

Bertrand Russell: from liberalism to socialism?

by Royden Harrison

INTRODUCTION

WRITING IN 1935 E. Halévy observed: “If in fifty or a hundred years someone writes the history of modern English thought, he will class Bertrand Russell among the individualists and libertarians, not among the socialists.”¹ This judgment has been supported by careful historians and clever philosophers. Thus, Jo Vellacott asserts that he stayed with liberal values, but let the Liberal Party go. She adds: “Perhaps Russell had too much liberal baggage to travel far on the socialist tram, but it can also be argued that the destination of the socialist tram—the ever-stronger centralized state—was not the one that Russell had bought a ticket for....”² The argument that empiricism is not merely often associated with liberalism, but entails it, is presented in a clearly argued essay by B.R. Barber.³ Still more to the point, one can find many instances of Russell distancing himself from socialism and reaffirming his faith in “liberal values”. These declarations may be all the more impressive because they are separated by long spans of time. “I don’t

¹ Elie Halévy, *The Era of Tyrannies* (New York: New York University Press, 1966), p. 201.

² Jo Vellacott, *Bertrand Russell and the Pacifists in the First World War* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1980), pp. 247–9 (quotation on 249).

³ Benjamin R. Barber, “Solipsistic Politics: Russell’s Empiricist Liberalism”, in George W. Roberts, ed., *Bertrand Russell Memorial Volume* (London: Allen & Unwin; New York: Humanities Press, 1979), pp. 445–78. Yet Russell himself maintained that epistemological or metaphysical positions could have no *logical bearing* upon his historical or political judgments. See *Freedom and Organization 1814–1914* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1934), pp. 226–7. He allowed that there might be and often was an *historical* and *psychological* association between empiricism and liberalism in *Philosophy and Politics* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1947). In *My Philosophical Development* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1959) Russell had nothing at all to say about social and political matters.

like the spirit of socialism—I think freedom is the basis of everything”, he remarked in 1916.⁴ In 1940 he hoped Russia would *not* come into the war on the British side. That would transform it from a struggle between the liberal democracies and the totalitarian states into one between communism and fascism. Ten years later he assured Gilbert Murray—despite a certain qualification—“I still hold the fundamental Liberal beliefs as strongly as ever....”⁵ There were moments when Russell insisted that his politics boiled down to an *ancestral* or Chinese sort of liberalism: “I myself, in England, vote for the Labour Party because my father was a Radical; my father was a Radical because his father was a Liberal; my grandfather was a Liberal because his father was a Whig; and he was a Whig because his ancestors obtained abbey land from Henry VIII. Having derived my radicalism from such a mercenary source, shall I turn Conservative? The very idea appalls me.”⁶

One is tempted to regard the matter as conclusively settled in Halévy’s favour when one finds the *Great Soviet Encyclopedia*, third edition, pronouncing that: “In ethics and politics Russell held the position of bourgeois liberalism.”⁷ However, in this essay it will be established that the problem is rather more complicated than it has been made to seem. It cannot be resolved without a close regard for historical development. Such an historical treatment is a necessary, although not a sufficient, condition for a satisfactory answer. If Halévy wanted to evoke the “real” or “essential” Russell behind the surface appearances of his political commitments and behaviour, it won’t do merely to demonstrate that Bertie himself was inclined to regard such proceedings with scepticism. In so far as the differences between liberal and socialist values may be discerned, and in so far as the priorities of historical figures may be made the object of research, one must try to rise to the challenge.

⁴ Bertrand Russell—henceforth abbreviated to “B.R.”—to Lady Constance Malleson—henceforth abbreviated to “Colette”, 1916. This is not an exact quotation since exact quotation from this correspondence is not yet permitted. (All letters are in the Bertrand Russell Archives, McMaster University, unless otherwise stated.)

⁵ B.R. to Gilbert Murray, 18 Jan. 1941 (“Russia, I think, will be the greatest difficulty, especially if finally on our side. I have no doubt that the Soviet Government is even worse than Hitler’s and it will be a misfortune if it survives.”) B.R. to Gilbert Murray, 26 June 1951.

⁶ “On Politicians”, *New York American*, 16 Dec. 1931, p. 17. Reprinted in Harry Ruja, ed., *Mortals and Others* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1975), pp. 47–8.

⁷ Translated by Charles Haynes in *Russell*, no. 23–4 (1976): 61.

I. THE ORTHODOX LIBERAL, 1895–1914?

Bertrand Russell, according to himself, was an orthodox Liberal up until 1914.⁸ It would have been surprising if he had been anything else. His parents, Lord and Lady Amberley, were charming and courageous representatives of aristocratic radicalism. His grandfather, on his father’s side, was Lord John Russell who piloted the “Great Reform Bill of 1832” through Parliament. Bertrand always took pride—a rather uncritical pride—in his family. For instance he imagined that his grandfather, “Finality Jack”, saved England from Revolution.⁹

As a boy Russell fell under the spell of J.S. Mill, who had consented to be his godfather. Mill opposed to the demand for land nationalization a proposal for the taxation of the unearned increment on land values. This influence on the young Russell was reinforced by that of the American, Henry George, whose book, *Progress and Poverty*, helped to stimulate the socialist revival in Britain—although George stood, not for socialism, but for the Single Tax: a tax on land. “My Aunt Agatha introduced me to the books of Henry George which she greatly admired”, recalled Russell. “I became convinced that land nationalization would secure all the benefits that Socialists hoped to obtain from Socialism....”¹⁰ Accordingly, once he had made the difficult decision to devote his life to research rather than to power; to mathematical philosophy rather than public service; the sort of politics he found time for were all in the well-worn line of the great Liberal tradition. He was ardently for free trade; energetically in favour of votes for women; eager for the “People’s Budget” with its proposed tax on land values and its prospect of curbing the powers of the House of Lords. He was strongly in favour of Home Rule for Ireland. Of the so-called “New Liberalism” which was designed, at least in part, to check the advance of Labour,

⁸ *German Social Democracy* (London, New York and Bombay: Longmans, Green, 1896) but Preface to the Allen & Unwin reprint of 1965.

⁹ For B.R.’s life and family see *The Autobiography of Bertrand Russell*, 3 vols. (London: Allen & Unwin, 1967–69); Bertrand and Patricia Russell, eds., *The Amberley Papers*, 2 vols. (London: Hogarth Press, 1937); Katharine Tait, *My Father Bertrand Russell* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975); Alan Wood, *Bertrand Russell the Passionate Sceptic* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1957); Ronald W. Clark, *The Life of Bertrand Russell* (London: Jonathan Cape and Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1975). For a view of B.R. as torn by tensions see L. Greenspan, *The Incompatible Prophecies: an Essay on Science and Liberty in the Political Writings of Bertrand Russell* (Oakville, Ont.: Mosaic Press/Valley Editions, 1978). For Russell seen as socialist see Ken Coates, ed., *Essays on Socialist Humanism in Honour of the Centenary of Bertrand Russell 1872–1970* (Nottingham: Spokesman Books, 1972).

¹⁰ *Autobiography*, I: 46.

he had little to say. He mocked L. T. Hobhouse's pretentious and ultra-rationalist book *Morals in Evolution*, remarking that it should have been called "from cannibalism to the Liberal party".¹¹ As for the practice of the New Liberalism as expressed in the measures of Churchill and Lloyd George to deal with unemployment and sickness, he had little to say about them.¹² This may well have been explained by the fact that he was often working ten to twelve hours a day on his great book, co-authored with Whitehead, *Principia Mathematica*.

Yet during these years there were a number of interesting straws in the wind. In 1895, while Russell was still debating how to spend his life, he and his first wife went to Germany to explore the nature of the most powerful socialist party in Europe. They struck up friendly relations with a number of the Social Democrats. When this became known to the British Embassy in Berlin the Russells became *persona non grata*. On their return to England Bertrand gave six lectures at the newly established London School of Economics and Political Science. The same year they appeared as Russell's first book, *German Social Democracy*. This was neither a very original nor a very profound work. Yet it was important in at least two respects. Russell began with a discussion of "Marx and the Theoretical Basis of Socialism". During the next sixty years he supplemented his reflections, but he never abandoned the main lines of his criticism. Second, whether he fully realized it or not, Russell was being very useful to the Webbs. Despite many ups and downs the Webbs and other socialists were henceforth "after him".

Virtually everything that Russell said had been anticipated by other English commentators on Marx.¹³ The usual assumption, shared by Russell, was that the labour theory of value was redundant and absurd because it ignored the "demand side". Since this was the supposed basis for all Marx's thought the whole superstructure collapsed once it had been removed. Philip Wicksteed had made all Russell's points far more clearly and effectively in a polemic with George Bernard Shaw

some ten years earlier.¹⁴ This was not surprising since, according to his wife, Alys, Bertrand was not fit "to conduct a correspondence class" in economics.¹⁵ He had evidently been supplied with a reading list by Alfred Marshall at Cambridge. Yet his acquaintance with Marx himself was limited to the *Communist Manifesto* (which he admired greatly) and to "the tedious economico-Hegelian pedantry of *Das Kapital*".¹⁶ Thus, Russell failed to recognize that Marx's primary interest was not in micro-economic analysis of price determination under conditions of static equilibrium, but in the macro-economic question of the "general laws of motion" of the capitalist economy. Accordingly, Russell could applaud Marx's prediction of the tendency to increasing concentration and centralization of capital as if it were just a shrewd hunch. He did not see that for Marx this followed from the theory of value through the rise in the "organic composition" of capital. (This concept which relates the ratio of capital going on the purchase of "labour power" [variable capital] to that going on plant, raw materials, machinery, etc. [constant capital] is never mentioned by Russell.) Under these circumstances it is not so astonishing that Russell never referred to Marx's opinions concerning the falling rate of profit and the tendency to deepening periodic crises. Our concern is not with whether Marx was right or whether Marx was wrong, but with Russell's failure to grasp what the German was concerned about. As will be shown, he never grasped, or fully grasped, the *impersonal* constraints of capitalist competition. He thought that Marx's economic determinism was all one with Benthamite hedonism. If he saw business as a system of power, he saw it as a conspiracy of the "sinister interests" rather than as a set of impersonal economic imperatives which constrained capitalists as well as labourers.

Russell attributed to Marx Lassalle's "iron law of wages". And he went on doing it even as he went on insisting that it all depended upon the validity of Malthus' view of population: a view which he insisted (rightly) that Marx repudiated. Russell was reiterating this mistaken attribution in 1934 when he offered his longest account of Marx. It was not until four years later that he appeared to have seen his mistake.¹⁷ In *German Social Democracy* not only did he make mistakes on several points of fact, he appeared to become self-contradictory. Among the

¹¹ B.R. to Margaret Llewelyn Davies, 24 Nov. 1906. It involved the "naturalistic fallacy".

¹² Peter Clarke, "Bertrand Russell and the Dimensions of Edwardian Liberalism", in M. Moran and C. Spadoni, eds., *Intellect and Social Conscience*, in *Russell*, n.s. 4 (Summer 1984): 207-21.

When Dr. Clarke cannot extend the frontiers of the "New Liberalism" far enough to include Russell one is almost forced to conclude that that term means something!

¹³ E. J. Hobsbawm, "Dr. Marx and the Victorian Critics", in his *Labouring Men: Studies in the History of Labour* (New York: Basic Books, 1964). See also Kirk Willis, "The Introduction and Critical Reception of Marxist Thought in Britain, 1850-1900", *Historical Journal*, 20 (1977): 417-59.

¹⁴ R. W. Ellis, ed., *Bernard Shaw and Karl Marx: a Symposium* (New York: printed for private circulation, 1930).

¹⁵ "Lion" Phillimore to B.R., n.d. but 1894 (file 710.054344).

¹⁶ *German Social Democracy*, p. 10.

¹⁷ *Freedom and Organization and Power: a New Social Analysis* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1938), p. 104.

more plausible objections which he offered to Marx was the complaint: "There is no question, in Marx, of justice or virtue, no appeal to human sympathy or morality; might alone is right, and communism is justified by its inevitable victory."¹⁸ But then a page later we are told that the theory of surplus value "seems to spring rather from his [Marx's] desire to prove the wickedness of capital...."

It is of no small moment that Russell came to make up his mind about Marx in 1895 when he was still a young Liberal. As the years passed he admitted that Marx was a hard man to "place". As he read more in the 1930s he became more sympathetic. He thought that the historical materialist interpretation of history—although it neglected nationalism, the independent and overwhelming importance of power and much else—was a good approximation. He announced that it had entered into the structure and conclusions of his *History of Western Philosophy*.¹⁹ Yet Russell was, on balance, always more hostile than favourable. Marx was muddle-headed and consumed by hate and German chauvinism and the worst adversary of liberty in the modern world. Even in the work in which his help was acknowledged he was accused of being too pedestrian and provincial and too concerned with "Man".²⁰

In 1895 Sidney Webb and his first Director of the London School of Economics were delighted with Russell's offering. "Hewins thinks—as I most decidedly do—that your syllabus is *first rate*. We have no suggestions to make. We both feel that there must be six lectures if you don't mind. It would be wasting a real opportunity to crush it into fewer."²¹ From Webb's point of view that "opportunity" consisted in satisfying the Fabian critics who suspected that he had abused his trust when he (Webb) had used money left to promote socialism to help establish LSE. (Russell's lectures may not have been very original, but it was probably unusual to allow the discussion of socialism to assume such a prominent place in the programme of an institution which aspired to university status.) At the same time Russell's criticisms of Marx made it safe when it came to dealing with the London Chamber of Commerce or Lord Rosebery. Moreover, Russell was sensible in pointing to the usefulness of the new middle class. He was shrewd when he recognized the need for the German Social Democrats to maintain their secular religious inspiration while going in, like Vollmar, for a moderate programme. The young Russell himself was modest. He

owned that he was not qualified to judge between the claims of individualism and collectivism. In the mid-'nineties he tended to use the terms "liberalism" and "socialism" vaguely and even to allow that socialism in some unspecified non-Marxist shape might be a form of liberalism. He gave a lecture on "Socialism as the Consummation of Individual Liberty" in which he apparently instanced ways in which the state, J.S. Mill notwithstanding, had enlarged freedom. He persuaded himself that "freedom has always been the ideal of Socialists" and that he himself was one—it being understood that there was no need for a distinct Labour Party nor for the class struggle.²²

The Webbs continued to pursue Russell. For a long time Beatrice was puzzled to know what to do with him. The people that the Webbs cultivated were all "experts" or potential experts. What sort of expert was Bertie? Finally, Beatrice decided that he was an expert on "reasoning". She and Russell were appalled by one another yet enjoyed each other's company very much.²³ She got him involved in the Coefficients, a dining club in which she and Sidney intended to bring together imperialist statesmen and creative writers in the interests of Social Imperialism. Russell along with H.G. Wells was numbered in the latter group. However, he claimed to have resigned after hearing a paper from Grey, the Liberal Imperialist who was to take Britain into the Great War in 1914. He followed up this resignation by leaving the Fabian Society. (Membership of the Fabian Society before 1918 was not limited to supporters or members of the Labour Party.) Beatrice took it all very calmly: rather more calmly than she took the break-up of his marriage. Such carryings-on were not in accordance with Mrs. Webb's ideal of "unblemished monogamous love". Despite this, when the Webbs launched *The New Statesman* Beatrice explained to Bertie that they would like a contribution from him and from other "sane" collectivists.²⁴ He obliged with an article which was eminently sane in its advocacy of more emphasis upon scientific education, but not obviously collectivist in any way. Indeed, during the labour unrest of

¹⁸ *German Social Democracy*, p. 14.

¹⁹ *History of Western Philosophy* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1946), pp. 813–14.

²⁰ *History*, p. 816.

²¹ S. Webb to B.R., 4 Dec. 1895.

²² *Cambridge Essays, 1888–99*, ed. K. Blackwell, A. Brink, N. Griffin, R.A. Rempel and J.G. Slater, Vol. 1 of *The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1983), p. 344. On 12 Sept. 1894 he told Alys: "I feel that *the thing* I have learnt this year is that any improvement in the condition of the great mass of women is only possible through Socialism...." But he went on: "Of course I know so little about this subject as yet that I may be mistaken, but I should love to go into it thoroughly, historically, economically, deductively—every way it can be gone into" (letter in possession of Barbara Strachey Halpern, Oxford; photocopy in RA).

²³ See my "Bertrand Russell and the Webbs: an Interview", *Russell*, 5 (1985): 44–9.

²⁴ B. Webb to B.R., 11 Dec. [1912].

1910–14 he showed more sympathy with syndicalism than with collectivism. In March 1912 he joined forces with John Masefield, G.M. Trevelyan, Ralph Vaughan Williams and other celebrities in defence of Tom Mann and others who had been prosecuted for trying to undermine military discipline with their “Don’t Shoot” leaflet.²⁵ In the same month he was invited to write a book on syndicalism. He told Lady Ottoline Morrell: “... I should *love* doing it, and I should love the excuse for getting to know all sorts of revolutionaries. I suppose they wrote to me because of my book on German Socialism.... Syndicalism does rather tempt me—I should have to sacrifice the precious long vacation to it though.” (Russell then held a lectureship at Trinity College, Cambridge.) “Every one keeps saying it is the enemy—even Labour Members grow respectable about it. This makes me like it—if I only knew what it is.”²⁶

II. THE TURN AGAINST LIBERALISM AND CAPITALISM, 1914–21

When he had been involved in the struggle for women’s rights Russell had joined the adult suffrage movement. This brought him into contact with Arthur Henderson, the labour leader (whom he affected to regard as a firebrand), as well as with Margaret Llewelyn Davies, a leading Co-operator and left-wing socialist. The influence of Margaret was particularly marked. At the outbreak of war Russell wrote to her: “You were right about the Liberals. I have done with them.”²⁷ In fact he did not formally resign until July of the following year.²⁸ It was also probably in or around that month that he joined the Independent Labour Party and through it the Labour Party itself.²⁹ He also appears to have come back into the Fabian Society during the war.

²⁵ *The Times*, 27 March 1912, p. 14; reprinted in *Contemplation and Action 1902–14*, ed. R.A. Rempel, A. Brink and M. Moran, Vol. 12 of *The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1985), pp. 433–4.

²⁶ B.R. to Lady Ottoline Morrell, #397, n.d. (Friday) but March 1912 (original letter at the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, University of Texas, Austin; photocopy in RA).

²⁷ B.R. to M.L. Davies, Mon. [Aug. 1917].

²⁸ B.R. to G. Turner, Secretary of the Cambridge Liberal Association, 26 April 1915, explaining that he could not help—directly or indirectly—a party that had deceived its supporters as regards a European war.

²⁹ “Probably”—see his fence-sitting correspondence with Herbert Bryan in July 1915. Within a couple of years he was reporting that the poet, Siegfried Sassoon, had joined the ILP, “at last”. See also Marvin Swartz, *The Union of Democratic Control in British Politics during the First World War* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971).

However, considered as a “recruit to Labour” it is a nice matter to distinguish what was, and what was not, representative in Russell’s transition.³⁰ The war taught him to see socialists as his comrades long before he was persuaded to make socialism his political ideal.³¹ And it was only certain socialists and certain kinds of socialism that he admired. Yet his development can be usefully related to the four main phases and characters of non-chauvinist opinion. He had strong affinities with those who might be described as the “dispassionate critics”. Then he became the champion of the conscientious objectors. From 1917 he increasingly identified with organized labour, which aspired to impose a just peace upon the belligerents. Finally, during the last few months he was reduced to a position akin to that of the French peasants and Fabians who continued to cultivate their fields directly behind the line of fire. In the aftermath of the war his firsthand experience of life in Russia and China helped to induce him to supply a clearly written death certificate for liberalism while providing a somewhat more ambiguous birth certificate for socialism.

From the beginning of the war, Russell was clearly identified with all those who simply could not pretend that the blame for the catastrophe rested entirely upon the shoulders of Prussian militarism. In politics Russell showed an appreciation for impersonal relationships and for “system” which he rarely carried into economics. The search for “the balance of power”, the presence of international anarchy where there should have been international authority, were seen as far more important than the malign intentions of this power or of that alliance. Of course, this was not to deny what Graham Wallas referred to as “balked dispositions” in men themselves.³² The war demonstrated the power of unreason. War might be atavistic, as Russell held it was. It might have made sense only under conditions of tribal scarcity.³³ But the coming of war called into question the primacy of reason and of calculation which had been taken so much for granted in too much Liberal thinking. These reflections belong to the period of Russell’s

³⁰ Catherine Ann Cline, *Recruits to Labour: the British Labour Party 1914–1931* (Syracuse: Syracuse U.P., 1963).

³¹ “It is clear the Socialists are the hope of the world; they have gained importance during the war. I would swallow socialism for the sake of peace” (B.R. to Lady Ottoline, #1,147, Wed. mg., n.d. but Nov. 1914).

³² “Disintegration and the Principle of Growth”, unpublished ms., n.d. [1915], p. 9. Probably 1915, being a first draft of the opening of the *Principles of Social Reconstruction*—discarded because considered too technical? Russell’s note refers readers to Wallas’s *Human Nature in Politics*.

³³ “Is a Permanent Peace Possible?”, *Atlantic Monthly*, 115 (March 1915): 367–76.

association with E.D. Morel and the Union of Democratic Control and his critical study of *The Policy of the Entente* (1915). It relates to his move towards the left because he was outraged by the discovery of how oligarchical power worked away beneath the surface of parliamentary government: how foreign secretaries sealed the fate of millions without the knowledge of some of their closest colleagues, never mind the public at large. It called for the end of consensus politics—at least in so far as defence and foreign affairs were concerned.

During this first phase of the war Russell could count on such men as Norman Angell and “Goldie” Lowes Dickinson. But in the second, his confrontation with the state assumed a more practical character. From 1915 forward state restrictions and control were extended inexorably through such measures as the Defence of the Realm Act, the Treasury Agreements, the Munitions of War Act and the more or less cunning advance towards full conscription.³⁴ In this context Russell emerged not merely as some sort of effete, academic critic of patriotic sentiment, but as an active opponent of the state. As younger men such as Clifford Allen³⁵ and Fenner Brockway³⁶ went to prison as conscientious objectors, Russell came forward to take their places as speaker, organizer, writer and editor for the No-Conscription Fellowship. The state responded by restricting his right to travel at home as well as abroad. It imposed prison sentences as well as fines upon him. His sufferings might be exaggerated. If he lost his employment at Cambridge, he was not spat upon by army officers, nor put in chains and kept in solitary confinement, nor was he sentenced to death as other members of the NCF were.³⁷

Yet those who suffered most were first to salute him whether they were Christians or socialists.³⁸ But for long he could accept neither the

one creed nor the other. In 1916 he was still inclined to see socialism—or one prevailing kind of it—as one enormous prison-house. “State Socialism”, he wrote even later than this, “enlisted the forces of progress on the side of the State, and the war completed what State Socialism had begun. It is now recognized that the State has the right to dictate to every man and woman what work he or she shall do, at what wages; what to eat and drink; where to live; and (most important of all) what opinions to profess. In this universal prison, the only free men remaining are the conscientious objectors.”³⁹

Nor could he bring any kind of uncomplicated reassurance to the Quakers. As editor of *The Tribunal* he evoked the rhetoric of believers and non-believers, but he did not conceal the fact that he was a non-believer even if he refrained from dwelling upon it. It is a strange—and hitherto unnoticed—fact that by far the fullest philosophical and historical account of conscience and the conscientious objector written during the war was supplied, not by Russell, but by Sidney Webb.⁴⁰ Russell was inhibited by two circumstances. As editor of the journal of the NCF he had to try to promote unity, not discord, and to retain the confidence of all who were sacrificing for their convictions. But further—he had no conscience! No one can appreciate Russell’s career who has not grasped this strange fact about him. If the utilitarians thought that nothing was worth anything but pleasure while having themselves little or no capacity for experiencing it⁴¹—Russell thought nothing deserved more respect than conscience while deriding it as a *cognitive faculty*! He never repudiated the opinion he arrived at in adolescence that conscience was a snare and a delusion. “Conscience”, he had observed, “is merely the combined product of evolution and education ... obviously it is an absurdity to follow that rather than reason.” And he went on to complain: “Yet this inner voice, this God-given Conscience which made Bloody Mary burn the Protestants, this is what we reasonable beings are to follow. I think this idea mad, and I endeavour to go by reason as far as possible ... [the] greatest happiness of [the] greatest number. Then I can apply reason to find out the course most conducive to this end.”⁴²

³⁴ Arthur Marwick, *The Deluge* (London: The Bodley Head, 1965).

³⁵ Marwick, *Clifford Allen: the Open Conspirator* (Edinburgh and London: Oliver & Boyd, 1964).

³⁶ Fenner Brockway, *Inside the Left: Thirty Years of Platform, Press, Prison and Parliament* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1942).

³⁷ Thomas C. Kennedy, *The Hound of Conscience* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1981).

³⁸ Emrys Hughes to B.R. from “The Guard Room”, 4 March [1917]. “I wish to thank you.... I am awaiting my 3rd Court Martial having been brought from Cardiff Prison last Thursday after completing a sentence of 9 months. Since last April I have had a rather stormy passage coming in for my share of bullying and rough handling and being transported from one gaol to another in handcuffs and chains.... I believe many of us, whose actions were at the beginning guided largely by healthy instinct rather than intelligent thought owe a great deal to you for helping us to understand....” Hughes became a left-wing socialist MP.

³⁹ “War and Individual Liberty”, *The Tribunal*, no. 50 (8 March 1917): 2.

⁴⁰ S. Webb, “Conscience and the ‘Conscientious Objector’”, *North American Review*, 205 (1917): 403–20.

⁴¹ *Freedom and Organization*, p. 119.

⁴² *Cambridge Essays*, pp. 9, 10–11. Russell’s “mature” view of conscience will be found in *The Conquest of Happiness* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1930), pp. 96–7, and *Human Society in Ethics and Politics* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1954), p. 74ff.

When Russell became the champion of the conscientious objector what he was championing was *integrity* rather than conscience. No one was an expert on what was ultimately worthwhile. What men called conscience sent some men to the front and kept others from going. No more than Hobbes did Russell respect conscience as a definitive moral authority.⁴³ It was not to be likened to either the legislature or to the judiciary. It was more akin to the executive. Its imagined actions were neither true nor false but merely pleasant or unpleasant: commendations or, more commonly, reproaches. For Russell moral passion was not diminished by being preceded by the most sang-froid calculation. Only such calculation allowed the necessary distinction to be drawn between just and unjust wars.⁴⁴ Thus, he preferred a British to a German victory, but believed the worst consequences followed from the prolongation of the war.⁴⁵ Such a prolongation threatened the future of European civilization. This was not the kind of intellectual or spiritual proceeding which was obviously intelligible to the sort of men who sat in tribunals which tried the objectors nor to those objectors who had to appear before them.

Russell objected to the view that there was something *peculiarly* subjective and *individual* about conscientious objection. He insisted upon the strength and value of fellowship.⁴⁶ Perhaps there was no other period in his life in which he rejoiced so much in the sense of comradeship. Those who fail to grasp this make it difficult to understand how Russell moved from February 1917 until March 1918 into the third, socialist camp which looked to a peace brought about by organized labour; how he could appear as hero of the hour at the Leeds convention which called for the establishment of Soviet power in Britain.⁴⁷ By June 1917 Russell had largely shifted the emphasis from psy-

chological to socio-economic considerations in accounting for war. When he repeatedly called for the abolition of the wages system it was not primarily because that system involved injustice: the denial of the claims of labour, women and science. It was the unequal distribution of *power*, even more than the unequal distribution of *wealth*, and income, which made capitalism offensive. Its appeal to the "possessive" rather than to the "creative" impulses was obnoxious.⁴⁸ The way in which it planted and cultivated the love of dominion in the ruling plutocracy made it dangerous to peace.⁴⁹ He was convinced that it must be smashed. With this conviction came a critical re-examination of the entire Benthamite inheritance.

There were times when Russell liked to insist that he had been "Benthamically 'conditioned'" and that he had always held Bentham to be "a most sensible fellow".⁵⁰ In fact, during the Great War Bertie came to the conclusion that Jeremy had become a "most defunct fellow". By 1916 he was insisting that Benthamism had outlived its usefulness. The war had delivered, to its already spent impulses, a death-blow. Bentham had failed to observe that we habitually obey impulses rather than pursue some conscious purpose. Then, Bentham had confused pleasure with happiness. In other words he had over-valued specific rewards, like high wages, at the expense of successful activity, as exemplified in important and interesting work. Then again, Bentham, while rightly insisting that tradition must be modified through rebellion and criticism, had failed to understand just how indispensable tradition can be. (He did not see how important it is when we need to find a link with the past and a guide to the future.) But worst of all, Bentham and Co. "did not foresee the importance of organization. In this respect, Marx was wiser than the individualists; his emphasis upon class-consciousness, class-conflict, and the substitution of monopoly for economic competition, proved far more nearly true than is common with even the wisest prophets."⁵¹ It is hardly curious that all these reflections were associated with the conclusion that: "English Liberalism, as we have known it, is dead."⁵² For a century, from 1815 until 1914, it had relied

⁴³ T. Hobbes, *Leviathan* 29 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1947), p. 249. ("For a man's Conscience and his Judgment is the same thing, and, as the Judgment, so also the Conscience may be erroneous".)

⁴⁴ "The Ethics of War", *The International Journal of Ethics*, 25 (Jan. 1915): 127-42. (Wars of colonization and wars of principle are "fairly often justified." Wars of self-defence: "seldom, except against an adversary of inferior civilization", p. 133. As for wars of prestige, they are never justified, p. 134.)

⁴⁵ "Two Letters", *The Cambridge Magazine*, 5 (30 Oct. 1915): 56.

⁴⁶ "The Conscientious Objector (A Reply to Mr. E.A. Wodehouse)", *The Herald of the Star*, 6 (Apr. 1917): 181-3.

⁴⁷ Stephen White, "Soviets in Britain: the Leeds Convention of 1917", *International Review of Social History*, 19 (1974): 165-93. The convinced revolutionaries detected "complicated attempts to exploit the [Russian] Revolution in the interests of Western pacifism" (p. 193). See also John G. Slater, "What Happened at Leeds?", *Russell*, no. 4 (1971): 9-10.

⁴⁸ *Principles of Social Reconstruction* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1916), Chap. I. Also *Political Ideals* (New York: Century, 1917), p. 27.

⁴⁹ *Principles of Social Reconstruction*, Chap. II, "The State". Hitler made exactly the same comment about the incompatibility of democracy and private property when he talked to the Dusseldorf Industry Club before he took power. See Joachim C. Fest, *Hitler* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, [1974]).

⁵⁰ B.R. to H.J. Laski, 12 May [192]8.

⁵¹ "Disintegration and the Principle of Growth", p. 14.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 2.

upon a social stability and an absence of external dangers which were no longer to be had.

Just before he went to prison in 1918 Russell completed his book *Roads to Freedom*. Neither Jeremy Bentham nor even John Stuart Mill put in an appearance. Marx, warts and all, led the way. He was followed by Bakunin and the syndicalists. In the second part of the work Russell declared himself for guild socialism. He did so despite the fact that his relations with the guild socialists themselves had not been easy. G.D.H. Cole, one of their liveliest leaders, was an angry young man who made a habit of reproaching his elders and betters.⁵³ Russell fared no better at his hands than did the Webbs. After an initial exchange of pleasantries, in which Cole was flattered by receiving the texts of some of Russell's lectures, and was largely in agreement with them, he turned to their differences. Russell wanted to designate the workers' associations as "voluntary" whereas Cole saw them as what Rousseau termed "particular associations": compulsory, but with an open door. What Cole insisted upon was: "If a man is a Socialist, he *ought* to join a Socialist Society. Similarly, if a man is a miner, he ought to join the Miners' Union, and it may be necessary to force him. This becomes even more essential, if the Union takes over the organization of production in the mines." He was careful to add that nobody should be shut out.⁵⁴ Two years later Cole's criticisms had become rather sharper. He told Russell: "You seemed to me to speak as one more interested in the non-political than in the political aspects of life, and as only asking of politics and economics that they should not disturb you or anyone else who desires to live a non-political life."⁵⁵ Finally, Cole declared himself to be shocked by a footnote in the *Principles of Social Reconstruction* in which Russell asserted that only a "small minority ... are capable of artistic enjoyment."⁵⁶

In fact there was a still more fundamental objection to Russell's guild socialism although it was perhaps not just *his* guild socialism which was vulnerable to it. Fearful of monopolistic extortion by the producers' cooperatives—Russell never departed from his early hostility to all forms of monopoly—he saw the state controlling prices and output. These "economic" matters must be managed in the interests of the consumers. But what Cole called the "industrial" concerns—the entire

organization of the actual process of production; the division of labour and the definition of tasks within it; the length of the working day; organization of shifts, etc.—ought to be left to workers' self-management.

Unfortunately, even the most democratic and benign government would be under great pressure to keep prices down and output up. Its powers in these decisive respects would probably be exercised in such a way as to set narrow limits to workers' self-determination. It is characteristic of Russell that he clearly identified the legitimate interests of consumers and producers. (His instinct was with the producers and only his "reluctant reason" induced him to substitute guild socialism for syndicalism.⁵⁷) But what he was not good at was getting down to the details of institutional structure and applied economics. Rightly discerning the impossibilities of anarchism as well as its attractions, he needed to show how the state might exercise its function unobtrusively, indirectly and moderately. Thus, there ought to have been a discussion about the general principle of price determination under socialism—an enumeration of the special circumstances which would warrant a departure from these general principles (say marginal cost pricing), a consideration of how a state monopoly of banking and foreign trade might be made to reinforce the government's power of taxation to prevent extortion and assure distributive justice.

With the conclusion of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk and his own incarceration, Russell felt that the moment when labour might exercise a decisive influence in the interests of peace and socialism had passed. In prison he returned to mathematical philosophy. Between times he read Lytton Strachey's *Eminent Victorians*. (The warder had to explain to him that he was not expected to laugh out loud while he was in jail!) For a few months Russell followed the advice of Sidney Webb and returned to doing his "own thing". Like the French peasants he went on cultivating his fields directly behind the line of fire.⁵⁸ After he came out of prison he did not seek to return to old relationships. He upset some of his comrades by his detached attitude.⁵⁹ As he mingled with the crowds celebrating the Allied victory he was aware of how hard it was for him to be at one with others. He doubted that he had ever been

⁵³ Margaret Cole, *The Life of G.D.H. Cole* (London: Macmillan St. Martin's Press, 1973).

⁵⁴ G.D.H. Cole to B.R., 31 Aug. 1915.

⁵⁵ Cole to B.R., 28 Sept. 1917.

⁵⁶ *Principles of Social Reconstruction*, p. 121n. (It is uncertain whether B.R. himself could be placed in this "small minority"! However, he enjoyed the poetry of P.B. Shelley.)

⁵⁷ "Guild Socialism and Education", *Labour Leader*, 14, no. 12 (12 March 1917): 6. An interview by Clement J. Bundock.

⁵⁸ R. Harrison, "The War Emergency Workers' National Committee", in Asa Briggs and John Saville, eds., *Essays in Labour History 1886-1923* (n.p.: Archon Books, 1971).

⁵⁹ Lord Fenner Brockway in an interview with the author, House of Lords, 16 March 1984. B.R. to Colette, 11 Sept. 1918.

a "Liberal, a Socialist or a Pacifist."⁶⁰ Yet he did retain his loathing for the wages system which he had acquired during the war and his interest in the Russian Revolution. He not only wanted to see the revolution at work, he even pretended the intention of settling permanently in Russia.⁶¹ The organization of a British Labour Delegation to the Soviets in 1920 seemed to afford an opportunity of sorts. Clifford Allen and other friends were members of it. Without belonging to it himself, he accompanied it. Litvinov apparently tried to stop Russell coming.⁶² Russell, for his part, tried to stop Dora Black, soon to become his second wife, from going. Being a woman of considerable character and energy, she made her own way there without Russell's knowledge.

The small book which Russell published upon his return and which he reprinted virtually unchanged⁶³ in 1949 does appear to have been exceptionally perceptive and prescient; tough-minded and fearlessly honest, yet not without generosity. It was criticized from the left for its failure to subordinate everything to the defence of the revolution against imperialism. It was criticized from the right for failing to exhibit the sustained analytical rigour to be found in the author's philosophical works.⁶⁴

Russell met Lenin whom he found destitute of self-importance; Trotsky who seemed vain; and Gorky who was lovable. He also travelled widely and tried to assess the quality of everyday life. He came to at least two important conclusions which, even today, may not be sufficiently appreciated or adequately worked out. First, Bolshevism was a secular religion "with elaborate dogmas and inspired scriptures."⁶⁵ Lenin might usefully be compared to Cromwell. "Cromwell's dealings with Parliament are not unlike Lenin's with the Constituent Assembly. Both, starting from a combination of democracy and religious faith, were driven to sacrifice democracy to religion enforced by military dictatorship. Both tried to compel their countries to live at a higher level of morality and effort than the population found tolera-

ble."⁶⁶ "Bolshevism as a social phenomenon is to be reckoned as a religion, not as an ordinary political movement.... Almost all the progress in the world from the earliest times is attributable to science and the scientific temper; almost all the major ills are attributable to religion."⁶⁷

Second, and perhaps still more important, Russell saw that Russia was tackling *pre*-industrial problems rather than *post*-industrial problems. He came close to understanding that this might not just be a matter of bad luck: "... if Russia is allowed to have peace, an amazing industrial development may take place, making Russia a rival of the United States. The Bolsheviks are industrialists in all their aims; they love everything in modern industry except the excessive rewards of the capitalists. And the harsh discipline to which they are subjecting the workers is calculated, if anything can, to give them the habits of industry and honesty which have hitherto been lacking, and lack of which alone prevents Russia from being one of the foremost industrial countries."⁶⁸

"By proclaiming itself the friend of the proletariat, the Government has been enabled to establish an iron discipline, beyond the wildest dreams of the most autocratic American magnate. And by the same professions the Government has led Socialists from other countries to abstain from reporting unpleasant features in what they have seen."⁶⁹ For the Bolsheviks' programme of world revolution Russell had little or no sympathy. "But as a national Government, stripped of their camouflage, regarded as the successors of Peter the Great, they are performing a necessary though unamiable task."⁷⁰ He concluded: "It may be that Russia needs sternness and discipline more than anything else; it may be that a revival of Peter the Great's methods is essential to progress. From this point of view, much of what is natural to criticize in the Bolsheviks becomes defensible; but this point of view has little affinity to Communism. Bolshevism may be defended, possibly, as a dire discipline through which a backward nation is to be rapidly industrialized; but as an experiment in Communism it has failed."⁷¹

In private, Russell gave full vent to his feelings of hatred of the regime. Of course, he did not anticipate the ravings of Malcolm Mug-

⁶⁰ *Autobiography*, II: 38.

⁶¹ B.R. to Colette, 6 May 1917.

⁶² Colette, 30 April 1920.

⁶³ B.R. removed a chapter by Dora Russell on art and education. B.R. did *not* look at the proofs of the second edition (letter to S. Unwin, 11 Oct. 1948).

⁶⁴ Antony Flew, "Russell's Judgment on Bolshevism", in Roberts, ed., *Bertrand Russell Memorial Volume*.

⁶⁵ *The Practice and Theory of Bolshevism*, 2nd ed. (London: Allen & Unwin, 1949), p. 9. This passage, and the others quoted below, are unchanged from the first edition of 1920.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 73-4.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 46. See also my "Marxism as Nineteenth Century Critique and Twentieth Century Ideology", *History*, 66 (June 1981): 208-20.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 69.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 118-19.

geridge.⁷² Yet Russell, too, thought it worse than Tsardom to live under. He loathed it. Perhaps what he most feared and detested was that the Bolsheviks did not appear to mourn the loss of individual liberty. Neither conscription nor suppression was regarded as a necessary, but transitory, evil. They seemed to be preoccupied entirely with their own mastery. In fact Russell saw, with terrible clarity, that any act of political emancipation is bound to arouse fierce opposition. Only people with the terrible defects of the Bolsheviks could hope to combat that opposition. Yet only people utterly unlike the Bolsheviks could make good use of victory!⁷³ From this predicament there was no easy deliverance. Oddly, just as H.G. Wells saw Lenin as a detestable, ugly, brutal Russian version of Sidney Webb, who ought to be put down by some moral sanitary authority, so too Russell could tell Lady Ottoline that in Russia he felt that he was under the rule of Webb.⁷⁴ In fact, the wretched Sidney had belonged to the minority on the executive of the Labour Party which had favoured putting Lenin down with fire and sword.⁷⁵

When Bertie and Dora were reunited he was appalled to discover that she took a much more enthusiastic view of Russian developments than he did. However, he had received an invitation to lecture for a year in Peking where left-wing students hoped that he would counter what they took to be the conservative influence of the American philosopher, John Dewey. On the boat Russell infuriated the British colonial officials and businessmen by giving a lecture which emphasized the positive achievements of the Bolshevik revolution.⁷⁶ For a long time he believed that there was no alternative government. While he was ready to associate with anarchists such as Emma Goldman in trying to help political prisoners in the Soviet Union, he took care to distance himself from any attempts at an anarchist revolution.⁷⁷

Despite the fact that he was taken seriously ill, Russell enjoyed the company of the Chinese. For the rest of his life he delighted in Chinese things and surrounded himself with them. He came, rather sadly, to the conclusion that China could not escape the need for industrializa-

tion. He looked at the different ways in which it might be accomplished and concluded that no one leader was likely to combine the intellectual and practical qualities required. China, he thought, "would need men as different as Lenin and Karl Marx."⁷⁸

Out of the experience of war and revolution, of industrialization in the developed and undeveloped world, the Russells were brought to the inescapable conclusion in their joint work, *The Prospects of Industrial Civilization*, that: "Liberalism with its insistence upon the individual, is unable to find any cure for the evils of capitalism." It was obsolete. They came to see that: "Individualists" had "freed business from the control of the State" only to discover "that they had subjected the State to the control of business."⁷⁹ Always and everywhere the State appeared, not as a neutral instrument, "but by its very nature on the side of established injustice ... the fact that the law and the law courts consistently decide against labour is one of the most powerful arguments for revolution...."⁸⁰ The reasons for the break with liberalism and capitalism were carefully itemized:

1. Industrialism makes society more organic, and therefore increases the power of the State.
2. Industrialism gives a wholly new power over men's lives to those who control the use of capital.
3. The institution of private property, inherited from the preindustrial era, has allowed the control of capital to be in the hands of certain private persons, the capitalists.
4. The capitalists have thus acquired control of the State with the vastly-increased powers that industrialism has given to it.
5. Meanwhile the new habits of life produced by industrialism have destroyed the traditional beliefs of wage-earners, while education has given them a new intelligence in criticizing the social system.
6. Education has enabled the workers to acquire political democracy, while the plutocratic control of the State has rendered political democracy almost worthless.
7. Owing to the inevitability of large economic organizations, and to the power of those who control the use of capital, individual freedom as conceived by Liberalism is no longer possible.

⁷² See M. Muggerridge to B. Webb (Passfield Papers, L.S.E.).

⁷³ B.R. to Colette, c. 1920.

⁷⁴ "Imagine yourself governed in every detail by a mixture of Sidney Webb and Rufus Isaacs, and you will have a picture of modern Russia" (B.R. to Lady Ottoline, #1,566, 25 June 1920; in *Autobiography*, II: 122).

⁷⁵ R. Harrison, "The War Emergency Workers' National Committee" (cited at n. 58).

⁷⁶ *Autobiography*, II: 125.

⁷⁷ B.R. to Emma Goldman, 14 Feb. 1925 (International Institute for Social History in Amsterdam; photocopy in RA).

⁷⁸ *The Problem of China* (New York: Century, 1922), p. 264.

⁷⁹ Bertrand and Dora Russell, *The Prospects of Industrial Civilization* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1923), p. 60.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 58.

8. Therefore the only way by which the community can avoid being enslaved to the capitalists is the collective ownership of capital by the community, as advocated by socialism.

9. Since capitalists profit by the present system, they cannot be dispossessed except by the class war, unless the preponderance of force against them becomes so overwhelming that they will abdicate voluntarily.⁸¹

III. THE RELUCTANT LABOURITE, 1922-44

In the 1920s the Russells persuaded themselves that the Labour Party had acquired a structure which removed one of the great predicaments of modern politics. "A political party represents, as a rule, certain interests which do not violently conflict with each other. Its policy is a compromise between the need of funds and need of votes; the former determines its acts, the latter its speeches. In a democracy, every party must seem to have something to offer to the average man. In a plutocracy, every ordinary party must actually have something to offer to some group of rich men, for the sake of its campaign fund. Therefore in a plutocratic democracy the leaders of most political parties must be hypocrites. The British Labour Party has happily escaped from this dilemma by obtaining funds from the Trade Unions, but the Liberal Party has repeatedly given illustrations of the fact that its heart was where its treasure came from."⁸²

Bertie and Dora evidently witnessed their faith in the genius of the Labour Party. Between them they stood three times in two years against Sir Samuel Hoare in his Chelsea stronghold.⁸³ When the first minority Labour Government took office in 1924 Russell served on a committee intended to look into the administration of the Boxer Indemnity. At home and abroad he defended this Government and

commended it for its achievements.⁸⁴ During the general strike of 1926 Bertrand wholeheartedly supported the strikers. When his brother Frank died in 1931 he went to the House of Lords where he accepted the Labour whip. Before that he had been on "My dear Bertie" terms with the Labour leader and Prime Minister, James Ramsay MacDonald.⁸⁵

How then can one suggest that there was anything half-hearted or reluctant about Russell's Labour Party membership? His heart was just not in it as it had been during the heroic days when he was writing for the ILP and the No-Conscription Fellowship. George Bernard Shaw patiently explained to him that it was impossible for him to get elected in Chelsea.⁸⁶ Bertrand knew this to be the case and found it profoundly reassuring. He did not want to be returned.⁸⁷

In 1924 he was forgiving rather than grateful for the work of the first Labour Government. It was a minority Government and he had worked out what it could and could not do. It could not introduce the capital levy nor could it nationalize industries. However, it could do something about unemployment. Russell followed experienced economists and not the prejudices of the Bank of England: "A great deal of unemployment in Great Britain", he contended, "is attributable to the tenacious policy of reducing the amount of money in circulation (that is to say raising the value of the pound sterling) which has been practised in favour of the financiers and against the interests of industry."⁸⁸ Likewise, in the crucial area of foreign policy Russell saw the Government being itself, without over-dependence on the House. It would recognize the Soviet Union and promote reconciliation in Europe. In the event, he drew a discreet veil over the lost opportunities in respect to the economy; was thankful for what was attempted in relation to Europe and Russia; regretted the continuities in imperial policy; and wished that the Prime Minister had managed to keep his

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 61-2. (Dora Russell, in Vol. 1 of her autobiography, *The Tamarisk Tree* [London: Elek/Pemberton, 1975], p. 168, claimed a half share in this work. Even if this is true—and there is no reason to doubt it—it still leaves B.R. with full responsibility. He never tried to deny it or diminish it.)

⁸² *Ibid.*, pp. 214-15.

⁸³ In his Election Address of Nov. 1922, B.R. suggested that wartime experience proved the superiority of production for use over production for profit! But as he told Gilbert Murray on 20 Nov. 1922: "My election was fought entirely on my moral character. I never knew how virtuous I was until I heard myself explaining it on the platform."

⁸⁴ "Why I Believe in Labour; a Great Work Begun", *The New Leader*, London, 9, no. 3 (17 Oct. 1924): 10. Also his remarks in debate with Morris Hillquit at Carnegie Hall on 5 May 1924, "Is the British Labour Government Revolutionary?" (B.R. demonstrated, with regret, that it was not). A report of the debate is in *The New York Times*, 6 May 1924, p. 7. Full transcripts of the debate are available at the Hoover Institute of War and Peace and at Duke University Library (copies in RA).

⁸⁵ J.R. MacDonald to B.R., 9 March 1926.

⁸⁶ G.B. Shaw to B.R., n.d. but autumn 1922.

⁸⁷ B.R. to Gilbert Murray, 20 Nov. 1922. Perhaps he had wanted to be returned once—at Bedford, as a Liberal, in 1910. He threw away the nomination by refusing to compromise on Christianity.

⁸⁸ "Lo que puede y lo que no puede hacer un gobierno laborista" [What a Labour Government Can or Cannot Do], *La Nación*, Buenos Aires, 24 Feb. 1924, sec. 3, p. 2.

head when he was rushed with the Campbell Case and the Zinovieff letter.⁸⁹

Bertie thought that leaders were very important, but he never really trusted them after his experience of Grey and Lloyd George. Even with respect to the ILP he noted as early as 1916 that its leaders numbered a lot of “mugwumps” among them.⁹⁰ Labour leaders, he remarked in 1926, “do not seem to realize that the ideal of a ‘gentleman’ is one of the weapons of the propertied classes; it precludes dirty tricks against the rich and powerful, but not against the poor and oppressed ... we shall achieve nothing until we desire Socialism more than the approval of our enemies, which is only to be won by treachery, conscious or unconscious ... it is only by a skilful muddle-headedness that the Labour Party can inveigh against imperialists while taking care to retain the Empire and to carry on the tradition of oppression, as the late Government did in practice.”⁹¹

When the general strike broke out a few months later, Russell pre-faced his careful examination of the circumstances under which such an enterprise might succeed and might be justified by observing: “There are two obvious morals of the recent fiasco. The first is that a battle is not likely to be won when the Generals do not desire victory. The other is that the only British reformer who was wholly sound as to tactics was Guy Fawkes because he based his action upon the proposition that all M.P.’s would be better dead.”⁹²

In 1930 Russell gave an amusing and crucially important statement about his attitude towards the Labour Party and the ILP. He had been asked by the ILP for an autographed letter which might be sold at a fair which it was organizing. “In reply to your letter asking for a few lines about the I.L.P., or the Labour Government, I can only say that I still pin my faith to the former, though the latter does not seem to me worth supporting. My continued faith in the I.L.P. is based upon the expectation that when the Lib-Lab. coalition has become fully developed,

⁸⁹ “El nuevo Gobierno británico” [The New British Government], *La Nación*, Buenos Aires, 13 Jan. 1925, sec. 1, p. 4.

⁹⁰ B.R. to Lady Ottoline, #1,371, n.d., Mon. night, pmk. 25 April 1916. (“... I find I now regard the I.L.P. as they regard official Liberals—as lukewarm mugwumps ... so one travels!”)

⁹¹ “Trotsky on Our Sins”, *The New Leader*, London, 13, no. 22 (26 Feb. 1926): 3. In this review of *Where is Britain Going?* B.R. largely assented to the critical observations on Labourism while treating the supposedly revolutionary alternative as quite unrealistic.

⁹² “On the Use of a General Strike”, *The New Leader*, London, 13, no. 33 (28 May 1926): 3.

the I.L.P. will form an Independent Party. I don’t suppose you will consider this letter suitable for your Fair, but you are welcome to make use of it if you do not mind the racket.”⁹³

Before the Labour leaders had formed their coalition with the Tories as well as the Liberals and before the ILP had had time to act up to Russell’s expectations, he found himself, more or less willy-nilly, a member of the Parliamentary Labour Party. His brother Frank died in March 1931 and he had to take his place in the House of Lords. But he explained: “I shrink from the thought of addressing so hostile an audience as the Peers, and I cannot in any case do so, as he did, on behalf of the Government, even if the Government desired my support. I am too dissatisfied with them in many respects to be able to become a loyal Party man. I like their conduct of foreign affairs and their concordat with Gandhi, but not their complete inaction at home.”⁹⁴ Sidney Webb wrote:

Dear Bertie,

When may we hope to welcome you to the House of Lords? The Party happens to be relatively rich in Earls—we are destitute of Dukes, Marquises and Viscounts—so that we can arrange for you to be inducted in due form—as their Lordships’ phrase is ‘in the usual manner’. Marley, as our Whip, would willingly make the necessary arrangements when you are ready.

It is deadly dull assembly with no rules, but habits: and these are dilatory in the extreme. I never saw a place in which so little was done in so much time. But it may give us more opportunities of meeting.⁹⁵

Bertie replied that: “It is dreadful to think that there are no Dukes in the Labour Party.”⁹⁶ However, he was not going to encourage Sidney’s hopes that they would see more of each other. He told the Chief Whip that with the possible exception of a few unusual matters he could be counted upon to support the Government when he was there. But he had no intention of being there often. His responsibilities as writer and educationalist precluded it.

A few weeks before the fall of the second Labour Government Russell described his attitude towards the Labour Party very clearly. He told a friend: “I think you are entirely right in what you say about the Labour Party. I do not like them, but an Englishman has to have a

⁹³ B.R. to A. Marshall Diston, 29 Sept. [1930].

⁹⁴ B.R. to Gilbert Murray, 8 March 1931.

⁹⁵ S. Webb to B.R., 14 March 1931.

⁹⁶ B.R. to S. Webb, 16 March 1931.

Party just as he has to have trousers, and of the three parties I find them the least painful. My objection to the Tories is temperamental, and my objection to the Liberals is Lloyd George. I do not think that in joining a Party one necessarily abrogates the use of one's reason. I know that my trousers might be better than they are; nevertheless they seem to me better than none.⁹⁷

After MacDonald (deaf to the cries of his own people but flattered and encouraged by his monarch) had defied the TUC and split the Labour movement, Russell remained silent. The Government was reconstructed in August. At the same time Bertie was writing about who can wear lipstick.⁹⁸

The 'thirties were difficult years. Russell was obliged to write many popular articles and pot-boilers to keep the wolf from the door. Dora and he had gone repeatedly to the United States on lecture tours. They went separately. Their marriage broke up. She tried to maintain the experimental school, Beacon Hill, which they had set up together. As with A.S. Neill's more famous institution, the children tended to be the more neurotic offspring of the upper middle class. Perhaps these schools were justified by the contribution which they eventually made to change in the state system. They promoted coeducation, the abolition of corporal and other cruel punishments, and the development of the critical faculties rather than learning by rote. But Russell did nothing directly for the proletarian child. He growled out against the whole system of compulsory public education. Nor was he more than a meritocrat when it came to universities and higher education.⁹⁹

IV. ORNAMENT OF HIS PARTY: SERVANT OF HIS STATE, 1944-51

When the Second World War broke out, Russell, his third wife ("Peter") and his three children were in the United States. Much against their inclination they were obliged to stay there until 1944. Upon returning home Bertie threw himself into popular education work. He took part in the extremely successful "Brains Trust" (a broadcast discussion among eminent thinkers). With Laski, he visited the troops to answer their questions. He noticed with some chagrin that

⁹⁷ B.R. to Maurice Amos, 16 June [1930]; in *Autobiography*, II: 195.

⁹⁸ "Who May Use Lipstick?", *New York American* (14 Sept. 1931), p. 13. This was a serious and perceptive, but untimely, article. Reprinted in Harry Ruja, ed., *Mortals and Others* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1975), pp. 26-7.

⁹⁹ "What a Labour Government Could do with the Universities", delivered to the ILP summer school and published as "Labour and the Universities", *The New Leader*, London, 4, no. 11 (14 Sept. 1923): 4.

Laski standing to his left (or east) got more support from the soldiers than he did. Shortly after the atomic bombs had been dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Russell spoke in the House of Lords and foretold the advent of a still more terrible weapon, the H-bomb.¹⁰⁰ During the next two or three years he went on to advocate that America should use its temporary monopoly to prevent proliferation. He maintained that the Soviet Union should be required to accept the control of atomic weapons under penalty of being subjected to a nuclear attack. Naturally such opinions received very wide notice in the press. They were also attended to in the highest quarters. The Prime Minister thanked him for drawing his attention to the article, "What America Could Do with the Atomic Bomb". "I have read this with interest.... I need hardly tell you that this is one of the most difficult and perplexing problems with which statesmen have ever been faced and I can assure you that all the points you have made are present in my mind."¹⁰¹

It is unlikely that Russell was told about the Prime Minister's decision to make a British bomb, since Attlee did not divulge this to a majority of the members of his own Cabinet. What is apparent is that Russell was used by the state or the establishment. He was sent to blockaded Berlin to speak to the troops and to Scandinavia to strengthen opinion in favour of the West and against the Soviet Union.¹⁰² He took a position to the right of the majority in the Labour Party on Western union. He even gave lectures at the Imperial Defence College for a few years.¹⁰³ For all this he was suitably rewarded. He was invited to deliver the Reith Lectures for 1948-49.¹⁰⁴ His Majesty, despite some vestigial unease about having a jail-bird in Buckingham Palace, was pleased to confer upon him the Order of Merit—the highest award for cultural distinction known to the United Kingdom.¹⁰⁵ Then

¹⁰⁰ 28 Nov. 1945, *Hansard*, 138: 87-92. Russell spoke in the House of Lords on six occasions—always on defence or foreign policy.

¹⁰¹ C.R. Attlee to B.R., 11 Oct. 1945.

¹⁰² "Det Marxistiska Gifet" [The Marxist Poison], *Samtid och Framtid*, Stockholm, 5 (June-Aug. 1948): 299-301.

¹⁰³ *Autobiography*, III: 19.

¹⁰⁴ Published as *Authority and the Individual* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1949).

¹⁰⁵ B.R. thought meeting the King was "fun", but he was starting to get uneasy. He confessed to Gilbert Murray in a letter dated 23 May 1952: "There certainly is some comfort in such things as the O.M., though I am always a little ashamed of feeling this sort of comfort. And I have been a rebel during so much of my life that conventional recognition makes me a little uncomfortable. What has made me respectable has been my hatreds of Hitler and Stalin, neither of which fits very well into the kind of general outlook that I like. It would be pleasant to be liked for one's virtues, if any, and not only for one's weaknesses."

came the Nobel Prize for Literature. In his speech of acceptance on this last occasion Russell put himself at a more impartial standpoint. And four years later he announced that man's peril was that he was caught between demented ideologies in east and west. To his friends, new and old, Russell's position on war and peace appeared wildly erratic, inconsistent and, ever so often, mistaken to the point of wickedness. He did not see his own record in that light at all. He had always maintained that there were just and unjust wars even if he had not been finally settled on which were which.¹⁰⁶

If he was unhappy about his book *Which Way to Peace?* (1936) and repented his support of Munich, that was exceptional. His general position was that circumstances altered cases. The one invariable rule was: try to assess the consequences and weigh the expected costs and benefits. Even in the 'thirties this was his position. "I am against a league war in present circumstances", he explained, "because the anti-league Powers are strong. The analogue is not King v. Barons, but the Wars of the Roses. If the League were strong enough, I should favour sanctions, because either the threat would suffice or the war would be short and small. The whole question is quantitative."¹⁰⁷ Thus, one power with an atomic bomb was one thing and two powers with them quite another. What Russell failed to understand is that most people can't associate all this rational calculation, in which the sums come out differently at different times, with moral passion. If J.D. Bernal and J.B.S. Haldane turned their backs on him at parties, if G.D.H. Cole and he stood eyeball to eyeball glaring at each other, it might be because they were a gang of red professors, but Russell's sang-froid attitude was widely rejected.¹⁰⁸ You don't pay tributes to your heroic ally one day and threaten to kill him the next. You don't expect a country which has lost 20,000,000 people defending its national independence to submit to a *pax Americana*: to tamely accept the yoke of the one country which had come out of the war richer than it had gone into it. You do not obscure the novel horrors of nuclear weapons. Russell furiously denied that he ever advocated a preventive war as distinct from using the threat of it to avert the danger of it once and for all. At the end of 1950 he resigned from the presidency of the Cambridge University Labour Club over this issue. The Club accepted his assurance that he

was misreported as advocating a preventive war as desirable, but then referred him to the following statements and answers to questions:

- (a) "I think we should undertake not to use the hydrogen bomb aggressively, but I think we should not give the same undertaking about the atom bomb."
 (b) (Answering whether "preventive war" has meaning as a phrase): "The phrase has a meaning, and under some conditions would be justified—it would not be justified until the Russian had given us a *casus belli*." *Casus belli* was held to include invasion of Siam, Burma, or W. Berlin, or the promotion of a revolution as in Czechoslovakia. (c) "He was not against the war on Hitler and would not be against any war he could envisage against Stalin."¹⁰⁹

Russell's preoccupation with the Bomb precluded him from paying much attention to the new social settlement which the first majority Labour Government was consolidating after the war. There is no doubt that he thoroughly approved of full employment, the mixed economy and comprehensive social services.¹¹⁰ Of course, he sometimes found the authorities trying and the bureaucracy irksome. In the cruel winter of 1946, he was worried that the Government did not appear to be coping adequately. In the following autumn he wrote to the Minister of Food:

October 9, 1947

Dear Strachey,

Like many other people, I am weary of the insolence of minor government employees. Is there no way of improving the standard of behaviour in Food Offices.

Last week our cook lost my ration book. My wife took the enclosed form to the nearest Post Office to have her signature witnessed by the Postmaster. She was told that if she signed the form not in the presence of the Postmaster it would then be taken to the Postmaster for signature, but only if I first signed the form correctly, for, as the clerk explained, I apparently did not know how to sign a form and had only put "Russell". My wife then obtained the signature as witness of the first literate and responsible person she met, and took the form to the Food Office. There she was told

a. that my signature was incomplete.

¹⁰⁶ *Autobiography*, III: 18, where he denies inconsistency. He does not appear to have condemned the use of atomic weapons against Japan.

¹⁰⁷ B.R. to Kingsley Martin, 7 Aug. 1935 (Rec. Acq. 585; originals at University of Sussex Library).

¹⁰⁸ B.R. to Colette, 26 April 1947.

¹⁰⁹ Harvey R. Cole, Hon. Secretary of the Cambridge University Labour Club, to B.R., 1 Dec. 1950.

¹¹⁰ See, for example, "Greater Democracy Is Socialism's Purpose", *Argus*, Melbourne, 2 Aug. 1950. ("I am myself a Socialist and have been a wholehearted supporter of the present British Government.") He contributed a photograph of himself and a paragraph to a Labour Party news-sheet, *You and Tomorrow*, Nov. 1949.

- b. that it was in the wrong place on the form.
- c. that my signature and not hers, according to the form, should be witnessed.
- d. that only in the case of an adult signing on behalf of a child should the signature be written where she, with a post office pen, had written hers.
- e. that I can only eat and therefore can only live (implied) after this week if I admit that I am illiterate, declare that paragraph D of the enclosed form means what it obviously does not mean, and agree to accept the reading of the said paragraph said to be correct by a young woman in the Marylebone Food Office.

Because I feel strongly that this sort of petty tyranny adds intolerably to the burdens of the people of this country I am sending you the form and asking you yourself to be so good as to let me know whether it is correctly filled in or not.

If the form is correctly filled in except that a restaurant manager is not a responsible person within the meaning of the act I should like very much to fill in a duplicate and ask you to witness it yourself. My wife could bring it to your office for this purpose.

We should like to see you both socially but have felt that, like so many old friends, you are too busy and too important to waste time on the likes of us.

Yours sincerely,¹¹¹

V. THE RED COCKATOO ONCE MORE, 1959-65

As has been noted, even before the death of Stalin there were signs that Russell was changing his ground in relation to the Cold War. A new chapter in the long history of his love/hate relationship with the United States was opening. Those who reproach Russell with failing to deal with the oppressions, failings, and aggressions of the Russians and Americans evenly and with a due sense of proportion forget that for Bertrand America was the land of *missed* opportunity. Uniquely blessed by geography and by history, the Americans, when they looked up from the trough, addressed their fellow creatures with a boundless insolence and an ignorant self-righteousness. It was because they were so unnecessary that the persecutions of the McCarthy period were so unforgivable.¹¹²

¹¹¹ B.R. to John Strachey, 9 Oct. 1947.

¹¹² "Bertrand Russell and the U.S.A.," *The Manchester Guardian*, 12 Jan. 1952, p. 4.

If Soviet society was not socialist but some sort of oriental despotism, as Russell had been among the first to recognize, the United States was capitalist. And capitalism was inherently unjust. The ruling oligarchy in the plutocratic democracies loved dominion and were prone to make war. This is not the place to trace Russell's development and restatement of "Man's Peril" in relation to the Bomb. Nor to recall his extraordinary success in engaging the leaders of both the super-powers in public correspondence. Nor can one do justice here to his unique importance in awakening imaginative understanding of the prospects before us. Our theme is a different one. Throughout the 'fifties Russell steadily moved back towards his customary position within the Labour Party. A critic of the leadership from a left standpoint, he was nice to Attlee. When the former Prime Minister was made an earl he asked Russell, jointly with Oliver Baldwin, to introduce him to the Upper House. It took the old man's fancy that a Labour Prime Minister should be presented by the descendants of Whig and Tory ones.¹¹³ Russell consented, but he found it hard to speak well of Attlee's successor to the Labour leadership, Hugh Gaitskell. If he did anything worth doing it was generally too little and too late as with resisting British aggression in Egypt in 1956. When Gaitskell in turn was succeeded by Harold Wilson, Russell had become more antipathetic. When Wilson offered him his hand, Russell rejected it.¹¹⁴

Simultaneously relations with the left were being restored to something like their old cordial character. Not that Bertie made the Labour Party the main vehicle for his activity. With help from Einstein he prepared the way for the first Pugwash Conference in 1957. The following year he emerged as one of the leaders of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. Dissatisfied with CND's want of militancy, he established the Committee of 100 in 1960 which advocated direct action. In the following year he and his fourth wife, Edith, were sentenced to two months' imprisonment each (of which they served a week) for participating in a sit-down outside the Ministry of Defence.¹¹⁵

When he had been sent to prison in 1918, the orientalist Arthur Waley had sent him the following translation of a Chinese poem:

¹¹³ C.R. Attlee to B.R., 28 Dec. 1955. (Long before the War Attlee had dismissed the idea that he would ever enter the House of Lords. He would be known, so he said, as "Lord Love-a-Duck of Limehouse". But then he began to read the works of Sir Arthur Bryant ...)

¹¹⁴ Clark, *The Life of Bertrand Russell*, p. 616. In unpublished notes on Clark's book, Edith Russell denied the story. However, Russell's contempt for Wilson is not in doubt.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 590.

Sent as a present from Annam—
 A red Cockatoo
 Coloured like the peach-tree blossom,
 Speaking with the speech of men.
 And they did to it what is always done
 To the learned and eloquent
 They took a cage with stout bars
 And shut it up inside.

The following year his ninetieth birthday was celebrated by left-wing MPs who invited him to a party in the House of Commons. Russell retained a lively regard for the left-wing leader, Michael Foot. He was deeply anxious when Foot and his wife were involved in a serious motor-car accident in 1963.¹¹⁶ However, friendship with rebels was not enough to keep him in a Party which he saw implicating Britain in America's criminal war in Vietnam. After addressing a meeting in 1965 Russell publicly tore up his Labour Party membership card. This was intended to be a personal protest against leaders who were seen to be betraying peace, socialism and national independence. It was not designed to set an example that others should follow. In fact, Russell was energetically involved in championing the rights of Ken Coates who fell foul of George Brown and his like on the Party's organization committee.¹¹⁷ It was ironical that Russell was effectively driven out of the Party by men many of whom were soon to defect to the Conservatives, the Liberals and the Social Democratic Alliance.¹¹⁸

VI. CONCLUSION

In a long discussion of socialism and liberal ideals Russell recalled:

I am one of those who, as a result of the war, have passed over from Liberalism to Socialism, not because I have ceased to admire many of the liberal ideals, but because I see little scope for them, except after a complete

¹¹⁶ B.R. to M. Foot, 4 Nov. 1963.

¹¹⁷ See Russell's Preface to Ken Coates, *My Case Against Expulsion* (Nottingham: The Week, 1966).

¹¹⁸ One of Russell's last articles was written for the Labour left and directed against the emerging renegades, particularly George Brown—subsequently Lord George Brown: "Labour's Goldwater", *Tribune*, 28 Nov. 1969, p. 1. Earlier he made a call for a new progressive party. Since it was to be constituted on the basis of British trade unionism it promised to be a case of *plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose* (Interview, *Sunday Citizen*, 7 Nov. 1965).

transformation of the economic structure of society.... For my part, I feel convinced that any vital progress in the world depends upon the victory of International Socialism, and that it is worthwhile, if it is necessary, to pay a great price for the victory.... When I speak of Socialism, I do not mean a milk-and-water system, but a thorough-going root-and-branch transformation.... Self-government in work is the most important of all the forms of freedom that have to be conquered, because his work is what touches a man most closely.¹¹⁹

There are freedoms of election, speech, association and assembly which are frequently referred to as liberal. And so they are, but in the context of the opposition of "liberal" to "authoritarian" rather than that of party differences. Russell was always a liberal in the grand sense of being a man of the left rather than of the right. Always—or almost always—he wanted to encroach upon the powers of the ruling oligarchy whether that oligarchy was made up of a caste or class, a bureaucracy or a knot of parliamentarians bent upon minimizing their accountability to anyone or anything but their own conscience. For him only economic backwardness and cultural deprivation of the most appalling kind might justify the temporary withholding or suspension of the liberal freedoms and the characteristic liberal frame of mind. He thought of that frame of mind in terms of its opposition to fanaticism. Here again the distinction is not between liberals and socialists, but between civilized men and barbarians. It has been well said: "to realize the relativity of one's convictions and yet stand for them unflinchingly is what distinguishes a civilized man from a barbarian." Halévy was claiming Russell for liberalism and individualism by cutting off the socialist tradition from the earlier and larger tradition of the entire left. He wanted his readers to think of socialism in terms of Sidney Webb or V.I. Lenin on one of their "off days" rather than in terms of Robert Owen and William Morris; Cole and Tawney.

What then are the differences between the liberal and socialist traditions and how did Bertrand Russell relate to them? First, socialists have opposed liberals by proclaiming the virtues of cooperation as against competition.¹²⁰ When Russell praised competition it was always in cultural and political terms, never economic. (Obviously this does

¹¹⁹ "Socialism and Liberal Ideals", *The English Review*, 30 (May–June 1920): 449–55, 499–508. Quotations at pp. 449–50, 501, 506.

¹²⁰ G.D.H. Cole, "Socialist Thought, the Forerunners 1789–1830", *History of Socialist Thought*, Vol. 1 (London and New York: Macmillan and St. Martin's Press, 1953), for some distinctive features.

not apply to his advocacy of free trade before the Great War.) Russell was clearly in the socialist camp when he compared the creative impulses so favourably to the possessive ones, and when he denounced the wages system in favour of industrial democracy discreetly regulated by a democratic state. Second, socialists have held that the interests of the working class (or those referred to by Saint Simon when he talked about the “poorest and most numerous class”) deserved the first and foremost consideration. Russell came very close to affirming this claim. He held that the claims of labour, like those of women, were unanswerable. Given the rules of distributive justice, resistance seemed morally impossible. Yet Russell was more aware than the early socialists that there might be a plurality of goals each of which was worthwhile in itself and which did not necessarily follow from, or attach itself to, the others. Thus, justice might conflict with efficiency. While Russell would have experienced little difficulty in coping with that conflict, his devotion to justice would have been hard tested if it had come into conflict with peace or freedom. Third, most of the men and women who have shaped the socialist tradition have held that social and economic relationships are more important than political ones. They have sometimes favoured this proposition considered morally, sometimes considered causally, and sometimes in both ways at once.

Within the socialist tradition there is wide agreement that the progress of humankind is more likely to be promoted by socializing the process of production than by proclaiming Bills of Rights and tinkering with constitutions. Socialists have been inclined to imagine that if you get rid of classes then the cruel business of governing men will soon be replaced by the painless affair of administering things. Russell was very sceptical about this sort of optimism. He agreed that private ownership and control encouraged an obsession with power among capitalists. But he did not expect that the abolition of economics would entail the abolition of politics. If he never stated the essential difference, he surely sensed it. The abolition of scarcity is imaginable in the world of goods and services. It is not imaginable in the world of power. To try and imagine it is to become immersed in self-contradiction. Russell’s anxieties about power were more akin to those of most liberals than they were to those of most socialists. However, they were more akin to those of most anarchists than to those in either of the other two camps.

There is, arguably, a fourth point of difference between the liberal and socialist traditions; a point which relates to the last one. Liberals and socialists may attach value to both positive and negative liberty, but they attach a different *relative* importance to them.¹²¹ It can hardly

¹²¹ Isaiah Berlin, *Two Concepts of Liberty* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958).

be disputed that liberals think of freedom, first and foremost, in terms of the absence of restraint—of the curbing of authority. Socialists, on the other hand, while acknowledging the importance of negative freedom, are much more inclined to think of liberty in terms of self-government—the concentration of authority in our own hands. It would be as big a mistake to be over-insistent on this difference as it would be to omit all mention of it. Great liberals, from John Stuart Mill to Lord Bullock, have been charmed into submission by the claims of the self-governing—or almost self-governing—workshop. But they have succumbed to these charms towards the end of the day when their liberalism was being replaced by “non-revolutionary syndicalism”.¹²² This may be an interesting context into which Russell can be fitted. In general, it would be a nice matter to decide whether he cared more for negative than for positive liberty. Probably he did—but the important point is that he cared passionately for them both.

Russell’s changing affiliation from the Liberal to the Labour Party has an undoubted bearing upon the problem of his essential political beliefs—but not all that much bearing. At the seaside during the inter-war years, he encouraged his children to get dirty, to make vile concoctions, concoctions which he referred to as “poison for the Government”.¹²³ It seems unlikely that Russell cared a damn whether this imagined lethal brew went down the throat of David Lloyd George (or whoever pretended to be his successor) or of Stanley Baldwin, or of James Ramsay MacDonald. He despised them all! And he despised them because they agreed about almost everything and did so out of greed and stupidity. Of course, in part, it was that Russell was not by temperament, nor by ambition, a good “party man”. He preferred the great tradition of the Chartists and the Anti-Corn Law League mobilized in popular campaigns around single issues. He never got immersed in Labour Party life as Webb and Laski did. He never aspired to become the tutor-general of the labour movement as Cole and Tawney did. Yet he belonged to the Labour Party for most of his long life. His discontents with it were almost always shared by those “below” on the left rather than shared with those “above” on the right. The faults of the Labour Party were that it was too respectable; not socialist enough; too reluctant to unite industrial with political action; too inclined to shrink back from any challenge to American imperial-

¹²² Lionel Charles Robbins, Introduction to Vols. IV and V of *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967), and *Industrial Democracy*, being the Report of the Committee of Inquiry, Session 1976–77, Cmnd 6706, xvi.

¹²³ Tait, *My Father*, p. 19.

ism! The fact of the matter is that Bertrand Russell was a Whig aristocrat to the very tips of his fingers. He concealed and protected his patrician attitudes behind his democratic slogans.¹²⁴ However, one imagines that he himself would have pointed out that “attitudes” and “slogans” are not true or false. He himself would have insisted that it was unimportant whether he was usually prompted by a non-conforming conscience, or by a socialist sense of comradeship or by an aristocratic disdain.¹²⁵ In the end what mattered was neither liberalism nor socialism, but a remembrance of our common humanity. “I appeal, as a human being to human beings: remember your humanity and forget the rest. If you can do so, the way lies open to a new Paradise; if you cannot, nothing lies before you but universal death.”¹²⁶

Yet, to remember our humanity is *not* to forget “all the rest”. On the contrary, it is to understand the rest adequately. It is not to be deceived by the ideologies of either side. It is to identify the actual choice which is open to us. It is to make our choice in as rational, peaceable and civilized a manner as possible. This is not going beyond liberalism or socialism. But it is what Bertrand Russell *really meant*.¹²⁷

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¹²⁴ Clark, *The Life of Bertrand Russell*, p. 631.

¹²⁵ “I once wondered aloud to him whether his temperamental bias towards non-conformity and dissent was an expression not so much of intellectual courage as of the aristocrat’s disdain of the commoner and his desire to *épater le bourgeois*. He replied with a disarming frankness: ‘Hook, I think you have got something there ...’” (Sidney Hook, “Bertrand Russell: a Portrait from Memory”, *Encounter*, 62, no. 3 [March 1984]: 18). This testimony must be treated with caution since this is a “hatchet job”. Hook depicts Russell as vain, greedy, cruel, lascivious and—worst of all—anti-American. Russell may simply have been taking the quickest way with a prying companion. He soon recognized that in his anti-Communist frenzy, Hook had come to discard socialism.

¹²⁶ “Man’s Peril from the Hydrogen Bomb”, *The Listener*, 52 (30 Dec. 1954): 1,135–6 (at p. 1,136). Reprinted in *Portraits from Memory* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1956).

¹²⁷ I am indebted to Professor Chushichi Tsuzuki, under whose editorship this essay first appeared in Japanese translation. For helpful comments on the English draft I wish to acknowledge Richard A. Rempel and Margaret Moran of the Bertrand Russell Editorial Project at McMaster, and Kenneth Blackwell and Sheila Turcon of the Russell Archives.