

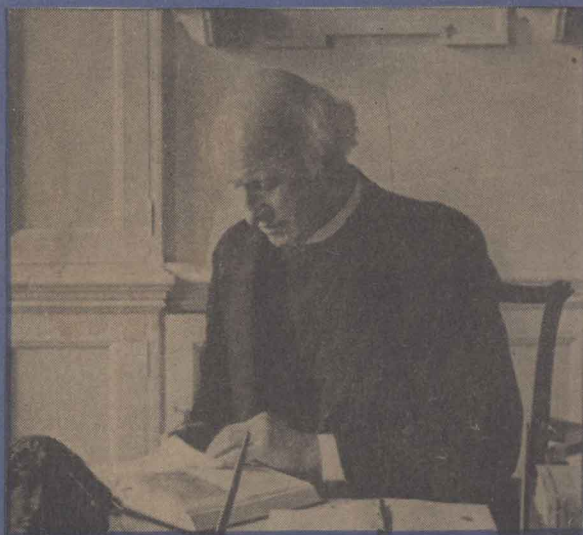
The SOVIET POWER

The Socialist Sixth of the World

*Complete
edition*

200,000 copies

Illustrated



BY HEWLETT JOHNSON
Dean of Canterbury

THE SOVIET POWER

THE ~~SOCIALIST~~ SIXTH OF THE WORLD

BY THE VERY ~~REVEREND~~ HEWLETT JOHNSON

The Dean of Canterbury

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY
NOWELL MARY HEWLETT JOHNSON



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Foreword Written on August 31, 1940

I WRITE this Foreword for the American edition as I have revised this book, to the accompaniment of the physical and mental horror of modern warfare. The wailing of air-raid sirens, the thud of guns, the vicious zooming of war-planes, the earth-trembling explosion of bombs which, as all the world knows, are at this moment a daily (and nightly) part of existence in Southeastern England.

From this peaceful Deanery garden, bright with summer flowers and secluded behind the ancient city wall, little children, one moment happy at their work and play, have seen the falling bombs. Terror stricken they have flung themselves to the ground and then fled, as others did centuries ago, to the sanctuary of the Crypt of this great and lovely Cathedral.

Upon these young people war has laid its heaviest burden. Their elders meet the situation as far as their own selves are concerned with the coolness and courage and confidence that we expected. But it is the innocents who suffer the most. Inexorably terrors and fears must gather in their minds and cloud their imaginations. For them the physical dangers, the disruption of homes, and breaking up of education, the loss of those who stand between them and all the perils and difficulties and hardships of life press hardest where least deserved.

It was indeed with thoughts like these in my mind, and to prevent this very kind of thing that now is happening that I began and finished this book. To repeat the words written in the Foreword to the English edition in November, 1939, "I regret that this book was not written and published six months earlier. Had that been the case I might have hoped that perhaps it would have served some part, however small, in helping our own country to understand Russia, and, by understanding, to have brought nearer the possibility of Anglo-Russian friendship. With Russian friendship, consummated in a pact for collective security, we should now be spared the

terrible tragedy that confronts us. It was, however, not to be. Greater forces were fashioning our destiny.”

Words more obviously true today than when written ten months ago; and now it is the destiny not only of Britain, or of Western Europe, but of the U.S.A., of China, and indeed of the world that is at stake.

Even before the war broke out I was conscious of a world in travail; of an old order perishing, and of a new one coming to birth. In the terrible monstrosities of Nazi-Fascism I saw the dying frenzy of an outworn system of society. What it was capable of in brutality and horror I witnessed with my own eyes in Spain.

For telling the truth about these things I naturally paid the price that all progressives pay. Yet today the things that then were said about Hitler and Mussolini become accepted parts of governmental outlook and statement.

In the same way, on the publication of this book last December, few could have endured greater vilification or suffered more violent attack. Rare was the critic who could be found to say kind words for it.

Yet despite this, despite also the obvious defects and demerits of the book, the essential truths which I believe it contains seem slowly to be receiving recognition. Already, I understand, several editions and something approaching 50,000 copies have been sold. It is no longer a sign of infamy to be discovered reading “The Socialist Sixth of the World.”*

I do not blame my countrymen for their attitude. Any one who would stand outside the crowd trying to see and tell the truth must pay the price in friends estranged and families divided, in social ostracism and the antagonism of what is most powerful in society.

I merely marvel that in my own case these things have been so shortlived. Indeed what has been lost in one way has been gained a thousandfold in others, and very many letters have shown a generosity and magnanimity that I little expected and less deserved. From the working class especially, always so calm and courageous in face of the dangers of the day, I have felt a warmth of feeling and a depth of understanding which give me hope for the future.

It is to them, and to the young of all nations, that I would dedicate

*Title of the English edition of the present work.

this book. To youth, with its clear eyes, unhardened by prejudice, hatred and vested interests, I offer it.

It is they who will see more clearly than I whatever is false in these pages. They will recognize with greater generosity than I deserve whatever of truth and rightness it contains.

We live in the end of an epoch. Old societies and groups break up and suffer forcible change. New and inscrutable forces long pent up are finding release. Will humanity, now on the march, repeat the errors of our own generation, or learn from them? We cannot say. All we can assert with any degree of certainty is that changes more extensive than we dare envisage are bound to come.

And it is in the hope that these changes may be for good, that others may succeed where we have failed, that war and conflict, social as well as national, may be exorcised that this study has been made and these words written. From the trials and errors, the successes and mistakes and accomplishments of a great group of peoples, the hopeful and creative side of whose great experiment and new achievement I have endeavoured to describe, youth may learn that fountains of creative ability can be tapped and new ways of life revealed. What a sixth of the world has accomplished brings new hope to toiling and struggling humanity.

I would add this one thing more. In the English Foreword I wrote that "the need for Anglo-Soviet co-operation is not less but far greater today and it is with this aim that I offer this book to the British public now, in the hope that it may shorten the bitterness and suffering which this war is sure to bring." Today I would enlarge the scope of this desired co-operation by including the U.S.A.

Whatever happens in Europe, there can be neither peace nor stability in the world so long as the three greatest powers stand estranged and at enmity. That fact becomes increasingly apparent to people in the British Isles. The outstretched hand that was refused a year ago would be more readily seized today. The co-operation of our three great countries would change the outlook of the world at one stroke. No combination could withstand them. The war would cease and peace receive its reasonable guarantee. Upon such foundations a new League of Peoples might well arise, and defy any challenger.

That this is no hopeless dream is shown by the relative approach

of England to the U.S.S.R.: Prime Minister Churchill avowing that it is the desire of England to seek more friendly relations with Russia. Equally, the more friendly relations between Russia and the United States bespeak Washington's movement towards Moscow. That the friendly approaches may grow and fructify is my dearest wish, though I suffer no illusions concerning the difficulties lying in the path of their growth. Deep-rooted prejudice and hostility exist in certain strata of peoples towards the U.S.S.R. For their hatred and intolerance we pay a bitter price in blood and tears today. Should any who cherish such feelings chance to read this book, I would beg of them to lay prejudice aside for a brief space and examine what the book has to say. A fairer picture and a deeper understanding may result.

I would conclude this Foreword with the words which concluded the Foreword of the English edition and which are felt even more fervently now than then: "If this book should serve to prevent one day, or one fraction of a day, of unnecessary bloodshed or slaughter by helping to ease the passage of those changes that I believe are necessary in our life, and which are bound at length to come, then it will more than have fulfilled any aims or hopes I may have entertained concerning it."

Preface

1. THE AIM of this book can be stated briefly. It attempts to explain in simple non-technical terms a great experiment in a new order of society. Its appearance today is the less inopportune, because suspicion still exists on both sides between two great peoples. The need for wider understanding is paramount.

2. The experiment which is being worked out on a sixth of the earth's surface is founded on a new organization of economic life, based on clearly defined principles which are thoroughly understood and gladly accepted. These principles, now on trial, differ as far as east from west from our own competitive system of every man for himself and devil take the hindmost, with the profit-making motive as the chief incentive; men being used as means and not ends, with all the consequential exploitation of the mass of the people that inevitably follows.

Our system lacks moral basis. It is only justified on the grounds that no alternative exists. It gives rise, when Christian men and women accept it and acquiesce in it, to that fatal divergence between principles and practice of Christian people, which is so damning to religion, and which found its sternest critic in Christ himself. The gap between Sunday, with its sermons on brotherhood, co-operation, seeking of others' good, and Monday, with its competitive rivalries, its veiled warfares, its concentration upon acquisition, its determination to build up one's own security, becomes so wide that many of the better men and women of today remain outside the Churches altogether. Hypocrites they will not be. The young especially, with their modern passion for sincerity, are in open revolt.

Such is the moral aspect of contemporary economic society. Its scientific aspect is the wholly irrational wastage of wealth, the artificially induced shortage, the poverty amidst plenty, which is as patently foolish as it is grossly immoral. Frustration of science is the counterpart of denial of morals.

Folly culminates in wastage of human material. Stunted and

narrow lives are the result. The upshot is pitiful and dangerous on a twofold count. It thwarts the individual by denying to him the thrill and satisfaction of a developing human life. It robs society by leaving uncultivated and unutilized whole ranges of potential ability.

Slumps and booms, unemployment and mis-employment, the dole and the multi-millionaire, the scales weighted for financiers and against the workers, frustrate society and produce strains and stresses whose logical conclusion is war.

3. In opposition to this view of the organization of economic life is that of the Soviet Union, where co-operation replaces competitive chaos and a Plan succeeds the riot of disorder. The emphasis is different. The community rather than the self-seeking individual stands in the centre of the picture. The welfare of the whole and of each individual within it replaces, as the ruling factor, the welfare of a select class or classes. The elimination of the profit-seeking motive makes room for the higher motive of service. The rational organization of production and distribution of wealth welcomes science as an ally and transfers the emphasis from scarcity to abundance.

4. A new attitude towards human life is the natural counterpart of the new economic morality. Individuals, all individuals, become ends as well as means. The development of the human potentialities of each individual receives fullest opportunity and encouragement, and leads to a new humanism. The mass of the people are inspired to play a creative role in life, and culture receives a fresh stimulation. The cultural heritage of the past is treasured and revered and becomes the spring-board for the future. Provided that no war intervenes to wreck the growth, the removal of economic shortage, and the substitution of plan for chaos, promise to open up new avenues of freedom, liberty, and creative personality.

5. The method of this book is as simple as its aim. The author is not so vain as to imagine that his own experiences in life are unique, or that the problems which life propounds to him are felt by him alone. As he states them he feels that he is merely putting perhaps into clearer words what many others feel and experience. The personal biography with which the book opens, whilst endeavouring to do this, may serve the further useful purpose of providing a

picture of the personal bias from which no book is free. The autobiographical section will at least explain the interest in economic and social affairs, and the unashamed sympathy with the "under-dog"; whilst the story of the technical training may give some guarantee of a reasonably sound judgement in technical matters. In case some should feel that this technical training has led to undue emphasis, or emphasis in too great detail, upon the economic aspects of the new order, it is well to remember that without such an economic basis the new order would rest on insecure foundations. Only on a sound base can a noble edifice arise.

The reader, however, if he so wishes, may skip the economic section in Book Three and proceed, without break in continuity, to the more human aspects of the new order in Book Four.

6. It is the moral impulse of the new order, indeed, and its human consequences, which constitute the greatest attraction and present the widest appeal. The sections which deal with these therefore form the longest and most important sections of the book.

Of any system we may appropriately ask, as the primary question, either from the moral or scientific point of view, How does this affect the life of the mother and child? How, that is, does it affect life at its very source and in its most impressionable stages? We may proceed through appropriate stages to inquire how it affects the community as a whole, and the relation of community with community, nation with nation, race with race. Finally, we may ask what hope it holds out for a harmonious international system. These human consequences and values are to the writer indissolubly bound up with Christian religion and tradition. The final chapter examines this connexion and explains why, alike from a Christian, a scientific, and a technical point of view, he finds absorbing interest and much encouragement in the Soviet experiment.

7. Finally, there is need to guard against a too rosy and optimistic view of life in the Soviet Union. My own approach in this book is from the sympathetic side. I ask in the first place for a sympathetic understanding of the problem. I lay stress on the successes and the good things of the experiment. There are shadows as well as lights, and I am well, and oftentimes painfully, aware of them. But if I have said less of the defects or lack of success, it is chiefly because others writers have already (and with over-emphasis) done the

task for me; and because I feel that this over-emphasis and concentration upon defects, whilst ignoring the massive moral and material achievements, accounts for the unsympathetic attitude of many who should, and if they knew more would, welcome the experiment and learn from it—an attitude not only unfortunate for themselves, but productive in many respects of the very shadows we deplore.

With sympathy and understanding at the outset, civil war on the great scale in the early years of the Revolution might have been prevented, and the war of intervention, on which England spent a hundred million pounds, averted.

Unfortunately, from the very first our popular view of the Soviet experiment has been, as many come slowly to recognize, sadly warped. An antagonism has been created which erects a definite barrier against the truth on the Soviet side as well as ours.

Mutual distrust and suspicion still exist. This book seeks to remove them and replace them with an attitude of tolerance and sympathy. As is so psychologically true in our dealings with individuals in general, so also with the Soviet order: it is by seeing what is good, and welcoming it, that we shall be more likely to change what is bad, both in ourselves, and in our friends of the U.S.S.R.

I would particularly stress the cautions outlined in this final section of the Preface.

I would acknowledge in addition to the assistance I have received from books, journals and monographs, acknowledged elsewhere, my debt to the London Library of the Society of Cultural Relations with the U.S.S.R. for the help they have constantly given me.

Chiefly would I thank Mr. A. T. D'Eye, of Balliol College, Oxford, who has placed at my disposal his time and his knowledge, not only of the Soviet Union, but also of economics and political theory, and of constitutional history and practice in general. His criticisms, advice, suggestions, and information have proved invaluable, and placed me under a debt I can never repay.

Chiefly, too, I would thank my wife, not only for her acute and commonsense criticism and suggestions, but also for the maps and little human sketches which point the moral and adorn the tale where the tale may be dull or the moral obscure. And I thank my secretary, Mrs. Crowe, for her accuracy and her unfailing willingness at all hours of day and night to type and retype manuscripts and manage papers.

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BOOK ONE

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Bourgeois Boyhood
Apprenticeship to Life
Parish Priest

2 Rise and Decline of Capitalism

Nineteenth-century Evolution
Nineteenth-century Consummation
Twentieth-century Frustration

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Denial of Justice
Denial of Freedom
Denial of Creative Living
Denial of Fellowship

