

## ANTHROPOLOGY

# Clue to USSR Character

Swaddling of Russian babies is believed partly responsible for the adamant Russian spirit. For them truth is an absolute, and compromise is inadmissible except as a tactic.

► BECAUSE Russian babies are bound with swaddling cloths into a rigid, immobile bundle, the world must contend with a stubborn people whose characters are distorted by these bonds.

That the custom of swaddling infants is one factor determining Russian adult character is the conclusion of the anthropologist Geoffrey Gorer whose analysis of the Russian character is published in a new book, *THE PEOPLE OF GREAT RUSSIA*, by Geoffrey Gorer and Dr. John Rickman (*Chanticleer Press*).

You were not swaddled. The American baby passes his infancy clothed in loose, light clothing. He can reach out to touch or grasp whatever attracts his attention. He can kick at will. If he is angered at anything, he can flail the air with both arms and legs, can arch his back, can express his emotion with his whole body.

The Russian infant from the moment of birth is tightly swaddled in long strips of material that hold his legs straight and rigid and bind his arms tightly down at his sides.

Although this restriction of movement is enraging to an infant, all the Russian baby can do is to scream and that is soon stoppered by a comforter. After that he can give expression to his bottled up rage only with his eyes—no other part of him is capable of movement.

All non-Russians tend to notice the great expressiveness of Russian eyes, and most Americans know Russians mainly through the song, "Dark Eyes."

At intervals—whenever he is hungry—the baby is taken to his mother, his swaddling taken off and he is caressed and put to the bountiful breast. Thus he goes from one extreme of complete restraint to the other of complete freedom and satisfaction.

In this alternation of treatment, Dr. Gorer sees one of the explanations for those abrupt about-faces for which the Russians are famous in international gatherings where they may change suddenly from a rigid negative attitude to one of smiling assent.

Russian soldiers are also known to switch abruptly from brutality to gentleness. Those who have visited in Russia have been struck by the Russians' endurance of privation alternated with bouts of heavy drinking and extravagant eating.

Teething normally starts while the infant is still swaddled, and this may explain why the Russian's rage is associated with the teeth and with biting off or gobbling

up. Russian folklore has a character of a witch baby with iron teeth who devours her parents. Russian propaganda frequently describes their enemies as cannibalistic. They live in the constant fear that their enemies will devour them. It is interesting that Soviet dental service provides false teeth made of stainless steel.

"For several months, at least," writes Dr. Gorer, "the Russian infant experiences intense but relatively undirected rage and fears deriving from his projection of this rage on to the external world; as a result of this he develops a feeling of pervasive though unfocused guilt."

Dr. Gorer sees an explanation for the "confession complex" in the early religious training of the Russian child. From about the age of five, the Russian child goes to confession. He kneels at the feet of the priest, but instead of giving a free account of his wrong-doings, he is instructed to answer "I am guilty, father" to questions put by the priest accusing him of some sin or other. It is not considered a lie to confess to sins one is not conscious of having committed, but it is considered sinful pride to deny sins of which the confessor accuses one.

The Russian, by tradition, does not understand rule by majority vote, Dr. Gorer points out. To the Russian there is but one truth or right decision on any question and all must comply to it. In the Russian version of the town meeting, the "mir," a member who is in disagreement with the general consent has only one outlet—to separate himself from the meeting. Is this why the Russian delegates are forever walking out of meetings where they find themselves in a hopeless minority?

To a Russian, the leader, whether he is a Czar, Lenin or Stalin, has always been completely idealized by the mass of the population which loyally adheres to the regime. "He is," says Dr. Gorer, "in the most literal sense of the word, superhumanly perfect in knowledge, truth, and foresight."

"He is so idealized that the ordinary person cannot imagine himself thinking or feeling as the leader would do."

It is for this reason that the Soviet representative must always consult with Moscow before making any decision or announcing any course of action.

To the Russian, says Dr. Gorer, compromise is inadmissible except perhaps as a tactic, and there is no possibility of a "loyal opposition." All men of good will must recognize the truth when it is pointed

out to them; if they refuse to recognize it, this shows their wicked characters and evil intentions. To accept the decision of the majority, without the appropriate internal convictions, is for Great Russians the abandonment of all honor and self-respect.

The Russian has no concept of relative truths or aspects or versions of the truth. The truth for him is one and absolute. It is a system of interconnected items, arranged in a hierarchy but in such a way that the destruction of one item jeopardizes the whole system.

Science News Letter, September 2, 1950

## GENERAL SCIENCE

## U. S. Can Live in Peace With USSR by Firm Policy

► IT IS perfectly possible to work out a way of living with Russia indefinitely without war but only through a policy of permanent strength, firmness and consistency.

This is the conclusion of anthropologist, Geoffrey Gorer, on the basis of an analysis of the Russian character made in collaboration with a psychoanalyst, Dr. John Rickman. The analysis together with recommendations for dealing with the Russians is published in a new book, *THE PEOPLE OF GREAT RUSSIA*, (*Chanticleer Press*).

Dr. Gorer's conclusions are:

"It is useless to try to make friends with, or win the sympathy of, the mass of the Great Russian people, in the hopes of producing transformations of policy. The mass of the people never have had, and (in any foreseeable future) are not likely to have



**INSIDE VIEW**—The color pattern "frozen" into this plastic model of a human leg bone reveals to Milton M. Leven where fracture might occur if bone were subjected to jarring impact, as in jumping from a height. Concentration of stress lines in socket where bone joins hip shows this to be the danger zone.

any appreciable influence on the policies their leaders adopt. . . .

"No techniques are yet available for eradicating the all-pervasive suspicion which Great Russians, leaders and led alike, feel towards the rest of the world. This suspicion springs from unconscious and therefore irrational sources and will not be calmed, more than momentarily, by rational actions. . . .

"In negotiations with the Great Russians, a successful outcome is most likely if negotiations are phrased in the terms of the most concrete and symmetrical equality: man for man, ton for ton, acre for acre, town for town and so on. In the view of Great Russians, the only alternative to the most rigorous equality is for one of the parties to be completely subordinate, and they always have the fear that they may be forced into the position of absolute weakness.

"Ideological arguments, notes of admonition and disapproval, and the like, are a complete waste of time and energy, as far as the Great Russians are concerned. With the Great Russian concept of truth, *pravda*, it is impossible for them to admit error in any one instance, for that would destroy their whole system of Truth and their self-esteem. . . .

"There is no likelihood of Great Russians voluntarily engaging their country in any form of international organization which might conceivably give to other countries the possibility of constraining them. Consequently, it is a waste of time to discuss, for example, the abolition of the veto in the Security Council of the United Nations. . . .

"Although the Russians will resist every encroachment, while themselves encroaching to the greatest possible degree, there would seem to be no necessity for war between the Western Powers and the U.S.S.R. The one situation which might evoke war (apart from the Western Powers 'compressing' Russia) would be if the

Western Powers manifested such weakness, or such alternations between strength and weakness, that the Russians would feel compelled to advance to such a degree that the Western Powers would feel that the menace was intolerable."

Science News Letter, September 2, 1950

#### ENGINEERING

### Photo-Plastic Puts "X" On Strains in Machines

➤ MACHINE parts made of transparent plastic, instead of metal, are coming into wide use by technicians to let them see with their eyes the results of operation actions.

This so-called photo-plastic, first announced a year ago, is now being employed in gun factories, naval laboratories, airplane plants, arsenals and universities in the design of stronger machinery and equipment. The three-dimensional models cut from the plastic enable scientists to get a "portrait in color" of the strains encountered in tools, machine parts and other objects.

The plastic used is a modified form of Fosterite, a tough, waterproof material developed by Westinghouse scientists during World War II to seal radio and radar parts against moisture damage. The new material was developed by Milton M. Leven and Herbert F. Minter, both of the Westinghouse Research Laboratories. It can be cast in chunks from ten to 20 times larger than any other resin formerly available for strength studies, it is claimed.

One of the major uses of this plastic is in the design of breech blocks for big guns. To understand the terrific stresses these parts undergo during firing of the gun, an exact three-dimensional model of the block has been built and "loaded" to simulate the stress.

When frozen into the material and then viewed through special polarized light, the stress pattern appears as a series of vari-colored lines. These tell the scientist where the major stresses are located, in which direction they are acting and just how great they are.

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Both New York and Pennsylvania have more acres of land in crops than all the New England states combined.

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What cereal cleans carbon from car engines? p. 158.

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