

IX - 76 - 6. Publishers advertisement for --"The Soviet Union as a World
Power" by Scott Nearing - The Island Press, 470 West 24th Street,
New York 11, N.Y.

Soviet Russia to date embodies the most ambitious attempt to find a way out of the world-wide social crisis precipitated by the decay of capitalist imperialism and accentuated by the rush of technological changes and the rapid spread of social science. In the same sense that the years from 1780 to 1840 are known as the era of the French Revolution, the years from 1900 to 1950 will be known in history as the era of the Russian Revolution.

Bolshevism has already profoundly altered the social pattern of this half-century. Its influence will extend far into the future. Anyone who pretends to be well informed on the major social movements of our time must devote serious study to the rise and development of the Soviet Union. Anyone who is concerned for the future of mankind must do his thinking, plan his social strategy and formulate his program of social action only after a careful survey of Soviet experience.

In the field of world politics Soviet influence has been felt ever since the revolution of 1917. During the past five years the Soviet Union has played a leading political role in both Europe and Asia. There is every reason to believe that the role will be enlarged and will extend to the Americas and perhaps to Africa. Under these circumstances the subject of the role of the Soviet Union in world affairs becomes a matter of prime importance for every thinking person.

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*From "The Soviet Union as a World Power"
by Scott Nearing. Just issued (October 1945)*

FOREWORD

I have frequently been urged to publish the lectures which I have for some years given annually in various cities. The suggestion came both from those who had been unable to attend the lectures and, more especially, from those who wished to review them at their leisure.

The difficulty has heretofore been the problem of distribution. A possible solution has presented itself through the facilities of The Island Press, a cooperative publishing house, and the World Events Committee, which has developed extensive connections throughout the United States and Canada.

I have accordingly decided to try the experiment of publishing one of the two series of lectures which I gave during the 1944-1945 lecture season, but brought up to date. If the experiment is successful, I plan to make it an annual practice under the series title, *Social Science Lectures*.

The publishing of the present volume is a cooperative, strictly non-profit undertaking. I have prepared and contributed the manuscript without remuneration; the costs of printing and binding have been covered by loans without interest from readers of *World Events*; The Island Press, which is attending to the manufacture and distribution, is a genuine non-profit cooperative and the members of the World Events Committee, who worked out the financial details and will assist in the distribution, are giving their services without compensation.

Any surplus of receipts over expenses will be employed to extend the distribution of this and similar publications. The cooperation of all who are interested will be welcome.

S. N.

Jamaica, Vermont
July 1, 1945

PREFACE

There is peculiar timeliness in a discussion of the role of the Soviet Union in world affairs—(1) because the part played, and to be played, by the Soviet Union is so substantial, (2) because it is so little understood and (3) because it is so frequently misrepresented. I have studied closely the Russian Revolution and the Soviet Union, have made six trips to Soviet Russia and have had opportunities to discuss Soviet policy with many well informed persons. While I have no idea that I can set the reading public right on the much discussed issue of Soviet foreign policy, I hope that I can make some contribution toward brushing away the cobwebs of traditionalism and providing a reasonable viewpoint from which to consider the position of the Soviet Union in the world of today and tomorrow.

Anyone attempting to write or speak on a general subject such as the relations between the Soviet Union and other nations is confronted by three serious difficulties: (1) the bigness and complexity of the matter, (2) its unfamiliarity to an outsider (foreigner) and (3) the great body of prejudices, preconceptions and half-truths that all of us carry about. These difficulties are present in the consideration of many controversial questions, but in the case of the Soviet Union, with its land mass flung across two continents, its conglomeration of cultures, races, peoples and nationalities and its bold attempt to replace the old social system by a new one, the difficulties are magnified and multiplied.

Writers and speakers on the Soviet Union fall into two main classes, those who deal with some technical subject, such as the construction of hydro-electric plants or the handling of tuberculosis, and those who discuss the economic and social structure and policies. The first group has an easy time of it, since it is necessary merely to survey and report; the second group is hampered by personal bias and harassed by special interests.

If there is a wholly unprejudiced report on the Soviet Union, I have never seen it. Some writers, like the Webbs, make an effort at neutrality. I make no such pretense. I am not neutral on the Soviet Union. I have been a partisan of the Russian Revolution since its inception and I am still a partisan of it. Anything I say or write on the subject will necessarily be colored by that partisanship.

Why am I partisan? I am not Russian, nor were any of my ancestors, so far as I know. I am not and never have been in the pay of the Soviet government and, with the exception of two years, 1927-29, I have not been and am not a member of the Communist Party. But I am a student of sociology and I am profoundly convinced that a time has come in the development of social theory and practice when mankind can undertake what Lester F. Ward called "the conscious improvement of society by society."

I have lived my life in an outmoded social order that is tearing itself to pieces in a manner which has proved highly expensive in terms of material wealth, health, life, hopes, aspirations and ideals. As a teacher of social science, I came in contact with the youthful victims of this social death agony and was casting about for some proposal or proposals that would provide a way out for the lost generation.

This search led me through the literature of social reform and social revolution. At the outset I was inclined to believe that the established order could be reformed—that is, preserved in principle and changed only in detail. The economic breakdowns that preceded World War I and then the war itself convinced me that the present social order is unsound in principle and must therefore be radically altered—that is to say, uprooted and replaced.

I was not and am not committed to any particular technique of social revolution. I disagree with Bolshevik theory and practice in a number of important particulars. But, while we in the west swallowed the bitter pill of economic paralysis and war, the Bolsheviks worked out an alternative theory and, at the risk of their lives, tried to put it into practice. Here was a group of people with a passionate belief in an ideal, a willingness to make immense sacrifices in its behalf and wide backing among a sturdy, uncorrupted people.

Had the Zapata brothers in Mexico or Sun Yat-sen and his Chinese followers or Gandhi and his Indian multitudes stepped out with equal boldness, I would have been equally partisan in their behalf. I felt and feel confident that capitalist imperialism has outlived its usefulness. I am convinced that any effort to keep the old carcass alive by the injection of artificial stimulants will result in disillusionment and much unnecessary suffering. I welcome any and every attempt to find a workable substitute.