

The pipe of peace

by *Cliff Phillips*

The Welsh journalist, Cliff Phillips, recently published his professional autobiography, Dilyn fy Nhrwyn. Translated from the Welsh in which the book is written, the title is Following my Nose. There is an account in the book of Mr. Phillips' interview with Russell in 1962, when he was chief correspondent in Wales of the Press Association. Phillips kindly translated the account for the readers of Russell. Following is the account of the interview with Russell.—K.B.

ONE OF THE most inspiring and responsible experiences in my life as a journalist came many years later when I interviewed the world known philosopher, Bertrand Russell.

It was at the time the old man, who was nearing his ninetieth birthday, was trying desperately to intercede in the dispute between the United States and Cuba, with Russia indirectly involved, in the late fifties [i.e., 1962].

Bertrand Russell was known to be in direct communication with the leaders of the United States, Cuba and Russia in his bid to ensure peace. Newspapers throughout the world were anxious to obtain the facts from the wise old man who lived in Minffordd, near Penrhyndeudraeth, North Wales.

In my position as chief correspondent in Wales of the Press Association, the national news agency which cooperates with Reuters in providing a world coverage of news to newspapers, I

received an assignment to interview Bertrand Russell at his home.

My editor was specific about the arrangements he had made with Russell's secretaries for the interview. Because of his age more than anything, there could not be a Press conference with all its attendant pressures.

One reporter only was to be at the interview—and what seemed a frightening task had fallen to me.

The idea was that the Press Association was to send my report to all daily and evening newspapers throughout the world.

Arrangements had been made by my Editor for me to arrive for the interview at 4 p.m. I was living in Glanamman, Dyfed, South Wales, at the time and the message came to me at mid-day.

Imagine the task confronting me—a journey of nearly 120 miles to Minffordd in three hours and an interview which the world of newspapers awaited. What lay ahead was a long journey along difficult narrow roads to North Wales in limited time and an interview which I was not likely to forget.

On the way I became apprehensive as to how I would approach the interview with the great man. I tried to rehearse my approach to him, but nothing convincing came to me.

My apprehension deepened as I proceeded along the driveway to his house. There were dozens of reporters and photographers representing all kinds of newspapers waiting in the hope that Bertrand Russell would call a Press conference. They had been there almost all day and one could sense their consternation as I walked from my car to the main door and knocked.

I was shaking, not visibly perhaps, as I entered the house. My apprehension almost reached a climax.

I was shown to the door leading into Bertrand Russell's room and was invited to enter by his secretary. As I knocked and entered the room, I still had no idea how to greet and make myself acceptable to the old man.

On entering the room my eyes fell on a white-haired man sitting comfortably in his chair. I noticed he was smoking a pipe. Suddenly, almost inspiringly, the introductory words came to me as if I had had a message from heaven—"I see, sir, that you are smoking the pipe of peace."

The effect was astounding. Bertrand Russell smiled benignly and I felt comfortable and confident for the first time since I had

the message to interview him.

A pipe smoker myself, I asked him if I could join him. "Of course", he said. I became more at ease again when he asked, "Will you have a cup of tea with me?"

Despite the fact that I was aware of my inadequacies as an ordinary man of average intelligence about to question one of the world's great men, I felt at home.

But I kept asking myself, "Who am I to question this man?" My fears were allayed time and again by the amiability of the man and his bewitching friendliness.

He told me he had a message to give to the world's Press. I suggested that he should tell me what he wanted to say and NOT what I wanted him to say as the interviewer. My shorthand came to the rescue as I took down every word he uttered in the statement he wished people to read.

Mid-way through he offered me another cup of tea as a break. I was in his company for more than an hour—an hour I shall never forget. It was one of the greatest privileges of my life. I telephoned my story from the kiosk of an hotel in Portmadoc from my shorthand notes without preparation into long hand as time was vital to catch the editions of the national morning newspapers. The story was published throughout the world.