

HANDS OFF RUSSIA.

No apology is needed for introducing this subject in the Report as it is so important and serious to every lover of national freedom and liberty that one can only stand amazed that the British Labour Movement has stood idly by so long, while the Government have proceeded with their policy of military intervention in Russia, and by this action are assisting the intolerable reactionary capitalists and landlords of Russia to revive the old regime of Czardom, which (previous to the Revolution) represented all that was known the world over as the most bloody and tyrannical reign, so that there stretched from Moscow to the remote icy regions of Siberia one long damning trail of red, the blood trail of the exiles upon the snow. The trail of the pioneers of Russian trade unionism and Russian Socialism, and to-day, after the working men of Russia have overthrown their age-long tyrants, the Government of England are sending soldiers, shells and aeroplanes to defeat the Bolsheviks who have succeeded in establishing the first Socialist republic in the world.

That Republic stands in danger of being overthrown because British trade unionists are manning the engines and ships that are to carry the soldiers and munitions to Russia. Here in London British trade unionists are working every possible hour on barges that are being fitted out to carry munitions of war to defeat their Russian comrades. Aye, and by some ironic circumstance, as if possessed by the bloody imp of capitalist greed, are working at a speed that they never exerted when it was thought necessary to have ships to beat the Germans. Ye God, how the Gods of War and Greed must now be smiling in fiendish delight.

And all this effort, all this loss of comradeship, all this prostitution of idealism and manhood, to assist the capitalists of all countries to restore the reign of the Czars.

Bolshevik atrocities? Why, even if they were true (and all independent eye-witnesses who have returned from Russia declare that they have not witnessed any of them), they would pale into insignificance beside the ghastly executions and pogroms of the late Czar, who in one year caused 26,000 of his subjects to be executed; the majority of whom belonged to your own class. Your Government never intervened them.

Therefore, I would appeal to all of you who still have a heart that beats in sympathy with our comrades abroad, to get busy in your branches, and get our members to refuse to touch any ship that is to carry munitions to Russia. Only by such action can the British Labour Movement wipe out the stain that now tarnishes its ideals, and if it means personal sacrifices, what of it! On the continent men and women are dying every hour to defend working class Russia. Shall we fail them in their hour of need, or rather, shall we not exhibit a little of that international solidarity that we love to cheer about, but have now such a magnificent opportunity to demonstrate?

In conclusion, I will quote the closing passage of Arthur Ransome's (*Daily News* Special Correspondent) "Truth about Russia," 3d. :—"These men who have made the Soviet Government in Russia, if they must fail, will fail with clean shields and clean hearts, having striven for an ideal which will live beyond them. Even if they fail, they will none the less have a page of history more daring than any other which I can remember in the story of the human race. They are writing it amid showers of mud from all the meaner spirits in their country, in yours, and in my own. But when the thing is over, and their enemies have triumphed, the mud will vanish like black magical noon, and that page will be as white as the snows of Russia, and the writing on it as bright as the gold domes that I used to see glittering in the sun when I looked from my windows in Petrograd."

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