



BERTRAND RUSSELL:

Will He See His Pugwash Goals Reached?

At the age of eighty-eight this "international gadfly on the rump of the affluent society" is still encouraging people to think for themselves and to search for truth.

(From THE LONDON OBSERVER NEWS SERVICE)

(Second of two articles)

LONDON—Almost everything that has happened since 1914 has been a fatal blow to the comfortable pre-Freudian beliefs in the basic reasonableness and charitableness of all men that had been gained by Bertrand Russell at Cambridge. Russell, a passionately honest man as well as a brilliantly perceptive one, has continually tried to adjust his theories to events. A visit to Russia in 1920 greatly modified his views on Socialism, and he was one of the first to see the corruption inherent in the Communist system. (He didn't wear the rose-tinted spectacles of the Webbs.)

Stalin's oppression of the Kulaks and the rise of Hitler converted him from the pacifism which he had preached — and practised — during the First World War. But he has never fully overcome this ineradicable tendency to think that politics are much simpler than they are.

As Keynes put it: "Bertie in particular sustained simultaneously a pair of opinions ludicrously incompatible. He held that in fact human affairs were carried on after a most irrational fashion, but that the remedy was quite simple and easy, since all we had to do was to carry them on rationally."

The same tendency to overrate the intellectual side of men and women has infected his personal relationships and made him an unreliable — though al-

ways exciting — guide on such subjects as marriage and the education of children.

It is not that Russell himself is inhuman, for few men are personally more attractive or more charming — even now at a party his white hair and bird-like head will always be surrounded by the prettiest women — but simply that, like Plato, he expects human beings to behave like philosophers, whereas in reality it is philosophers who behave like human beings.

Then why is Russell a great man? There are, perhaps, two reasons. In an age when the emotional side of man has been dominant, an age when cruelty, intolerance and hysteria have been rampant throughout the world, he has continued to expound the great truths of eighteenth-century rationalism and nineteenth-century liberalism in a clear and unmistakable voice.

The fact that these doctrines were not the whole truth about humanity doesn't mean they were false. It has been Russell's great contribution to preach the virtues of tolerance and to denounce the vices of cruelty and bigotry when other men forgot and lost heart.

He has also revived the role of the philosopher as public figure. At a time when academic philosophy was becoming increasingly abstruse and remote, he deliberately left the study in order to nag, excite and interest ordinary men about

the great questions facing humanity.

Like Voltaire (whom he resembles a little, except that he has no malice), he has been a kind of intellectual gadfly on the rump of the affluent society, continually asking awkward questions, often answering them wrongly himself, but always forcing men and women to think harder by his own disinterested passion for truth. He hasn't hesitated to use journalism and television to do the kind of thing Socrates did by walking and talking in the streets of Athens.

Some have sneered at Russell because he opposed the First World War and supported the Second; because at one moment he advocated using the American advantage in nuclear weapons to impose disarmament on Russia, and now advocates unilateral disarmament. He would reply that always he was convinced as to the rightness of his own theories, that a man must act on what he believes to be true, and that there was something to be said for each of these positions at the time.

He is now convinced that humanity will be destroyed unless the Great Powers get rid of nuclear weapons, and that they can be shocked into doing this only by the protests of ordinary men and women, even if it means breaking the law.

These views may be wrong. They certainly underrate the immense difficulties of comprehensive disarmament. Perhaps sitting down on the road, as he and his "ban the bomb" followers did in London a few days ago, is not the best way to secure peace. Yet Russell's campaign during the last five years to awaken the world to the perils of nuclear war is certainly one of the most impressive and unselfish political actions ever undertaken by a private citizen, and has already had one momentous and beneficial result.

Russell in England and Einstein in America were together the founders of the "Pugwash Conference" of Western and Russian scientists, which meets each year in private to discuss the problems of nuclear war and which was named after the Nova Scotia community in which its sponsor and chief financier, Cyrus Eaton, was born. Its importance is now recognized by Presidents and Premiers. If Mr. Kennedy and Mr. Khrushchev reach some agreement on how to control nuclear weapons, they will owe something to Pugwash and to the frail old man with the tough mind who doesn't think himself too old or too busy, too important or too clever, to lead a protest in the streets.

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"Away Wi' Ye, Laddie — I'll Hae No Other Monster Stealing My Thunder!"



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