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**A Journey
for Our Times**

A MEMOIR

A Cornelia & Michael Bessie Book

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I had no special qualifications for covering Russia, none. I didn't know the language, I didn't know the history, I didn't know the culture, and I knew little more about the Revolution than I had heard from Nathan Rosen in that upstairs flat of the old Derickson house on Royalston Avenue. True, I was a good journeyman reporter, but on specifics I was blank. I had taken a course at the university in the Sociology of Revolution, given by a man named Pitirim Sorokin. Sorokin was an émigré with an accent so thick I could hardly make out what he was talking about. Principally, he seemed to be telling the story of his escape through Siberia, hiding in ditches from Red Army cavalymen. I had no idea that he had been a leading member of the Kerensky government nor that he would go on to a distinguished career at Harvard. I had read *War and Peace* and I loved *The Cherry Orchard*, but I didn't suppose they had much connection with the Russia of 1944. I knew Walter Duranty's *I Write as I Please* and Eugene Lyons's *Assignment to Utopia*. I knew a bit about Lyons because he had been a UP man in Moscow and I had been impressed with tales about the hoard of art he was said to have brought back from Moscow, enough to start a gallery or found a fortune. He had made a good thing out of Moscow and written a best-seller.

Lyons had left as a monument a co-op flat on Furmanov Street in the Arbat, which he acquired for UP in 1933. Though the Moscow Soviet long since had taken over the building, Henry Shapiro had the flat; he couldn't live there because the pipes froze and burst during the winter of 1941-42, when he and the other foreigners were evacuated to Kuibyshev as the Nazis advanced on Moscow. It now stood, ceilings fallen, holes gouged in the walls, furniture damaged, uninhabitable, and so it would remain until it was reoccupied, unhappily, by Walter and Betsy Cronkite in the winter of 1945-46, when the snow in Furmanov Street reached up to their second-floor windows. That was the winter Virgil Pinkley in London refused to authorize a car for Walter (every other correspondent in Moscow had one). Pink-