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THIRD IMPRESSION

Carl Cowl

SIXPENCE

THE SOVIET SYSTEM AT WORK



ROBERT WILLIAMS

(in Russian Dress)

A Series of Articles contracted for
but refused by the "Daily Mail"

By **ROBERT WILLIAMS**

(Member of the Labour Delegation)

THE SOVIET SYSTEM AT WORK

By

ROBERT WILLIAMS

(MEMBER OF THE LABOUR DELEGATION)

Carl

LONDON :

THE COMMUNIST PARTY

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FOREWORD

In writing a foreword to the series of four articles which have appeared in the *Daily Herald*, but which should have appeared in the *Daily Mail*, I have to explain how the latter journal refused to print what they had asked for from me, namely, "my experiences and observations."

A few days before leaving London for Russia, I was told by a regular contributor to the *Mail* that that paper was anxious that some member of the delegation, preferably myself, should agree to contribute a series of articles upon the return of the delegation. I was asked to see Mr. Valentine Williams, the Foreign Editor, with a view to determining certain points which required to be made clear. I suggested that they knew my views very well, and that I wanted a free hand to say exactly what I thought required saying regarding Soviet structure of government or anything else with which I required to deal. The following letter speaks for itself:—

Daily Mail : Editorial Department,
Carmelite House,
London, E.C.4.
April 23rd, 1920.

Dear Sir,

In confirmation of our telephone conversation this evening we shall be glad to arrange with you to write us four articles about your experiences and observations in Russia as a member of the Trade Union Delegation

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visiting the Soviet Republic, to be signed with your name and to be written exclusively for the *Daily Mail*. These articles should be about two-thirds of a column in length and we will pay for them at the rate of 20 guineas a column.

I should be very glad to have a talk with you before you start if we could arrange a meeting between this and Tuesday. I will telephone you in the morning with a view to arranging this.

Yours faithfully,

G. VALENTINE WILLIAMS,
Foreign Editor.

Robert Williams, Esq.,
8, St. Martin's Place.

Let me say that the figure of twenty guineas was fixed at my own suggestion because I had no desire to undercut any writer for the *Daily Mail* or any other newspaper.

On arriving at King's Cross from Russia on June 30th I again saw the contributor to the *Mail* already referred to. He asked me if I had anything to say for publication. I replied that I had two of the promised articles in manuscript which would be typed forthwith and sent to the *Mail* office immediately. When I reached my own office, one of the sub-editors of the *Mail* asked over the telephone whether the typescript was ready of the first article, to which the reply was that it would reach the Editorial Department within a few minutes. I fulfilled my part of the contract, and was surprised to find the following morning that, although great anxiety had been expressed regarding the delivery of the typescript, not a word appeared.

I quite naturally drew the conclusion that the *Mail* was expecting from me the kind of things

which were being said by Mr. Keeling and also by another member of the delegation. They were prepared to print any and every attack upon the Soviet Government, but with the customary attitude of the British Press they did not welcome anything which tended to show the strength of the Soviet organisation and forms of Government. I spoke to Mr. Valentine Williams, and he was anxious that I should change the form of the articles : that in effect I should write according to the instructions of the *Daily Mail*. I explained to him that there had been plenty offering diverse criticisms of the Soviet regime, and that they need not be afraid of my four columns in the paper. Moreover, in view of the smashing attacks made against the dupes of the Polish Barons by the Red Army it was essential that people if they desired to be well-informed should know something of the strength of the nation which was behind the Red Army.

At Mr. Valentine William's suggestion, I submitted the second article, which it appeared was even less acceptable than the first, and in a second telephonic conversation he said that they were unable to print them as they stood.

I do not apologise for writing for the *Daily Mail* or any other capitalist newspaper. I think that of the upwards of a million readers of that paper there must be some to whom the truth would do no harm, and I suggested that the *Mail* had every opportunity of attacking my views in its leaders or elsewhere in the paper. However, when it was made clear that they had no intention to print the articles as they stood ; and when I indicated equally clearly that I had no intention of altering what I said, I informed Mr. Valentine Williams that the articles had better be returned and I would make other use of them. I received the articles by return, accompanied by the following letter :—

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Daily Mail : Editorial Department,
Carmelite House,
London, E.C.4.

Personal July 1st, 1920.

Dear Mr. Williams,

I propose to avail myself of your suggestion to return the two articles on your impressions of Soviet Russia. I am sorry there has been a misunderstanding about them.

Believe me,

Yours faithfully,

G. VALENTINE WILLIAMS,

Foreign Editor.

Robert Williams, Esq.

The articles then appeared in the *Daily Herald*, and the British Socialist Party has suggested that they should be issued as a pamphlet with as wide a circulation as possible, and be printed in full, which was impossible for space reasons in the *Herald*. Opportunities would be afforded for wide publicity by the distribution of the pamphlet at Socialist meetings, through Socialist branches, and more particularly at the meetings to be held in connection with the "Hands Off Russia" Campaign. It was my intention to enlarge materially upon the subject-matter of the four articles, but pressure of work leaves me little or no opportunity so to do.

I will supplement the foregoing by saying that in my judgment and in the judgment of our comrade Lenin, it is essential that the Socialists of the Left must achieve unity if they are to carry on successfully the work of emancipating the working-class from capitalism and landlordism. Far-reaching events are pending in Eastern Europe which will

have the profoundest effect upon the Western nations. We have seen the Red Armies, and while we were in Russia we realised that the Poles would not withstand their military efficiency coupled with their physical and moral energy.

The movement in Great Britain has been chaotic because of our intense individualism and because we possess many forms of liberty without the content of liberty. The imminent breakdown of the capitalist system makes it imperative that we should subordinate our individualisms, our own personal conceptions regarding tactics, and our own futile sectionalisms in order to consolidate all the forces of the Left.

In a conversation I had with Lenin I asked him whether in view of the need for peace so manifest in Russia the delegates should on their return concentrate all their energies and efforts on the restoration of peace and the opening up of trade relationships between Great Britain and Russia; or whether we should assiduously propagate the ideas of the Third International and work consistently and systematically for the overthrow of capitalism in Western Europe which might for a time prevent Russia from getting those things of which she stood in so paramount a need. Lenin's reply was incisive and conclusive:

“Let those who believe in peace work for peace; and let those who believe in Communism and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat work for the overthrow of Capitalism.”

He indicated further that in his judgment the capitalists of Western Europe and of America would not and could not make a real peace between themselves and Soviet Russia for the simple reason that the great Communistic experiment would offer such an example to the proletarians of the whole world that it would provide more forceful propaganda by example than all our precepts.

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Purcell and I and others, therefore, have returned from Russia to offer such encouragement as we may to the attempts to form a definite Communist Party based upon the unalterable conception of proletarian or working-class dictatorship. The influence of definitely Socialist organisations upon the vast mass of the people in the past has been small because of the exclusiveness of Socialist teaching. We have to make it increasingly clear to the workers—and especially the manual workers—that there is no hope of any real improvement in their economic status unless and until they break the vicious system of capitalism which exploits them. We have to show them that Proletarian Dictatorship can only come by means of the assumption of control of the mines, factories, workshops, railways, docks, and means of production and transport generally. Every intelligent trade unionist must be made the centre of organisation and propaganda of the idea of the proletarian control of industry. There is no reason why within a year, the membership of the New Communist Party should not be as great as that of the Communist Party in Russia, namely, 650,000 members.

During the transitional period which lies ahead there must be a great measure of discipline, mutually imposed and mutually accepted by those who will join in the fight for the triumph of communist ideas. When the movement was in that stage of development when many of our schemes were impracticable because of the want of economic preparedness, we could all do much as we liked and say what we would, but during the coming months we must ourselves give and expect from others as much solidarity and loyalty to the decisions and programme of the Communist Party as we expect trade unionists to give to their fellows in an industrial dispute. Individuals there will be of course who cannot and will not work under

these disciplinary influences. They will always remain a law unto themselves, but faced with the stubborn fight which lies immediately ahead many or most will subordinate their own personal conceptions as to the right measures, methods and tactics to the general will of the members of the Party.

There are many in this country who believe the Revolution can be achieved and will be achieved without force. We must respect their convictions; we must solicit their assistance. We must go on by every means in our power to make our policy of direct action effective, and when the time comes that the proprietary classes will refuse to yield one jot or tittle, we must be prepared to act in defence of ourselves and the proletarian interests we claim to represent. There must be a good deal of tolerance from each section of Socialist thought to the other. Lenin has said again and again, and the members of the Communist Party in Russia are largely with him:—We must use Parliamentary and other electoral platforms as a means of propaganda never relying upon Parliament to give us control of land and industrial capital, but working steadfastly towards promoting a conception in the minds of the toiling masses that “Those who would be free must themselves strike the blow.”

In conclusion, let me quote the text which hung over our hotel in Moscow, and which met our eyes whenever we left or entered:

“We started the Revolution, comrades—
we started it alone; let us finish it together.”

ROBERT WILLIAMS.

THE SOVIET SYSTEM AT WORK

To visit Russia under the Soviet Regime is quite unlike visiting any other country. When one goes to Paris, Berlin, Brussels, or Vienna for the first time, one realises after a time that they are all at the basis very much like London. In Petrograd and Moscow, however, there is to be found an entirely new civilisation. I use the word deliberately, because it is utterly useless trying to destroy or even to modify the Soviet system by maligning it, or pretending that it is what it palpably is not; or that it is not what it is. We see in Russia an effort planned and systematically carried out to place a new value on human qualifications, in fact, to supersede any aristocracy of birth or wealth by an aristocracy of ability. That men and women should be estimated and appraised not by whom they are or what they have, but by what they do.

As one of the members of the British Labour delegation to Russia, I went frankly and avowedly as a supporter of the Proletarian Dictatorship. My impressions will therefore be coloured by my essentially working-class outlook. Britishers owe it to themselves to know all that can be known from whatever point of view of the great experiment in Russia. I will divide my observations into four parts, dealing very briefly and indicatively with what appear to me to be four outstanding questions. The parts will deal respectively with "Lenin and World Revolution," "The Militarisation of Labour," "Russian Capacity for War" and "Impressions in General."

Carl Cowl

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Someone who knows the foremost figures in European bourgeois and Socialist politics as well as any other said quite recently, "The three greatest men alive to-day are Lenin, Bela Kun, and Smillie." The third I know very well, the first I met at his request and talked with for two hours, and then met again some days later with the rest of the Labour delegation. Lenin speaks English rather well, and knows British politics better than most Englishmen. I must confess I went to the Kremlin with perhaps more trepidation than I have had when encountering either Mr. Asquith or Lloyd George. There were several sentries on the way with rather brutal points to their bayonets who scrutinised my pass closely as I went through with the guide.

I found Lenin simple, genial, and entirely without affectation. While he was at work and during our conversation, a young sculptor was busily employed on a clay model of Lenin's head, and had, I subsequently discovered, also taken a sketch of my own profile. After exchanging greetings we talked about English and Russian politics, and also of revolutionary possibilities in general throughout the "International."

Lenin in my opinion gives more thought to world revolutionary possibilities than to gathering immediately the fruits of the Russian Revolution, because he has convinced himself, and not without abundant reason, that a world drama is being enacted in the struggle between a small, alert, determined, intelligent and thoroughly organised section representing proprietary interests, and a large, partially alert but growingly intelligent though indifferently organised mass, representing working-class or proletarian interests. The spear-head of this mass, with its brilliant and far-sighted intelligentsia is of course the Russia of Soviet Power.

He talked of the counter-revolutionary move-

ments of Kolchak, Denekin, Yudenitch, and also of the British complicity in all these as well as at Murmansk. There was not the slightest possibility of these adventures being undertaken were it not for the promised support of the Allied Powers.

Lenin sees clearly that if the International Bourgeoisie cannot destroy or drastically modify the Soviet Power in Russia, Soviet Power and all its implications and potentialities will undermine and eventually overthrow Capitalism, Landlordism, and all that they imply in Western Europe and America, not to speak of Asia and the Colonies.

Everyone in Russia realises that the Polish Offensive was engineered by British and French influence, supported by British and French direction, training, and equipment, and was part of a comprehensive and grandiose plan to include Rumanian and Finnish military co-operation and assistance from the new Baltic States. Lenin ridicules the statement of Bonar Law that the supplies of munitions to Poland were sent in fulfilment of a pledge that they were to be given in the event of a Soviet attack on Poland. The best reply to Bonar Law is the statement of Chicherin, Soviet Foreign Minister, who said that the essentially moderate terms offered to Poland were held to be evidence of Russia's internal weakness, which accounts for the Polish Offensive breaking out when it did.

Lenin asked about the campaign in favour of Direct Action promoted by the Triple Alliance in 1919 to compel the British Government to refrain from further intervention in Russia. He could not understand the acceptance by the Parliamentary Committee of the Trades Union Congress of Churchill's and Lloyd George's assurances that intervention would cease. The best proof of this will have appeared shortly after these lines appear, the delegation having been furnished with the most

convincing proofs that the Churchill policy of last year was one of studied and deliberate evasion and deceit, not only towards organised labour but towards traditional British Liberalism.

Those who are directing the policy of Soviet Russia and also the Third International are fully convinced that most or all the factors which operated to bring about the economic collapse in Russia are operating to bring about similar effects in Western Europe. They watch critically the growth of the respective national debts. Everything which can be known is duly observed relating to the class struggle and its intensification, especially in industrial disputes and the unending fight for the share of the product between Capital and Labour. Lenin foresees that inevitably there must be established in Great Britain a Labour Government or Labour-plus-some-other-Party Coalition. He says that Clynes, Thomas, Henderson, and perhaps Macdonald and Snowden must have their opportunity as Kerensky and his colleagues had in Russia. But he is positive this attempt will produce as little advantage to the working-class as the Noske-Schiedemann Government in Germany.

While we were in Russia there were also delegates from Italy, Germany, France, Belgium, and Scandinavia, and there appears every indication that the Geneva Conference, if it be held, will be the grave of the Second International. The Soviet idea, based as it is on occupational rather than residential qualification, gains ground on all hands, and the policy of Revolutionary Russia as well as the Third International faces West confronting Industrial Capitalism instead—as many imagine—the more economically backward East. Russia's Eastern policy is one into which she has been forced, if only to create a diversion for Great Britain and preventing her from continuing to

focus counter-revolutionary movements in general.

I shall deal with the other questions in succeeding articles; but let me say clearly here that the delegation arranged their programme apart from the official welcomes we received. We went where we liked; we interviewed whom we pleased. We talked without let or hindrance to supporters and opponents of Soviet institutions alike. We discussed grievances with workers, technical and manual.

The Bolshevik experiment is destined to have the profoundest influence upon the development of human institutions, and we shall be compelled more and more to examine critically the Soviet plan as explained by its supporters and advocates instead of blindly accepting the denunciations of its opponents and detractors.

II.—“ MILITARISATION ” OF LABOUR.

In practically every country other than Russia, what is called Organisation of Labour means the embarrassment and hampering of production and distribution of wealth. Slur the fact over as we may, the pitched battle between Capital and Labour destroys any possibility of genuine co-operation in production. Capital in general seek constantly to cut the cost of production by reducing labour charges. Labour seeks to get as much as it can for as little as the employer will accept in return. In Russia, not only is there no difference between the Trade Unions and the administrative heads of Soviet affairs, but we find the heartiest co-operation between the Unions, the technicians, and the Supreme Council of Public Economy.

As an illustration, I would refer to a visit to a large locomotive refitting and repairing shop near Saratov which I made in conjunction with Sverdloff, Acting People's Commissar for Ways and Com-

munications. Both he and I impressed on the workers in the railway shops the supreme need to accelerate railway work. I could not help contrasting the reception given to Sverdloff and myself and the response to our appeals for discipline with the acrimonious temper displayed by the Clyde workers on the occasion of Mr. Lloyd George's visit during the war, and his appeals to increase output.

The difference of working-class outlook is determined by the difference of the grounds of appeal. Men will make every sacrifice when they know that it is for national and collective well-being, and equally will resist attempts to exploit their generosity for individual gain. To realise the position in which Russian democracy has been placed since October, 1917, is clearly to understand their acceptance of Labour Mobilisation.

Karl Radek, one of the influential Communist Party Leaders, and Secretary of the Third International, puts the position with clarity as follows :

If Soviet Russia is to extricate itself from the economic disorganisation its first task is to rally the scattered forces of the skilled proletariat. If the Socialist community has any right at all to throw upon the battlefield hundreds of thousands of workers to shed their blood in the name of the liberation of the entire working-class the more right it has to say to the skilled workers who have dispersed to the villages : " No surprise is entertained at your having fled to the villages to escape starvation, but the entire country is doomed to ruin and famine unless you return to town. Only by increasing the productivity of locomotive repairs, only by beginning to create transport means as well as means of production can we save the Russian working-

class from death by starvation. Just as you are bound to fight for and protect Soviet Russia with arms in hand equally so are you obliged to extend your credit to the Soviet Government which is a Government of the working-class."

This sounds startlingly like a statement by Lloyd George when he assumed the position of Minister of Munitions. He then said in effect that it was necessary for the civil authorities to have the same control over the men in the workshops and the factories as the military authorities possessed over the men in the trenches. We have, moreover, to bear in mind that Russia's industrial and political policy is shaped largely if not entirely for her by inexorable pre-war and post-revolutionary circumstances. Russia lived by exchanging food and raw material for manufactured articles. Since 1917 this process has been suspended. She has therefore had to create a new resourcefulness and adaptability in producing the things which she previously imported. Added to this difficulty it must be understood that both the first and second revolutions made a great drain on Russia's urban proletariat. The men who manned the barricades, who suffered the most casualties, were the metal-workers and those other sections of skilled workers who realised the meaning of the class-struggle. Their ranks were again depleted by the formation of the Red Armies, of which they were the revolutionary leaven. Added to these factors was the constant migration of thousands of engineering skilled and semi-skilled workers from the industrial centres to the agricultural areas because of the shortage of raw material and of food in the towns after the Second Revolution.

Mobilisation of civilian labour is carried out by Communists and trade unionists alike because they

understand that it is essential if they are to fight disease, improve transport, and produce agricultural implements and manufactured articles to exchange with the peasantry for the necessary foodstuffs. Dilution will be developed scientifically and the bonus system operates in such a manner as to provide the very best incentive to individual initiative and effort. Russia can be faced with not even the remotest possibility of unemployment or under-employment following upon "over-production" as we are in Western Europe. Credit is due to the directors of Soviet policy that, following upon civil war, ringed around by enemies, faced with the most appalling difficulties, they are embarking upon vast schemes of social reconstruction. They are doing more for education than any other country in the world. They are attempting more in a few years than economically and industrially advanced countries have done in a century. Their motto is "Through Discipline to Freedom."

When it became imperative to take the power from the hands of the bourgeoisie and the remnants of the feudal class, the trade unions raised the demand "Labour Control of workshops and factories." Workshop control by Collegiates and Boards of elected Shop Stewards was gradually found to have outlived the transitional stage from individual ownership to social ownership, and there was no hesitation on the part of the Communist Party and the Trade Unions to modify their policy to meet changing requirements. They say frankly that if "One-man Management" can give us better and more rapid production of those things of which we stand in paramount need, then introduce such management without delay. The trade unions, however, will remain in control of the main currents of labour and production, but will hand over the direction of the details of management to the most efficient individuals to be obtained.

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With us in this country the processes of production and distribution have been socialised while the product remains individualised. In Russia both the processes and the product are socialised.

I repeat and emphasise what I said before. Russia is working out her own social emancipation according to her own racial, historic, economic, and industrial needs and requirements. It does not at all follow that Western Europe should in any way studiously or slavishly follow the precise lines of Russia's great experiment. The discipline which the Soviet Power has beaten out for itself on the anvil of war and counter-revolution has been imposed upon our industrial workers by generations of factory and workshop experience. Revolutionary Russia marches forward steadily and steadfastly with a rifle in one hand (so to speak) and a hammer in the other. The best justification of "Industrial Conscription" was and is the expeditious manner in which she re-mobilised her Red Armies from industry to the Polish front, where once more they cover themselves with military glory.

III.—RUSSIA'S CAPACITY FOR WAR.

Whatever may be said of the Soviet Government no one can deny their ability in war. After the decisive overthrow of the Bourgeois in October, 1917, the old army simply fell to pieces. They had been beaten and broken in the Kerensky efforts, promoted by the Entente to continue the Imperialist War against the German, Austrian and Turkish fronts.

The Brest Litovsk Peace was unavoidable even had the newly created Soviet Government wished to continue war operations. The troops had been badly armed, badly clothed, and badly fed. They were also disillusioned regarding the Czarist

ambitions of Imperial aggrandisement. After the definite Proletarian Dictatorship had been proclaimed the directors of Russian policy foresaw the possibilities of either the Central Powers or the Entente, or perhaps both concentrating their forces against the working-class Revolutions. They called again and again upon the workers in Germany, Austria-Hungary, France, Britain and Italy to throw over their own respective Landlord-Capitalist and Imperialist Government. The insistent propaganda of the revolutionary idea did more to sap the vitality of German Militarism than is yet generally understood.

While hoping and believing in the ultimate triumph of the Revolutionary Idea the Russian Communists are prepared to meet force with force. They hastily improvised a new citizen army, the Red leaven of which was the Communist members of the urban proletariat. Gradually this army was extended by universal conscription until to-day; it is in my personal judgment the best army in the world. It is the best not necessarily because it is composed of the finest fighting material, but mainly because every army is influenced to an unestimable degree by the motive of the Cause in which and for which it fights. No army ever fought in a cause worthier than that which inspires the Red Soviet Army of Russia. Educational and political propaganda has been worked to a fine art. Much or most of what was said in Britain during 1914, 1915, and 1916, in order to obtain recruits and afterwards to keep up the national war spirit, was untrue and most of these who said it knew it to be untrue. In Russia they have merely to tell the Truth, the Whole Truth and nothing else, and this is the basis and the whole of their propaganda. We were told by Britishers in Moscow that when our prisoners from Murmansk were interviewed they showed evidence of perplexity as well as

disquiet at the tactics of the Red Soldiery. The British prisoners exclaimed: "Let them come against us with bayonets, machine guns, tanks or gas and we'll show them what we are made of, but, gorblime, how can we fight men who offer us leaflets and pamphlets?"

While members of the Delegation were at the Polish Front they saw a shell which explodes and drops among the Poles thousands of leaflets in their own language telling them how they are being used as the tools and instruments of the Polish Barons co-operating with the Entente Imperialists, and headed always with "Workers of the World, Unite."

During our stay in Moscow Purcell and I, at the special invitation of Madame Balabanoff, went to the All-Russian War Department, and spoke with General Kamenieff, Commander-in-Chief of the Russian Armies, and Skliansky, who is the Acting Chairman of the Russian Revolutionary Military Council. The latter, by the way, presented me with the Military Medal of which so much has been written.

We talked with military men and were impressed with the thoroughgoing efficiency of all we saw and heard. I have met personally the late Lord Kitchener, and Lord Derby who succeeded him as Minister of War. I have visited the British War Office on numerous occasions, and I have no hesitation in saying that the Soviet military institutions and the atmosphere of competency prevailing compares very favourably with our own.

We saw the manufacture of light and heavy artillery, of tanks and aeroplanes, and war equipment in general. Russia, like most other countries, devotes the best of her constructive powers to waging war. This policy has been forced upon her by the concentration of capitalist hatred in Europe and America. Trotsky, with whom I talked at the Opera House, Moscow, while not being over-

sanguine of a speedy triumph over the Poles, said that cost what it may and take as long as it might, they would break the Polish military power irretrievably.

We witnessed numerous military parades and displays by the garrisons of Petrograd and Moscow as well as other important military centres. The personnel of the Army was as good as anything I have seen in Great Britain during the years of the war, the officers and men manifesting not only physique, but a spirit of mental determination. Through the good offices of our old Socialist friend Petroff, I talked with many of the Russian soldiers and sailors, and the question ever on their lips was : Why are the British workers fighting against the Russian workers, who only wish to establish Communism to improve the economic conditions of themselves and their dependents? Needless to say, I was middle-stumped by such pertinent questions.

Purcell, who, being a woodworker, was interested in the construction of aeroplanes in Great Britain during the war, says that the aeroplane factories he saw compare favourably with anything we had here at that time.

Military service is of course compulsory, and military training is also compulsory to men between the ages of 18 and 40. Those between 14 and 18 have to undergo physical drill as part of their civil education. Corps of Boy Scouts and Girl Guides are in existence in all the populous centres. There is the most devoted attention to the wounded by the nurses of the Red Army, and one of the most striking of the banners carried during the Moscow parade bore the inscription : " Courage and endurance to the Red Hospitals." The Red Army is better-clothed and better-shod and fed than any other section of the population. While I made numerous enquiries, with all the tact and discretion

at my disposal, regarding the numbers of men on ration strength, I was met always by polite statements that nobody knew and nobody could say. It would appear, however, that there must be at least six million men waging war, preparing for war, or providing material for war purposes.

My own opinion is that the Allies, knowing by means of their Political Intelligence Department that Poland had not the ghost of a chance against Soviet Russia, are pursuing the same plan in regard to Russia as they found so effective in regard to Germany: to occupy as much of their man-power as they possibly could in order to weaken them in the rear and prevent that social reconstruction which would make Russia the most favourable country in the world for the working-class.

Regarding the so-called rival schools of Eastern and Western Policy, the overwhelming majority of those who shape Russia's policy turn their eyes towards the West to the reconstruction on social lines of the whole of Western Europe. Their capacity to wage war will be improved by the recovery of the Donetz basin coal area, and the occupation of Baku with its millions of tons of oil for fuel purposes.

In an interesting conversation with Petrovsky, who is the Director of all the Officers' Training Schools, he confidently assured me that there was not the remotest chance of Russia producing a second Napoleon who might possibly overthrow the Communist Revolution and establish a military dictatorship. The bulk of the officers are recruited from the working-class, and they are inspired with the Communist idea. There is, moreover, the fact that the population of the towns is drilled and armed and equipped in order to maintain their control of the workshops and factories. Russia, in my judgment, could not attempt imperialist wars, for while the soldiery and more particularly the

peasantry will fight for defensive purposes, their morale would be instantly destroyed were a real aggressionist enterprise commenced.

IV.—THINGS IN GENERAL.

I started the invited series of impressions which the *Mail* could not or would not publish without indicating very much about the actual conditions of life in Russia. It is the intention of the British Socialist Party to reprint the four *Herald* articles with some amplifications as a pamphlet as early as opportunity will permit, and those who care can readily see some phases of Russian life through the eyes of a proletarian.

In Petrograd and Moscow one sees every aspect of City and Metropolitan life completely changed. The main streets, while being thronged with people going to and fro, present an outward appearance of perpetual bankruptcy. Shops, cafes, stores, hotels are closed and shuttered. To those who like places such as Bond Street, Regent Street and Oxford Street, life must be almost unendurable. I must confess I longed now and then to go into some place and order a decent lunch or dinner such as one finds in any capitalist city, but there was simply "nothing doing." One of the best illustrations I can give of the effects of the Revolution, as compared with conditions under Capitalism, was the reply given to one of my questions by that incarnation of the spirit of Working-Class Dictatorship, Angelica Balabanoff. I said to her: "Why is it that in little Esthonia which is in about the same latitude as the Petrograd area, and enjoys the same kind of climatic conditions, there appears to be an abundance of cheese, butter, eggs, milk, bacon, etc., on sale in the shops while there is no evidence of the existence of these things in Petrograd?" She replied by saying that if I made

close enquiries among the workers both in Esthonia and Russia I would make several interesting discoveries. Firstly, that in Esthonia these nourishing foodstuffs mentioned never appeared on the tables of the workers. They could not afford them. Although there appeared to be an abundance on sale in the shops, it was in fact only within the reach of the relatively well-to-do sections of the community. The children of the Reval workers lived mainly or entirely on rye-bread as their parents did, while the middle-class, the bourgeois, the military heads, and those who by hook or by crook could put their hands on sufficient Esthonian marks might eat to repletion. Now, in Petrograd, and in fact throughout Soviet Russia, whatever nourishing foods there are at the disposal of the Soviet Authorities go to the care and feeding of the children and the invalids, utterly irrespective of the class to which previously they belonged. Balabanoff said further imagine, but only for the sake of illustration, that the bourgeois system were reintroduced into Petrograd, shops would open as if by magic, food would appear on the counters and in the windows, not because any more had been produced, but the supplies brought on view and obtained by Landlords, Capitalists and their principal supporters would be taken from that which now goes to the children and the infirm.

All the foregoing was quite borne out by subsequent investigations both in Russia and afterwards on my return journey through Esthonia. Everywhere we went we saw for ourselves conditions were bad, as we were frankly told, but always we heard they were much worse in 1918 and 1919. I consider that the Russian fatalist outlook on life has helped the people to endure as they have the terrible privations following on six years of war, two bitterly contested revolutions and innumerable counter-revolutionary movements internal and

external. Most of the distribution of foodstuffs, boots and clothing is carried on through State distributive agencies which is an extension of the work of the Co-operative Movement. Every man and woman rendering social service is paid in roubles, and in addition food and clothing cards or coupons, which enable them to get their supplies at one-tenth of the price obtaining in the speculative markets.

The Drama, Opera, the Ballet and Kinema performances are enjoying unprecedented popularity. I spoke to the leading tenor at the Petrograd Opera House where they were performing Gluck's "Orpheus," and I also spoke to the conductor of the admirable orchestra. Chaliapin was singing regularly at the "Hermitage," Moscow, and I had an interesting conversation with Madame Chaliapin while in Petrograd. It may interest atrocity-mongers and others who say that the Soviet Power has destroyed Art to know that Chaliapin, whom we heard singing at Reval, and who was perfectly free to come to London or Paris where he can command his own price, prefers to go back to Moscow to sing to the people, and he himself remains a plain member of the Artistes' Professional Union, together with the scene-shifters and programme-sellers. In my brief talks with the leading tenor, the conductor of the orchestra, and Madame Chaliapin, they all unquestionably agreed that the audiences in Russia are far more appreciative than they were under the old regime. The tickets are distributed mainly through the trade unions and the garrisons, and at such prices as bring them within the reach of the humblest Russian worker. The artistes, in general, agreed they were not politicians, and concerned themselves more with art than politics, and they looked forward to a period when the population, including themselves, will be enabled to enjoy the higher

standard of living procurable when the nation devotes its energies to more productive efforts, rather than—as it is doing to-day—waging war and breaking down counter-revolution.

The problem of prostitution is being dealt with in the only really effective way, that is, by destroying the economic causes of prostitution. The *elite* of the *demi-monde* of course came to Western Europe as part of the *entourage* of the nobility and bourgeoisie. The others, being deprived of their more or less well-to-do patrons, have perforce to seek employment in some useful form of occupation.

Although some of our temperance friends have said that we have nothing to learn from Russia, I am convinced that the prohibition of the sale of alcohol in Russia has led to physical, social, and moral regeneration. Everyone to whom I spoke agreed that the revolution could not have been maintained had the sale of intoxicants been continued. What will happen after the transitional period has been passed remains to be seen, but I come back to Western Europe believing profoundly that if we have to pass through a revolutionary crisis prohibition will be absolutely essential during the period of transition.

To sum up, I believe more and more in discipline and organisation. Discipline first of all to break down the capitalist system, and then strict military and industrial discipline in order to establish the Socialist or Communist State.

I have to state publicly, in conclusion, that although I was appointed in January of this year as a delegate to the Second International Congress at Geneva, my experiences in Russia, coupled with my knowledge of the international movement, preclude any possibility of my fulfilling my engagement to attend. I think the Second International worse than useless. It is attempting to erect a

new superstructure upon a foundation of sand, and I shall devote such of my energies and time at my disposal to working towards the extension of the Third International. Moreover, Purcell and I, acting in conjunction with the representatives of the Italian trade unions, and members of the All-Russian Trade Union Executive, together with Zinovieff, have signed an appeal to the leaders of the Left Wing of the trade union movement to form an International of the Trade Unions from the paralysing influence of the Legiens, the Gompers, the Appletons, and others who were more imperialist, more jingoistic, and more chauvinist than the landlord and capitalist class in their respective countries during the war.



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