

Groups of young girls, in their spare time, visit the military hospitals to help cheer the convalescents. They keep the men supplied with books and magazines and read aloud to those whose wounds prevent their reading for themselves.

Women were amongst those honoured by the Government for courage and valour displayed in fire-fighting during the raids on Moscow.

To Work, Everyone!

Recently, it was reported that a team of women railway-workers—drivers, firewomen, guards and repairers—successfully brought a heavy goods train some 1800 miles with gifts and materials for the Front.

A correspondent to the "Argus" writes, "The first person to speak to me on Russian soil was a woman sentry at the foot of the ship's gangway. With a soft voice, but a purposeful manner, she asked for my passport. It is from the women of Russia that one obtains the deepest impression of how grimly and thoroughly the Russian people have entered the fight against fascism. At the wharfside there were women crane-drivers, winch-hands, railway workers and shunters. They worked side by side with the men. Despite the equality of work, I did not notice that this detracted in any way from the essential femininity of the Soviet women nor did I see anything to support the idea abroad that Russian women are Amazons."

Mrs. Haldane, an English war correspondent, wrote, last year, from the U.S.S.R., "The Russian people are fervent patriots who know what they are fighting for and are ready to give their lives for the independence and freedom of their country. They are determined not to surrender their liberty and their happiness. Their hearts are filled with a sense of profound duty to their country and with a feeling of sacred hatred for the accursed enemy."

Conclusions

What can we conclude from the experiences of the women in China, in Britain, and in the Soviet Union—our sisters in this grim fight against the Axis powers?

First, that this is a Women's war as well as a Men's. Bombs, food rationing, brutalities, the scorched earth that frustrates the invader: these affect women as much as men. And women must realize that. If they refuse to do so, they ignore the very nature of fascist war; and they limit the strength of their country.

Second, in each country we have considered, when women have been called to difficult or tiring jobs which they feel "they ought to do," they have seldom failed. Their sense of responsibility is strong, their endurance often astonishing. Women who had probably never done anything unusual in their whole lives have performed most unpleasant tasks calmly and efficiently.

Third, women organised, working together for the common good, either leading or being led, can overcome difficulties, cut red tape, and show great initiative and resource. (e.g., The W.V.S. in England, the workers in Indusco in China.) But they must feel that their service is not being exploited or wasted.

Fourth, there is an ever larger number of jobs that women can do! They must see to it that the Government uses their latent skill as widely and as well as possible. The Chinese peasant women who have become leaders in Indusco, nurses, teachers; the British women who man balloon barrages, ferry aeroplanes, work in more and more branches of war production; the Soviet women who have stepped into the places of their husbands and sons in factories and countless other places—these are proof of what women can do. We know that Australian women are following, and will continue to follow this lead.

Five: The work of women in England could have been much easier and more effective if central and local governments had not blundered so often. Time and time again individual or collective "gumption" from among the people had to overcome unnecessary obstacles.

Six: Creches for the children of women in war industries are essential. They must be well-run, happy places. And equally essential are communal kitchens. They have been one of the good results of this war. Calder, who has made a special study of them, says, "The feeding of the people, which had its origins in the initiative of individuals, and became an essential communal enterprise, is indispensable to the conduct of this war, and in its best form, will survive as a social service after this war." He urges that every town and district equip a kitchen independent of those utility services which may be interrupted by bombing, and accustom the public to patronising them.

Lastly, and above all, women must be mobilised to take an active part in the defence of their country. People who have a job to do, who feel that they are definitely sharing in the tremendously important task of saving their country from the mistakes and blunders, and from the terrible scourge of Fascist occupation,—these people do not panic. They are more than behind the Armed Forces, they are with them. Work in the factory; the replacing of men where this is needed to release them for active service; A.R.P.; Red Cross Services; "Good Neighbor" squads to shelter the bombed-out, to look after children and to help fight fires; the staffing of creches and communal kitchens if you cannot work in a factory; readiness to imitate the women partisans of China and of the Soviet Union if need be; these are some of the jobs that women in Australia can do. If you haven't something to do which will help actively to win this war, find something!