

# Britain and Russia

By Douglas Young

[Mr. Young, as the British Consul, was in sole charge of British interests in Archangel from December, 1917, until the military occupation on August 2, 1918.]

**D**URING my eleven year's service under the Foreign Office in parts ranging from the Equator to the Arctic Circle, I have seen how the direction of foreign affairs is the close preserve of an exclusive class bureaucracy; and how matters vitally affecting international relations are decided by officials, often of minor rank, who, for the most part, have no first-hand knowledge of the countries on which they are experimenting, and who ignore, if they do not actually resent, any suggestions or advice from "outsiders" who happen to possess such knowledge. The plea of "State Secrecy" is used by this bureaucracy to conceal its blunders, which often involve the lives of thousands of the people. Our diplomatic representation abroad is also the exclusive preserve of a caste, the members of which in most cases do not even speak the language of the country in which they reside, and who gather their knowledge within the four walls of their Chancelleries or in the Court or aristocratic circles which they exclusively frequent.

In my three years' service as British Consul at Archangel during the war, I have seen the money of the British taxpayer squandered with the most cynical indifference by a similar bureaucracy established by other departments.

The British Government played a dirty, double game with the Soviet Government in Russia. First they gave a solemn assurance, which was published over my name in the Archangel Press, that they had no annexationist intentions and that they would not interfere in the internal affairs of Russia. This was accepted by myself and by every man who read it, and who was not concerned with the niceties of diplomatic quibbling, as meaning that the British Government intended no military action against the Soviet Government. Then they stabbed that Government in the back by forcing a landing of Allied troops at Archangel under a specious pretext.

So far from the Soviet Government having violated the sanctity of the British Embassy at Petrograd, the Embassy no longer existed, as its personnel had ignominiously fled the country some months previously, and official representatives of the British Admiralty and War Office were abusing diplomatic privilege—to which, in fact, they had no claim—to organize, in conjunction with Russian counter-revolutionaries, under cover of the Embassy building, a plot to overthrow the Soviet *de facto* authorities in Archangel and elsewhere.

The British Government having completely failed to understand the cause and significance of the Russian Revolution and the ideals and aims of the Soviet Government, proceeded to suppress any news or any expression of opinion which did not coincide with their preconceived ideas, and was therefore calculated to expose that blunder; and, further, they proceeded to misrepresent and blacken every action of the Soviet Government, giving either deliberately untrue or evasive replies to the few independent members of all parties who have tried by questions in Parliament to extract the truth, though there is, of course, always the possibility that Ministers have not been allowed by their officials to know what was going on.

The Archangel expedition, considered only as a military enterprise, and apart from questions of morality or political expediency, is already admitted even by its militarist sponsors to be an even greater fiasco than might have been anticipated. It is actually in danger of being thrown out into the White Sea, leaving the civil population of Archangel to the vengeance of the Bolsheviks. And this failure is due primarily to the fact that our naive authorities grossly underestimated not only the moral force but also the military power of the Soviet Government, apparently believing that in its stronghold at Moscow, 700 miles from Archangel, the walls of Bolshevism would fall to the ground at the approach from the White Sea of a few "brass-hats" and a nondescript force of a few hundred men "scraped together."

I have seen in Archangel a British general acting toward the Russian population in their own country as despotically as any Czar and conducting himself as scandalously as any of the Russian generals of the old regime who were a common subject of superior criticism on the part of British residents in Russia. One can only conclude from this that the war against Prussian militarism has created a Whitehall militarism little better than the Potsdam variety, and a British bureaucracy perhaps less corrupt, but hardly less incompetent than that of St. Petersburg.

Whitehall is the district in London where the British War Office, Admiralty, Foreign Office, etc. are situated.

I hate "Bolshevism"—a product of reaction working upon national war-weariness and popular discontent. But I am convinced that the policy or absence of policy—of the British Government as regards Russia is responsible for having strengthened "Bolshevism" by forcing the Soviet Government to adopt cruel and inexcusable measures for its self-preservation, and incidentally for placing Russia still more under the heel of Germany and for slamming the door in Russia in our own faces against British political and commercial influence in that country. I believe that Bolshevik propaganda has had as much to do with the sudden collapse of Germany as our military operations. And I am afraid that, at the moment the most urgent problems of domestic reconstruction are awaiting settlement at home, we shall fritter away our strength and resource in a vain attempt to restore order in the Russian Colossus; and that if we do this we shall sooner or later provoke an outbreak of Bolshevism in the United Kingdom, thus realising the aim of the extreme Russian Bolsheviks of spreading their ideas throughout Western Europe.

Russia cannot be invaded and conquered by a few thousand men. The distances are enormous: the difficulties are great: the Bolsheviks are strong and are growing stronger. It is not a question of "restoring order" in Murman or the Crimea. It is a question at least of penetrating to Moscow. That means war on a large scale—it may be years of war. It means the sacrifice of thousands of lives and millions of money, with heaven knows what purpose or result. There cannot be limited intervention. If it continues it must be on a large scale—with all the consequences that implies.

There is another alternative. I believe that if a delegation, composed not of bureaucrats or militarists but of broad-minded representatives of all British political parties, were to meet a Soviet delegation in a neutral country an understanding might be swiftly reached after a few hours' deliberation. And I believe that that understanding might be acceptable alike to our extreme Socialists and to British capitalists whose sole interests in Russia seem to be to get their money back and to secure a field for making more.

M. Litvinoff is reported to be in Stockholm offering to open negotiations. It is for British public opinion to see that the opportunity for retrieving a ghastly blunder and for removing a stain on our national honor is not missed.

## The Height of Impudence

Place—Lawrence, Mass., February 5th, the Year of Our Lord 1919.

Personae—Peter Carr, City Commissioner and one hundred thousand citizens—mostly wage-slaves.

**S**TRIKE of thirty-five thousand of the wage slaves to demand the same monotonous conditions of existence, same miserable housing conditions, same beggarly mess of pottage, same sense destroying moving pictures, same character destroying pool parlors and saloons, same tin chapel bell ringing and attendance thereat, same old drab, soul-destroying hymn singing, pulpit punching, meek and humble, obey your masters, praise the lord, order yourselves humbly before your betters, order of things, with this one exception that these daring rebels on strike who comprise 31 different nationalities had the audacity to ask for a shorter working week by 6 hours, so that they might get a little more fresh air in their lungs and a larger measure of recreation and a few hours more of the warmth of the sun. In a moment of reason they have the audacity to think they have the right to parade through the city which they built by their slave labor.

So humbly, like the submissive slaves that they are, they approach with that humility which only the working class seems to possess, the nonentity Peter Carr, not Carr, High Commissioner of the City of Lawrence, Mass., the modern Pooh Bah, and beg to ask His all-Highness to permit them to show their weakened and overwrought frames to the public, but Peter in that unctuous, rigidly, righteous manner, which so well becomes to him, not caring to offend the aesthetic soul of his masters, the capitalist owners of the mills of Lawrence, in a letter which he had neither the ability to formulate nor the penmanship to indite, replies in His autocratic Prussian manner and says:

"No, I forbid! I, the great Peter Carr, forbid you to so assemble, for you 35,000 slaves who don't want to work . . . (egregious fool, what these thirty-five thousand want is to work that they may eat), but Peter says that the assembling of these 35,000 would intimidate those who do want to work! Such is Peter Carr and the vile bunch of political grafters and capitalist mill owners and mouth patriots and profiteers who control that city.

Another reason he says why they shall not parade is because these thirty-five thousand slaves are foreigners, Bolsheviks, enemies of democracy, in fact an all round bad lot. Yet, a few months ago, Peter and a few political thugs were boosting the loyalty of these same thirty-five thousand foreigners, and how each of them had bought liberty bonds, paying fifty-fifters for \$45. or \$47. so that they and their children may eat.

Over five thousand of the sons of these fathers or their relatives went to France to fight for democracy and the right to parade in their own city of Lawrence. The bones of many of these sons and relatives of the thirty-five thousand strikers whiten the fields of Flanders, while Peter Carr who left Ireland a few years ago for Ireland's good and who, it is alleged on good authority, is not as yet a citizen of America and therefore not a citizen of the city of Lawrence, Mass., refuses these workers the right to parade. We understand that this matter is now before the courts as to whether he is a citizen or not, and if not he has no legal right to hold the position of City Commissioner and therefore no legal right to permit or forbid a parade; but whether a citizen or not, matters not to our purpose.

If this unintelligent prehistoric minded creature is allowed to interfere with the liberty of 35 thousand useful men and women it is full time that instead of

fighting for democracy in France they should fight for democracy at home. The citizens of Lawrence ought to insist that Peter Carr should be relegated to that obscurity which he so well adorned and from which he should never have emerged. This slave minded creature that might at one time have been a man and who bears an Irish name, is a type of Irishman that brings the Irish name and tradition into contempt. We hope that every citizen, with a sense of decency will mark their disapprobation of this Junker Carr, not Carr, by demanding his recall and that at once. And further that the punishment may fit the crime, we suggest that Peter Carr be given a job at some useful labor in the mills and that he be compelled to attend night school that there he may learn the meaning of citizenship and its responsibilities. As a means to that end he be compelled to write out every day (that is to say when he has learned to read and write) the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States, so that when he rises to a position where he is worthy of citizenship and fitted to resume the responsibility of City Commissioner he may be able to write his own reply to a request from his fellow citizens without having to call in the assistance of the Chamber of Commerce and the capitalists of Lawrence. In the meantime, while he does usurp the position of Commissioner for the good name and credit of Lawrence, Peter Carr ought to be compelled to learn how to write his own name legibly.

So we give our modern Pooh Bah, Peter Carr, City Commissioner of Lawrence, the loud Ha! Ha!, reminding him that when he is dead and forgotten, the men who are now leading the strike and the strikers will be held in honor by the future citizens of Lawrence, Mass.

JIM LARKIN