladys Lord a former school teacher who was also a *Ministry*

¹⁸National Council for British-Soviet Unity. “The work of the movement for British-Soviet Unity”, leaflet, London (undated) WCML.

¹⁹Bishop of Chelmsford, “Anglo-Russian Unity”, *Labour Monthly* vol. 24 no. 1 1942, pp.11-12

²⁰National Council for British-Soviet Unity. “The work of the movement for British-Soviet Unity”, leaflet, London (undated) WCML.

²¹National Council for British-Soviet Unity. “The work of the movement for British-Soviet Unity”, leaflet, London (undated) WCML.

of Information speaker²². The first major initiative of the *Manchester Anglo-Russian Friendship Committee* was an *Anglo-Russian Friendship Week* during the first week in November 1941, the first such week outside of London. The week was designed, “to explain our gallant Allies to the public and stimulate support for the *Russian Red Cross Society*”²³. The week’s organisers believed that collections for the *Russian Red Cross Society* were the best way of helping with Russia’s urgent need for surgical instruments and medicines. Mrs Frank Moxon of London but a native of Moscow, attended the week’s closing ceremony; she was a representative of the *Mrs. Churchill Russian Aid Fund*, which received the money collected during the week. The money raised included £500 from an anonymous industrialist; half the proceeds from the first performance of the Russian Ballet *Sorotchintsi Fair* at the *Palace Theatre* plus a collection in the theatre raised £139. The *Wythenshawe* committee of Manchester’s *Anglo-Soviet Unity Committee* raised £15; there were collecting boxes in cinemas, shops and money could be sent to the Lord Mayor’s *Anglo-Russian Friendship Fund* at the Town Hall²⁴. In November 1941 *Metrovicks’* management gave £1,000 to the *Mrs. Churchill Fund* and its *Works Committee* agreed that the *Penny-a-week Fund*, a voluntary charitable deduction from wages should be allocated to the Fund²⁵. During the first three months of 1942 the *Metrovicks Penny-a-week Fund* raised £521 for the *Mrs. Churchill Fund*²⁶. In total, by the end of April 1942 Manchester’s total contribution to the *Mrs. Churchill fund* stood at £36,000²⁷.

Other engagements prevented Ambassador Maisky from opening the week, but together with Sir Bernard Pares, religious and trade union leaders he contributed a message for a souvenir booklet that was on sale throughout the week. An essay competition on the subject of *Our Russian Allies* was organised

²²“Withington’s aid-to-Russia effort”, *The Manchester Guardian* 23rd January 1942, p. 3 and “New Woman Councillor”, *The Manchester Guardian* 5th February 1942, p. 3.

²³“MANCHESTER’S ANGLO-RUSSIAAN FRIENDSHIP WEEK”, *The Manchester Guardian*, 31st October 1941, p.6.

²⁴“MANCHESTER ANGLO RUSSIAN WEEK To-day and Sunday”, *The Manchester Guardian* 8th November 1941, p.8.

²⁵*Metro-Vickers Works Committee Minutes*, 390. Aid to Russia, 24th November 1941, *Metro-Vickers Box 16 AF Archives Works Committee, Sub Committee 1929-1955. WCML*.

²⁶*Metro-Vickers Works Committee Minutes*, 159. Red Cross Penny-a-week Fund, 20th April 1942 Penny-a-week Fund, 24th November 1941, *Metro-Vickers Box 16 AF Archives Works Committee, Sub Committee 1929-1955. WCML*.

²⁷“Aid to Russia Fund”, *The Manchester Guardian*, 4th April 1942, p.7.

in Manchester schools. Manchester buses and trams were decorated with *Friendship Week* streamers, churches were asked to hold services of intercession and university students held a fund-raising dance²⁸. There was an exhibition at the *Manchester City Art Gallery* about life in Russia and the achievements of the Russian people since the last war; films about various aspects of Russian life were shown at the *Art Gallery* and also in Lewis's and Henry's stores and in church halls in different parts of the city; the University held lectures, special talks were given to factory workers; and the Manchester Police Band played Russian music in Piccadilly Gardens in the city centre. The week closed on Sunday 9th November with a parade of representatives of all political parties, members of *Manchester City Council*, of the city's defence organisations, the University, refugees, trade unions, co-operative societies and a detachment of the Royal Air Force, from Saint Ann's Square in the heart of Manchester to Ardwick Green. At Ardwick Green Councillor W. Johnson, deputy chair of the *Manchester Emergency Committee* took the salute accompanied by women representatives of Russia, munitions and transport workers. Then a mass meeting at the Manchester Hippodrome was addressed by Sir Miles Mitchell (Liberal party), Mr. E. A. Radford (Conservative party), Mr. John Jagger (Labour party) and Mr. R. P. Dutt (Communist party)²⁹. The parade and meeting were a demonstration of cross-party unity within Britain and also of Britain with the USSR. Some of the week's activities such as the factory talks proved so popular, that they were carried on into a second week to meet demand. The *Newton Heath Committee* organised a *Russia week* at the beginning of December 1941, which continued the fund raising with public meetings, dances, and a flag day³⁰. The Manchester committee also received enquiries from other towns and cities including Blackburn, Stoke-on-Trent, Ipswich, Torquay and Hoddesdon who were interested in organising their own Russia weeks³¹.

Manchester's Women's Anglo-Soviet Unity Committee: Greetings to women of the USSR

²⁸“MANCHESTER'S RUSSIAN FRIENDSHIP WEEK”, *The Manchester Guardian*, 25th October 1941, p. 4.

²⁹“MANCHESTER'S RUSSIAN FRIENDSHIP WEEK”, *The Manchester Guardian*, 25th October 1941, p. 4.

³⁰“AID-FOR-RUSSIA Efforts”, *The Manchester Guardian*, 13 December 1941, p. 5.

³¹“MANCHESTER ANGLO RUSSIAN WEEK To-day and Sunday”, *The Manchester Guardian* 8th November 1941, p. 8.

Women's *Anglo-Soviet Unity Committees* were established throughout the United Kingdom to mobilise women to support the alliance. *The Manchester Guardian* announced on 9th September 1941 that, "With the object of establishing the closest possible bonds of solidarity between themselves and women of the Soviet Union in the struggle against Nazism women in Manchester and surrounding districts have formed a women's *Anglo-Soviet Unity Committee*"³². Appeals for support had already been sent to women's organisations in the area and factory managers were asked to co-operate by allowing speakers to address women workers during their lunch hours. The committee collected signatures for a book of greetings to Soviet women³³ and a deputation travelled to London to present it to Mme. Maisky. Mrs Clara Bamber the committee chair received a letter from Mme. Maisky, expressing pleasure at meeting the delegation and thanking them for the parcel of comforts for the Red Army, a cheque for £75 for medical supplies, and a sum of over £11 that they had collected on the journey down to London³⁴.

On 26th January 1943 Mme. Maisky presented an Album to the Manchester Lord Mayor from the women of Moscow expressing sympathy with for the women of Manchester. The Album had been put together by women from the *Trekhgorka Textile Mill* in Moscow. It included photographs of the women at work and at their Moscow meeting that organised the Album. It also included pages of signatures on thin wooden sheets backed by fabric. The presentation ceremony at the Manchester Opera House was designed to express patriotism, the shared struggle and the important role of women in the war effort. In addition to Mme. Maisky the dignitaries included the Lord and Lady Mayoress, the deputy Town Clerk, the chief constable and Mr. George Mould the regional officer of the *Ministry of Information*. The event was attended by hundreds of women and selected members of the women's services were invited to the microphone to speak. Uniformed girls from the Manchester high schools' unit of the Air Training corps stood at the back of the stage, holding high the flags of the *United Nations*. The flags were dipped at the beginning of the event when the orchestra played the *Internationale* and at the end when it played the *National Anthem*.

³²"Women's Anglo Soviet Committee", *The Manchester Guardian*, 9th September 1941, p. 6.

³³"Women's Anglo Soviet Committee", *The Manchester Guardian*, 9th September 1941, p. 6.

³⁴"MME. MAISKY'S THANKS TO MANCHESTER WOMEN", *The Manchester Guardian*, 20th November 1941, p. 6.

Mme. Maisky gave a rousing speech declaring that, “Moscow’s defence shook Hitler’s army. It showed to the world the invincibility of the great war machine Hitler had massed against us could be broken”³⁵. And that,

“throughout the battle women of the Trekhgorka Mill upheld the fine tradition of soviet womanhood they remained at their job . . . they kept their factory going day and night. They trained as fighters. They dug trenches. They studied first aid; enrolled as blood donors. Everything they could give for the defence of Moscow they gave they knew that in defending their own city they were also defending the liberties of all freedom loving peoples”³⁶.

Mme Maisky ended with, “Long live the friendship and militant union of the great Russian and English people!”

The forging of civic links

The first moves towards post war town twinning were made by the war time *British-Soviet Unity committees* and by trade unions. A *National Council for British-Soviet Unity* pamphlet in 1943 noted that,

“Forty-one towns in Britain are striving to build fraternal connections with parallel towns in the Soviet Union. November 7 provides a good opportunity for developing this work of forging human bonds. Many of the fraternal towns have suffered from Nazi occupation; some have only recently been liberated by the Red Army”³⁷.

The pamphlet gave the example of the London borough of Acton, which had decided to make fraternal contact with Voronezh. The Mayor of Acton sent a cable to Voronezh and received a reply. Acton published a booklet about Voronezh’s role in the war, fund raised to buy comforts for Voronezh, organised letters from school children and correspondence between organisations and factories as well as a poster competition in the schools. Formal city partnerships were however slow to develop. Coventry and Stalingrad formed the first

³⁵“FROM MOSCOW TO MANCHESTER”, *The Manchester Guardian*, 27 Jan 1943, p. 6.

³⁶“FROM MOSCOW TO MANCHESTER”, *The Manchester Guardian*, 27 Jan 1943, p. 6.

³⁷National Council for British Soviet Unity pamphlet, 25th September 1943, MCA.

between a British and a Soviet city in 1944 and Manchester and Leningrad the second such agreement in 1962.

Coventry and Stalingrad: the Anglo-Soviet first twin cities

The industrial city of *Coventry* had been devastated by bombing during the blitz of November 1940³⁸. Following the Nazi invasion of the USSR, Coventry quickly established an *Anglo-Soviet Unity Committee*, which set about raising medical aid for the Red Army. The committee decided to focus its activities on Stalingrad, as it was an industrial city of a similar size to Coventry, the *Battle of Stalingrad* had not yet started. The *British-Soviet Unity Committee* organised a petition to be sent to Stalingrad. One thousand sheets of paper headed with the greeting, "From this city, scarred and ravaged by the arch enemy of civilisation, our hearts go out to you, who now face slaughter and suffering even more fearful"³⁹ were distributed to factories, shops and women's organisations in Coventry. Six thousand signatures were collected and the sheets were bound into an album decorated with Coventry's coat of arms. A message of greeting was cabled to *Stalingrad* from the women of Coventry. It said that the, "Nazis wage their war against the civilian population of both our countries", spoke of the destruction of, "the most priceless and lovely architectural and cultural treasures of Coventry" and "our common struggle"; and finally committed the women of Coventry to, "remove all hindrances to maximum production" so there would be enough arms for "this titanic struggle"⁴⁰. In May 1942 this message was discussed by women in Stalingrad, they sent their warmest greetings to women of Coventry, who they described as "valiant British patriots" . . ."we, Soviet women, appreciate the feelings of friendship which you, our comrades in the struggle, have expressed"⁴¹. Signatures were collected and bound into an Album but the *Battle of Stalingrad* (August 1942-February 1943) delayed the delivery of the Album to Coventry until 20 January 1943, when Mme. Maisky presented it to the Mayor Emily Smith. The ties between the two cities grew deeper with the creation of a *Coventry-Stalingrad Bond of Friendship* in 1943 and fund raising for Stalingrad continued in Coventry. In 1943, Emily Smith and 830 Coventry women and a few men, paid sixpence each to sign a tablecloth,

³⁸BBC, "1940: Germans bomb Coventry to destruction", 15 November 1940, *BBC website*, http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/november/15/newsid_3522000/3522785.stm

³⁹Volgograd-Stalingrad-Coventry, [http://www.lyceum8.ru/stalingrad/V-S-K\(En\)2.htm](http://www.lyceum8.ru/stalingrad/V-S-K(En)2.htm).

⁴⁰Message from Coventry, 1941, Volgograd-Stalingrad-Coventry, [http://www.lyceum8.ru/stalingrad/V-S-K\(En\)2.htm](http://www.lyceum8.ru/stalingrad/V-S-K(En)2.htm).

⁴¹Volgograd-Stalingrad-Coventry, [http://www.lyceum8.ru/stalingrad/V-S-K\(En\)2.htm](http://www.lyceum8.ru/stalingrad/V-S-K(En)2.htm).

the money raised went towards medical aid for Stalingrad. Over the next two years the signatures were embroidered and the tablecloth was presented to Mr I. F. Zimenkov, the chair of the Stalingrad Soviet on 31st March 1947 at a formal dinner in *Coventry*. A photograph of the tablecloth and the books of signatures are in the *Coventry City Archives*. In 1944 Coventry and Stalingrad become the first Anglo-Soviet twin cities⁴².

The Leningrad and Scottish Albums

As news of the blockade of city of Leningrad (8th September 1941 to 27th January 1944) reached Britain, people were moved by the unimaginable horrors endured by Leningraders. In the steel making towns of Airdrie and Coatbridge in Scotland, the war had brought jobs, especially for women after the unemployment and poverty of the 1930s. The pro-CPGB *Russia Today Society* (successor to the *Friends of the Soviet Union*) was active in this area and wanted to express its admiration and sympathy for the people of *Leningrad*. They collected over 600 signatures and messages of solidarity, but these were not just from communists. The women's section of the *Anglo-Soviet Aid Committee*, collected 500 signatures and pasted them in a tartan-bound album, together with drawings and expressions of goodwill. The list of signatures was headed by the wives of the provosts of Airdrie and Coatbridge, there were also messages of support from women's organisations, youth groups, churches of all denominations as well as CPGB members. More than 500 women from the SMT aircraft factory signed, many describing themselves as "industrial war worker"⁴³. The *Scottish Album* was taken to London by women from the *Anglo-Soviet Aid Committee* and presented to Mme. Maisky to be forwarded to Leningrad. Quite how the *Scottish Album* reached Leningrad is unclear but in June 1942 Agnes Maxwell of the *Russia Today Society Anglo-Soviet Aid Committee* received a telegram from the Leningrad branch of the *Anti-Fascist Committee of Soviet Women* saying that the *Scottish Album* had been received. It was not until February 1943 that Mme. Maisky, was able to present the *Leningrad Album* to the Provost of Glasgow

⁴²"Town twinning" Coventry City Council website, http://www.coventry.gov.uk/info/662/town_twinning.

See also "Salute to Stalingrad", *British Pathé*, 1950, <http://www.britishpathe.com/video/salute-to-stalingrad-version-2/query/Mrs+Maisky>

⁴³"The Leningrad Album, a Token of Scottish-Russian Friendship in War", Scotiana website, <http://www.scotiana.com/the-leningrad-album-a-token-of-scottish-russian-friendship-in-war/> pp. 6 & 7. See also Margaret Henderson, *Dear Allies: A Story of Women in Monklands and Besieged Leningrad*, Monklands District Libraries, 1988.

J. M. Biggar. The *Ministry of information* in London seemingly thought the *Scottish Album* had been sent from *Glasgow* not *Airdrie* and *Coatbridge*. The *Leningrad Album* produced in the besieged city, has a linen cover with fine Russian embroidery, it contains letters, watercolours, prints, lithographs and photographs and today is held by the *Mitchell Library* in *Glasgow, Scotland*.

The handing over of the *Leningrad Album* provided an opportunity to affirm Soviet-Scottish solidarity, rally workers to raise production and also to promote the soviet campaign for a second front in Europe. The *Glasgow Provost* announced that the football used in the *New Year's Day* match between *Celtic* and *Rangers* would be auctioned in aid of the *Stalingrad Fund*. *Mme. Maisky* also visited the *Clyde shipyard*⁴⁴. Thousands of people filed past the *Leningrad Album* when it was displayed in *Aidrie Town Hall* during *Russia Week*, the last week in *February 1943*. *Harry Walker*, a member of the *Russia Today Society committee*, recorded that, "Sadness and tears mingled with joy and happiness as the pages of the Album were turned, as its beauty was revealed and the feelings of friendship and solidarity it represented were transferred to all who passed by. Many were visibly affected as they examined this unique gift to the people of *Airdrie* and *Coatbridge*. Many were heard to remark on the need to speed up the opening of a *Second Front* to hasten the final defeat of the *German Army*"⁴⁵.

THE PRODUCTION FRONT: THE ALLIANCE IN THE FACTORIES

Manchester Trade Unions and the USSR during the war

The *Manchester and Salford Trades Council* (MSTC) was heavily influenced by the CPGB and had a succession of CPGB leaders. It is not surprising then that in *September 1941* the MSTC adopted a resolution welcoming the alliance between the *USSR* and the *British government* and pledged its support for the national *TUC's* declaration of solidarity between the *Soviet* and *British peoples*⁴⁶. The MSTC promised full support to the *Manchester British-Soviet Friendship Committee*, and the MSTC secretary *Jack Munro* struck a note of urgency, "Russia needs our aid NOW. One tank, one gun, one aeroplane NOW

⁴⁴"Madame Maisky in Glasgow", *Glasgow Herald*, 6 February 1943,

⁴⁵"The Leningrad Album, a Token of Scottish-Russian Friendship in War", *Scotiana* website, <http://www.scotiana.com/the-leningrad-album-a-token-of-scottish-russian-friendship-in-war/> p. 9.

⁴⁶Edmund and Ruth Frow, *To Make the Future Now!* Didsbury Manchester: E. J. Morten, 1976, p. 163.

is worth three or four in 1942”⁴⁷. In the same vein a MSTC leaflet signed by Jack Munro and announcing a *Special Production Conference* to be held 25th October 1941 at the Caxton Hall in Salford reads,

“As Trade Unionists we appeal to you; if you are really sincere in your desire to aid our Russian Comrades in their historic resistance to Hitler and his Hordes, you will agree that the supply of more Tanks, Guns, Aeroplanes, etc; will be a more practical method of expressing our solidarity, and will be better appreciated by the U.S.S.R. than all our expressions of good will and fraternal greetings”⁴⁸.

During the war people shared platforms and called for common aims who never would have done so in other circumstances. The *Metrovicks Works Committee* for example received a circular from the *Lancashire, Cheshire, North Wales Federation of Trades Councils* calling attention to a special conference to be held in the *Albert Hall, Manchester*, on Saturday, 8th November 1941. The meeting was addressed by Minister of Supply Lord Beaverbrook and chaired by Labour M.P. Mr. Ellis Smith⁴⁹. Then on 11th November 1941, Lord Beaverbrook addressed a thousand delegates at a conference called by the *Lancashire Federation of Trade Unions*. Following a conference of *Manchester and District Works Committees* representing 80,000 engineering workers on 7th December 1941, its secretary wrote to Lord Beaverbrook calling for more women to enter the labour force and to Winston Churchill calling upon, “all workers, managements, and Governmental departments to set up a system of complete collaboration so that trivialities and vexatious distrust shall not endanger the flow of necessary war materials to our splendid and courageous ally.” (see Appendix Three). It also welcomed the Libyan offensive as a necessary prelude to the opening of a second front in Europe.

Metrovicks production for the USSR – “Now is the time to act”.

Under its earlier name of *British Westinghouse*, *Metrovicks* had had branch offices in Moscow and St. Petersburg before WWI and was one of the first British companies to start trading with the Soviet Union in the 1920s. *Metrovicks*

⁴⁷Souvenir Programme of the Anglo-Russian Friendship Week, Manchester, November 2-9, 1941. WCML.

⁴⁸“WAR PRODUCTION”; Manchester and Salford Trades Council leaflet 16th October 1941, signed by W. J. Munro. WCML.

⁴⁹*Metrovicks Works Committee Minutes*, 27th October 1941, ITEM 356. Special Conference, Metro-Vickers Box 3 AF Archives Works Committee 1940-1945, WCML.

trained soviet engineers and despite the arrest in 1933 in Moscow of six of its British engineers on charges of espionage and wrecking, trade was resumed when they were released. Before the war *Metrovicks* supplied large numbers of small turbo generators which were used in large soviet destroyers⁵⁰. *Metrovicks* staff had long experience of working with the USSR and the company developed and manufactured innovative technology, including radar. *Metrovicks* was a target for enemy action. During one night of the Manchester Blitz in December 1940, "All the Manchester district seemed ablaze, and well it might, for on the *Metrovick* works alone there fell more than a thousand incendiary bombs and by midnight there were more than twenty dangerous fires in the factory, not counting, "little ones"⁵¹.

In April 1942 the *Metrovicks*' management passed on a copy of the paper *Soviet War News* to the *Works Committee* for discussion. It carried an article entitled, "Now is the Time to Act" and the Committee agreed to record the following extract from the article in the minutes of their meeting, "The decisive period of the war will in all probability be this spring. The Allies must be prepared accordingly, prepared both morally and materially, prepared to throw all their weight into the scales. They must act now for this and this alone can determine the future"⁵². The message "Now is the time to act" was relayed to the workforce.

A story which illustrates *Metrovicks* contribution to the Anglo-Soviet war effort appears in Frank Rowlinson's company history of *Metrovicks*' contribution to the war effort. He recorded that,

"One day in 1942 a group of men sat in the Works Manager's office about to ventilate a grievance in one of the rare disputes that arose. A note was handed to the Manager. "You'd better read that before we start talking", he told the men's representative. The note

⁵⁰Frank Rowlinson, *Contribution to Victory*. An account of some of the special work of the Metropolitan -Vickers Electrical Company Limited in the Second World War. Metropolitan-Vickers Electrical Company, Manchester, 1947, p. 120.

⁵¹Frank Rowlinson, *Contribution to Victory*. An account of some of the special work of the Metropolitan -Vickers Electrical Company Limited in the Second World War. Metropolitan-Vickers Electrical Company, Manchester, 1947, p. 174

⁵²*Metrovicks Works Committee Minutes*, 20th April 1942, ITEM 158. *Soviet War News*. "Now is the Time to Act." Metro-Vickers Box 3 AF Archives Works Committee 1940-1945, WCML.

stated clinically that 37 German planes had been shot down during an attack on a convoy to Russia and that the radar equipment which these men were making contributed largely to the defence of the convoy which had got through.

The men read the note; then their leader said, "Come on boys, let's get back to work – the dispute's off!" These men, like all the workers engaged on radar from executives downwards, were putting in up to 100 hours of work per week⁵³.

Metrovicks also had expertise in the development and productions of mobile and transportable power stations. It was the main contractor for seventeen land power stations to the USSR during the war and from the end of 1943 *Metrovicks* constructed thirty-five mobile power stations which were shipped to the USSR by the *British Ministry of Supply* as well as ten Transportable Power Units⁵⁴.

CONCLUSION

The British-Soviet alliance amongst the ordinary people of Britain is at one and the same time spontaneous and organised. There is no doubt that the alliance brought a welcome sense of relief that Britain was no longer fighting in its own and took some of the pressure off Britain, which had itself been facing invasion. It would however be inaccurate to say that only self-interest was involved. Support for the soviet system was strongest on the left of the political spectrum, but admiration for the achievements of the soviet people was much more widespread. The tone of the speeches, the genuine concern expressed for the suffering of the Soviet people and the humanitarian impulses are evident. The CPGB was as ever, an active cheer leader for the USSR, but politicians from the Labour, Liberal and Conservative parties also promoted the cause of the alliance. The outpouring of good will was channelled through organisations such as the *Mrs Churchill Fund for Russia*, which worked very closely with the *Soviet Red Cross* and the Soviet Embassy in London. The alliance therefore operated at the level of government, civic bodies, political parties, trade unions, social organisations and individual people who attended events,

⁵³Frank Rowlinson Contribution to Victory. An account of some of the special work of Metropolitan—Vickers Electrical Company Limited in the Second World War, Metropolitan-Vickers Electrical Company, Manchester, 1947 p. 41.

⁵⁴John Dummelow, 1899-1949 Manchester Metropolitan-Vickers Electrical Company Limited, 1949, p. 175 and Frank Rowlinson, Contribution to Victory. An account of some of the special work of the Metropolitan—Vickers Electrical Company Limited in the Second World War. Metropolitan-Vickers Electrical Company, Manchester 1947, p. 18.

Mrs Churchill Fund for Russia, which worked very closely with the *Soviet Red Cross* and the Soviet Embassy in London. The alliance therefore operated at the level of government, civic bodies, political parties, trade unions, social organisations and individual people who attended events, films, talks, exhibitions; entered essay and poster competitions, donated money and sent greetings.

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