

# 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 years' 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 their blunders, which often involve the lives of thousands of the people. Our diplomatic representation abroad is also the exclusive preserve of 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.

## A Double Game

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 Peril at Archangel

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 popula-

tion 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."

The danger of the moment is that this disastrous experiment, which has only brought ruin and death to the Russian classes in the interior whom it was naively intended to help, may be repeated in the Black Sea, nearly 1,000 miles from Moscow, with inevitably similar results.

## British Prussianism

I have seen in Archangel a British general acting toward the Russian population in their own country as despotically as any Tsar and conducting himself as scoundrelously as any of those 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.

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 of Russia in our own faces against British political and commercial influence in that country. I be-

## THE FORTY-FOUR HOUR WEEK

**L**AST May at their convention in Baltimore the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America voted to establish the forty-four hour week in the men's clothing industry. This meant that they were no longer satisfied with the straight eight hour a day six days in the week for which the American Federation of Labor had been contending for more than a generation. Fourteen weeks ago their employers denied their demand. A combined lockout and strike followed. Last week this contest ended in complete victory for the workers. According to the officers of the union, this is the first case in which the forty-four hour week has been established as the standard throughout an American industry.

This fact in itself is sufficiently noteworthy; but the circumstances surrounding the achievement are even more remarkable. The great majority of the men's clothing makers are recent immigrants, men and women whom the older American unions have sought to exclude from the country for fear that they would lend themselves to the debasement of the "American standard of living." This fear and the resulting prejudice against these immigrant workers is in part responsible for the exclusion of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers from affiliation with the American Federation of Labor. The long strike for the forty-four hour week has been won without either the moral or financial support of the official organized labor movement by an "outlawed" organization of immigrant workers, who have thus forged into a position of leadership in the improvement of working standards. It is not surprising, therefore, that these despised immigrants should celebrate their triumph as a battle won by themselves in behalf of American workers gen-

erally. The leading article in their official journal, the Advance, rejoices that "our victory means legislation not only for the clothing industry but also for the entire Labor Movement. . . . The official Labor Movement does not recognize our existence, our struggles or our victories. But we send this message to our fellow workers in and out of the official Labor Movement: 'We have organized, built, fought and won single-handed. But we have done all this not for ourselves alone, but for the working class as a whole. Whatever your attitude toward us may be, we know you only as flesh of our flesh and blood of our blood. We have made a glorious beginning. We hope to see you follow our example.'"—From The New Republic, Feb. 1, 1919.

lieve that Bolshevik propaganda has had 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 desources in a vain effort 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.

## A New War?

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.

—From the "Herald," London, Eng.

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## "REDS" AGREE TO TALK—WILL RESPECT OBLIGATIONS

**LONDON, Feb. 6.**—The Russian Soviet Government, in a wireless message announcing that it is willing to begin conversations with the Entente with the object of bringing about a cessation of military activities, declares it is willing to acknowledge financial obligations regarding the creditors of Russia of Entente nationality.

The statement was sent out from Moscow by M. Tchitcherin, the Russian minister of foreign affairs. Besides willingness to recognize the Entente creditors, the Soviet Government offers to guarantee the payment of interest on its debts by means of stipulated quantities of raw materials.

The Bolshevik government is likewise willing, it declares to place concessions in mines, forests, etc., at the disposal of citizens of the Entente, provided "the social and economic order of the Soviet Government is not affected by internal disorders connected with these concessions."