

The Theater

THEATER LIFE in the Soviet Union is important, and, as in the case of concerts, ballet, opera, the drama theater is well supported both by the Ministry of Culture and by the public. It was with some reluctance that the delegation accepted the suggestion to attend a theater in Moscow one evening, due to the tremendous language barrier. "Dead Souls" by Gogol was the play. We received only a very brief synopsis of the play from the interpreter—and then found ourselves thoroughly enjoying the production, laughing with the rest of the audience to the point where our neighbors thought we were Russians and began to talk to us (in Russian) about the play! Nothing was spared to project the production, whose characterizations were effective enough to surmount the formidable language obstacle. A director of an important theater in New York mentioned to us later the possibility of actually importing the production to New York.

Another experience in the theater was in Leningrad when we attended Arthur Miller's "Death of a Salesman," which had been playing in Leningrad for several months, and, on the evening we were there, had a large and enthusiastic audience. Theater repertory, by the way, is so arranged in the Soviet Union that plays do not run for long periods. The repertory is constantly changed and, of course, repeated at intervals.

THE PUPPET THEATER is a unique experience for visitors to the Soviet Union. Not only did we attend the famous Puppet Theater in Moscow, but an afternoon was spent with the also famous Obraztsov, head of the Puppet Theater, which was established close to thirty years ago. Some 200 people are engaged in the activities of this theater alone. It was interesting to listen to Obraztsov state his philosophy about the Puppet Theater. Rather than paraphrase this philosophy, perhaps it would be good to give some actual quotations—which, of course, are taken out of context but which may give an insight into this artist's concepts.