

A Reply to Bertrand Russell

Bertrand Russell's impressions of Soviet Russia have been given the widest publicity in the capitalist press, and in the liberal periodicals, including the N. Y. Call. These articles make no contribution to the knowledge of the Soviets, already made available through the investigations of such trained observers as Ransome, Bullitt, Price, Melbride, and others, and are valuable only insofar as they show the effect of a proletarian revolution upon the mind of the bourgeois pacifist and radical.

Russell became famous during the war for his opposition to the capitalist-imperialist governments, rightly attributing the cause of all modern warfare between capitalist nations to the need for world markets and for the exploitation of the peoples and resources of less developed countries in the interests of the capitalist class of the nations involved, and because of this and the articles contributed since the war, led many to believe that Russell was convinced that war with all its horrors could only be permanently avoided by the forcible dispossession of the capitalist class and the introduction of Communist society.

"I went to Russia," says Russell, "believing myself a Communist; but contact with those who have no doubts has intensified a thousand fold my own doubts, not only of Communism, but of every creed so firmly held that for its sake men are willing to inflict widespread misery."

Russell might well have spared himself the trouble of his month spent in Russia—a mere reading of the literature of Communism should have convinced him that he never was a Communist.

Russell cannot think in terms of the working class. A bourgeois sentimentalist and reformer, he himself has lived soft and easily upon the unpaid labor of the workers, having no contact with them or their problems. Steeped in bourgeois ideology, he has no conception of the class struggle, of the clash of irreconcilable class interests, culminating in civil war, the armed uprising of the workers and the seizure of power in the consciousness and fulfillment of their historic mission.

"It is difficult," says Russell, "to exaggerate the difference between a Russian and an Englishman. I am convinced that there is far more resemblance between Mr. Smilie and Mr. Winston Churchill, than between the former and Lenin or the latter and Kolesnik."

Here is an attempt, common to all bourgeois ideologists, to make one believe that there is a fundamental difference between the peoples of one nation and others, and that the Bolshevik Revolution is peculiar to Russia and could not possibly take place in England or America, with similar results. We venture to assert that Russell would feel as uncomfortable in the company of the English Communist McLean as he did in the company of Lenin, and as much out of place in a meeting of Welsh miners or the ship workers of the Clyde as in any meeting of Russian workers in Russia.

One of the conditions upon which Russell was allowed to enter Russia was that he travel with the British labor delegation, in whose company he made the journey, a condition that Russell says he was glad to comply with and which the labor delegation allowed him to fulfil. The five members of the British Labor Delegation were not Communists and observed the same phenomena in Russia that Russia did. Also they are real Englishmen, as their names would indicate. The London Daily Herald of July 1st published interviews with the members of this delegation, from which we quote, and it must be remembered that these British trade unionists are not apt to be overenthusiastic.

A. A. Purcell:

"The action of the capitalist governments and their complicity in attempts to crush organized working class Russia had been amply proved. The Russian Soviet Republic, to be fully understood, should be measured by the fact that its accomplishments had been performed in the face of six years' continuous war, always on its soil, and within its borders, by masses of conspirators backed by foreign finance. Add to that, long sustained attacks and distortions of the foreign press, and one might get a glimpse of the wonderful achievements of the Russian Communist and trade union movement." "On the way home," he added, "we have read the lying statements in the capitalist press regarding the Polish war. After repeating the story of Russian victory, which the press made a Russian reverse, he said, they had actually seen Polish prisoners pass a resolution in the presence of the delegation, giving their opinion of the war and their leaders, afterwards attaching their signatures." "This afterwards attaching their signatures," "This we have in our possession." "In conclusion," said Purcell, "All power to the Soviet Republic is what I said in Russia, and here in England I say All power to the Soviets everywhere. Up with the dictatorship of the proletariat."

R. C. Wallhead:

"The opening of the Volga will certainly hasten economic reconstruction, and already the flow of oil from Baku is materially altering the situation. The poor peasants are infinitely better off than ever they have been before. The men responsible for the reconstruction are optimistic, and with reason. Their work in hand will alter the whole situation for the better."

Robert Williams:

"What I have seen in Russia surpasses my most hopeful expectations. The greatest expansion ever made in progressive development

of human institutions has taken place under the most adverse circumstances. Those working for the establishment of a cooperative commonwealth deserve not only words of encouragement, but deeds, in their support. British labor is used to sympathetic striking in aid of men striving for trifling improvement in conditions, but the Russian revolutionists strike in the most effective way, for all the wealth for the workers who aid in the production of that wealth.

"Sympathetic action is due to them because they are in the van of the proletarian revolutionary movement, and every advantage they can obtain, every reform they can achieve, will affect the workers in other countries."

These are the impressions made upon the minds of men, who, although they are not Communists, are by their own proletarian experiments, moved to the expression of international solidarity of all the workers of the world, and who have observed the workings of the dictatorship of the proletariat in Russia, not as Englishmen, but as workers.

Russell stresses the fact that by dictatorship the Russian Communist actually means the rule of the class conscious proletariat, the ruthless crushing of the counter revolution, the forcible expropriation of the capitalist owners, the iron discipline of the revolution,—something that his bourgeois pacifist mind cannot tolerate especially when practiced by the workingmen.

"Opposition is crushed with out mercy," says Russell, "and since all evils are due to private property, the evils of the Bolshevik regime, while it has to fight private property will automatically cease as soon as it has succeeded. These views are the familiar consequences of the fanatical belief. To an English mind they reinforce the conviction upon which English life has been based ever since 1688, that kindness and tolerance are worth all the creeds in the world—a view, which, it is true, we do not apply to other nations or to subject races."

Kindness and tolerance by the capitalist dictatorship, in England, indeed. Let Russell consider the ruthless suppression of the workers during the Chartist movement—the East End of London, the cotton mills of Manchester, will bear eloquent testimony to the kind and tolerant treatment of the children, the women and the men of England at the hands of her capitalist class.

No working class in the world has been so mercilessly exploited and sacrificed as have the workers of England in the attempt of the British imperialists to make England "the workshop of the world."

Perhaps Russell missed in Russia, the pleasant English country-side and the comfortable houses of the smug and complacent British bourgeoisie, whose guest he has so often been—and that other British institution—the poor house.

But Russell is appalled when he contemplates the prospect of civil war, of world revolution. In this he sees an universal cataclysm in which civilization might go under for a thousand years.

Russell completely ignores the fact that the capitalist system is collapsing, is breaking up and falling to pieces about his ears, that as a result of this system and the world wars it breeds, whole populations are dying of famine and disease in the midst of fabulous wealth, that capitalist imperialist governments only function to enslave the greater part of mankind and will if they endure attempt to drown in their own blood the workers who seek to achieve their emancipation and with it the freedom of the human race.

As an alternative to world revolution, to the seizure of political power by the class conscious workers and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat, leading to the introduction of Communist society,—what do the Russians propose?

PEACEFUL EVOLUTION.

The world is standing at the cross roads of history and civilization is indeed in the balance.

"What is the Commune, that sphinx so tantalizing to the bourgeois mind?" asks Marx. "The proletarians of Paris," said the Central Committee in its manifesto of 18th March, "amidst the failures and treasons of the ruling classes, have understood that the hour has struck for them to save the situation by taking into their own hands the direction of public affairs.... They have understood that it is their imperious duty and their absolute right to render themselves masters of their own destinies by seizing upon the governmental power." "But," says Marx, "the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready made state machinery and wield it for its own purposes."

This lesson the Russian Communists learned. They have built up their own political machinery—the proletarian dictatorship, so obvious to the bourgeois Russells.

Marx thus describes the capitalist state: "During the subsequent regimes, the government placed under parliamentary control—that is, under the direct control of the propertied classes—became not only a hotbed of huge national debts and crushing taxes; with its irresponsible allotments of place, pelf, and patronage, it became not only the bone of contention between the rival factions and adven-

*See Thesis of the Executive Committee of the Communist International published in this issue.

tures of the ruling classes, but its political character changed simultaneously with the changes in society. At the same pace at which the progress of modern industry developed, widened, intensified the class antagonism between capital and labor, the state power assumed more and more the character of the national power of capital over labor, of public force organized for social enslavement, of an engine of class despotism. After every revolution marking a progressive phase of the class struggle, the purely repressive character of the state power stands out in bolder and bolder relief."

"Imperialism is, at the same time, the most prostitute and the ultimate form of the state power which ancient middle-class society had commenced to elaborate as a means of its own emancipation from feudalism, and which full-grown bourgeois society had finally transformed into a means for the enslavement of labor by capital." (Civil War in France.)

Here is a perfect picture of that bourgeois state, which our bourgeois pacifists fondly imagine will peacefully evolve into a co-operative commonwealth, but which the working class is coming more and more to realize must be destroyed, root and branch.

Russell fears that in the revolution which will destroy this capitalist state machinery, that "the heritage of civilization is likely to be lost while hatred, suspicion, and cruelty become normal in the relations of human beings."

One would think to read this, that in England and America today, we are living in a perfect heaven of fraternal bliss, and that love, confidence, and kindness are the normal relations between capital and labor and with each other. Here again, Marx, with almost prophetic vision castigates the Russells of our time.

"It is a strange fact. In spite of all the tall talk and all the immense literature, for the last sixty years, about the Emancipation of Labor, no sooner do the workingmen anywhere take the subject into their own hands with a will, than uprises at once all the apologetic phraseology of the mouthpieces of present society with its two poles of capital and wage slavery (the landlord is now but the sleeping partner of the capitalist) as if capitalist society was still in its purest state of virgin innocence, with its antagonism still undeveloped, with its delusions still unexploded, with its prostitute realities not yet laid bare...."

"Why those members of the ruling class who are intelligent enough to perceive the impossibility of continuing the present system—and they are many—have become the full mouthed and obtrusive apostles of co-operative production. If co-operative production is not to remain a delusion and a snare; if it is to supersede the capitalist system; if united co-operative societies are to regulate national production upon a common plan, thus taking it under their own control, and putting an end to the constant anarchy and periodical convulsions which are the fatality of capitalist production—wrat else, gentlemen, would it be but Communism—impossible communism?"

Russell visited Maxim Gorky and found him dying, and expresses the opinion that the artistic and intellectual life in Russia is dying too. Just how much of the intellectual and artistic life is vouchsafed to the workers in England and other capitalistic countries is too well known to need extended comment; the artists and intelligentsia under capitalism are not free but like the workers are the hired men of the ruling class.

In the Bullitt report we find it stated, "The achievements of the Department of Education have been very great. Thousands of new schools have been opened." And the Ransome report states that whereas under the Czar's regime there were six universities there are now sixteen, with a constantly increasing attendance. Tuition is free, and working men and women are urged to attend. The number of libraries has more than doubled. The number of schools has vastly increased. Art galleries and the opera are open to the poorest workers at prices that they can pay.

It appears that out of a mass of contradictions (for example, where Russell says in one place that, "The Russian Government is not imperialistic in spirit, and would prefer peace to conquest," and in another, "The reconquest of Asiatic Russia has revived what is essentially an imperialist way of thinking....") that the one thought to which Russell holds fast is his abnormal fear and obsession, common to all bourgeois pacifists and "yellow" Socialists, that the centralization of power in the hands of the class conscious proletariat, and the world revolution which impends and which the Third International is preparing for, will start a conflagration, beside which the World War will be only a skirmish.

Let it be understood that revolutions are not made with rosewater. Nothing was ever achieved by an oppressed and slave class without a struggle. The every day struggle of the workers to maintain a "living" wage has a' times developed into bitter and bloody conflicts entailing untold suffering and hardship upon the workers and their families, and these are mere skirmishes in the class war. Communists do not shrink from their stern duty. The revolutionary war for emancipation from wage slavery will not be won without some casualties among the bravest and the best, by the bloodshed and the slaughter of the workers in the imperialist wars waged by capitalism to exceed the sacrifice imposed upon the worker

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