THE FORMATION OF THE ANGLO-SOVIET MEDICAL COMMITTEE.

By DR. D. E. BUNBURY.

(*Hon. Secretary, Anglo-Soviet Medical Committee.*) *

The Anglo-Soviet Medical Committee is an organisation of very recent foundation, which was set up to fulfil an immediate need, but which will, we hope, continue to serve a useful purpose in a peaceful future. When Hitler attacked the Soviet Union, many doctors in this country must have wondered how best we could help our most recent ally. One way in which we could assist was clear. There was a considerable amount of medical information which we had acquired from our experience of modern war and of air-raid casualties, which would be of value to the Soviet medical profession and, through them, to the population of the U.S.S.R. Furthermore, it was evident that a closer co-operation than had existed in the past (if, indeed, one is entitled to speak of a closer co-operation when the past had been conspicuous by the absence of contact) besides being of benefit to the Soviet medical profession, would be of very considerable value to us. An approach to some of the most influential members of the British profession showed that there was much support for the suggestion that a body should be formed with the objects of establishing a liaison between the professions in the two countries and of exchanging medical information. The formation of such an organisation was therefore begun.

The inaugural meeting of the Anglo-Soviet Medical Committee was held on 10th September, when Sir Alfred Webb-Johnson, P.R.C.S., took the chair. H.E. the Soviet Ambassador was present and wished the Committee every success in its work. A message of greeting to the medical profession of the Soviet Union was sent, pledging the Committee to work for the maximum exchange of medical knowledge, now and in the future.

At this meeting the aims of the Committee were outlined and agreed upon. They are four in number and are as follows: to form a liaison between the medical professions of both countries; to exchange the latest clinical and scientific knowledge; to facilitate visits of medical specialists between the two countries; and to give specialist advice on medical aid to the U.S.S.R.

Sir Alfred Webb-Johnson, P.R.C.S., accepted the presidency of the Committee, and vice-presidents were elected, including the Directors-General of the Medical Services of the Navy, Army and Air Force. An Executive Committee was formed, consisting of representatives of all the medical specialities. The method of work proposed was that each representative should be responsible for the work in his own speciality, with the aid, if he required it, of a sub-committee in that subject.

The committee was now in the position to set to work, and it was clear that in view of the reciprocal nature of its aims, its work would fall into two main sections. There was, first and most urgent, the transmission of English material to the Soviet Union. The other side of the picture was to make available translations of Soviet medical literature to the medical profession here. A letter in the medical and dental press brought in offers of help in the preparation of translations from about thirty doctors, and their assistance has been of inestimable value. All of them, however busy they may have been, have sent us the translations we have asked for, and have coupled this with a request to be sent more work.

We have already despatched to the Soviet Union the most recent copies of a number of English journals, such as the Bulletin of War Medicine. In addition, reviews of recent work have been sent on subjects such as the prevention and treatment of malaria. The Executive Committee has drawn up a list of subjects to be dealt with in this way and the various sub-committees are at work. The list includes subjects such as the treatment of burns, maxillo-facial injuries and the treatment of acute war neuroses. These reviews aim at being as concise and factual as possible, without sacrificing the necessary details of the most recent

* Particulars as to associate membership of the Anglo-Soviet Medical Committee can be obtained from the Hon. Secretary, c/o the Royal Society of Medicine.

methods of treatment. At this stage of the Committee's existence, it is obvious that our major interest must be centred on the problems of war medicine, but we do not propose to neglect the other aspects of medicine.

With regard to the giving of advice on medical supplies, a supplies sub-committee has been appointed which has done much valuable work. We have just issued an appeal for any surgical instruments which can be spared, so that they can be sent to the Soviet Union. The need is urgent, as the manufacturers can supply only a limited number of the Soviet requirements.

It soon became clear that the medical and dental professions were showing considerable interest in the work of the Committee, and at a meeting of the President, Vice-Presidents and members of the Executive Committee, it was decided to initiate an associate membership of the Committee, so that members of the medical and dental professions and students of these professions might give their support to the work of the Committee. The minimum annual subscription is 5s., and we feel sure that there will be a wide response. Paper regulations permitting, a bulletin on the work of the Committee will be issued from time to time, and it is proposed to hold a general meeting early in the New Year.

In its three months of life, the Anglo-Soviet Medical Committee has already accomplished a respectable volume of work. The initial period in which the organisation of the methods of work was the principal task is now behind us, and we can go forward to a greatly increased usefulness, which will not end with the defeat of Hitler and the establishment of peace. Mr. Eden, speaking on 21st November, said that we wanted the closest co-operation with the U.S.S.R. now and after the war. The Anglo-Soviet Medical Committee feels that, in the sphere of medicine, it can serve a valuable role in translating Mr. Eden's words into action.