

- Government, whether we like it or not." (pp 147-8, which did not appear in the newspaper articles on which this book was based). Also see the *Stalin-Wells Talk* (London, 1934). Other comments by Wells on Russia which are useful in this vein are his preface to the *Russian Horizon* (London, 1943); H.G.W. *The Outlook for the Small Nations in Frit Denmark* and republished in *Budou Cnost* and *Mazyeh Narod* which is an introduction to *The Rights of Man* in which he specifically asked for comments from readers of these languages; H.G.W. to editor *Daily Worker*, July 26, 1943; to Jan Masaryk, July 26, 1943; to Alexandra Kollantai, October 6, 1943; and to Chaim Weizmann, August 3, 1943 with the same requests. And especially to Ivan Maisky, June 15, 1943.
28. H.G.W. *Sunday Dispatch* *Russia and the Future* June 29, 1941. He told his readers that he could hardly hold from saying, "I told You So." H.G.W. *The Last of Hitler's Blood-soaked Convulsions* pp 93-4 of *In Defence of Civilisation Against Fascist Barbarians: Statements, Letters and Telegrams From Prominent People* (Moscow, 1941) *Idiot's Delight: Drawing the New Map of Europe* *Evening Standard* (January 6, 1943): Wells conducted a correspondence about the Rights of Man with Lev Upensky, a Russian aviation pioneer. The correspondence was published in the United States in 1944, *The New Rights of Man* (Girard, Kansas 1944) and parts of it in England, *Modern Russian and English Revolutionaries....* (London, 1942).
29. *The Westminster Gazette* *The League of Nations and the Federation of Mankind* (September 22, 1923). These were collected, occasionally slightly revised, in *A Year of Prophesying* (London, 1925).
30. *The Westminster Gazette* *The Hub of Europe: Czechoslovakia and France*. (January 26, 1924). Of course, the treaty proved to be worthless when it was tested in 1938.
31. These problems are clearly stated in his article of March 8, 1924, *Reconstruction of the League of Nations: The Practical Problem*. It was, of course, failure to allow representation for many linguistic and ethnic groups while falsely creating others.
32. *The Westminster Gazette* (August 2, 1924), *The Impudence of Flags: Our Power Resources, and My Elephants, Whales and Gorillas*.
33. Wells's introduction to Edward Benes *Building a New Europe* (London, 1939) pp 5-9. The introduction was given first when Wells introduced Benes at a Foyle's literary luncheon in December, 1939. H.G.W. to Times, October 6, 1938 and many other newspapers. November 1, 1938, J.S.Huxley, J.M.Keynes and Gilbert Murray also signed some of these letters. Benes and Wells exchanged a half dozen letters in 1942. Wells bade him farewell when he returned to Prague at the end of the war. See H.G.Wells to Benes, February 27, 1945.
34. H.G.W. *Guide to the New World: A Handbook of Constructive World Revolution* (London, 1941) Chapter XXI *Poland* and Chapter XXII, *Map Dreams*.

## Russia in the Shadows and Wells under a Cloud

### Mary Mayer

Wells made his second visit to Russia in September - October, 1920, and writes in the first chapter of *Russia in the Shadows*, that he had been invited to repeat his 1914 visit to Russia by "Mr Kamenev of the Russian Trade Delegation in London". The visit was made at a critical time in Anglo-Russian relations. British support for the Whites fighting the Bolsheviks was waning and the British Prime Minister, Lloyd George, had for some time been advocating "realism" in dealing with the Bolsheviks, by which he meant the re-establishment of trading relations, e.g., the *de facto* recognition of the Bolsheviks which would inevitably lead to a *de jure* recognition which many were not prepared to grant. The coalition Cabinet was polarised around two factions: Lloyd George, who some feared was prepared to do any deal with the Bolsheviks, and a second faction headed by Churchill, the War Minister and Lord Curzon, the Foreign Minister.

Trade negotiations commenced in London in May, 1920, came to a halt during the period of the Russo-Polish War, but were re-commenced in early August when it appeared that peace negotiations between Poland and Russia were under way. Leonid Krasin<sup>2</sup> returned to London on August 3rd, 1920 after consultations in Moscow to recommence the negotiations. Lev Kamenev was one of the enlarged party and according to the letter of credentials addressed to Lord Curzon<sup>3</sup> chairman of "a special peace delegation" sent to enter negotiations about peace between "the British Government and also the Governments of its Allies"; he was also empowered to sign any other political and economic agreement.

When the British had decided to commence negotiations about trade with Russia, they had attempted to avoid trade with the Bolsheviks, planning to trade with the Co-operative Societies, but the negotiating team that had arrived in Copenhagen were Bolsheviks who had taken over the Co-operative Societies creating a *fait accompli*. Kamenev himself was vice-president of the Comintern, a member of the Central Committee and of the Politburo of the Communist Party.

By 10th September, 1920, five weeks after his arrival, Kamenev had been declared *persona non grata* in Great Britain. He had planned to return to Russia for a week "for consultations", but was informed by Lloyd George he would not be permitted to return to England due to his interference in Britain's internal affairs, which he denied, but of which the British Government had evidence from their interception of the telegraphic traffic between Kamenev in London, Litvinov<sup>4</sup> in Copenhagen and Chicherin<sup>5</sup> in Moscow.

During the short time Kamenev was in Britain, the international situation changed considerably. The battle of Warsaw, the turning-point in the Russo-Polish War, prevented the Russians "spreading revolution across Europe" and immediately after this Kamenev requested permission to return to Moscow. During his stay in England he had been involved with the Council of Action<sup>6</sup> and the financial support of the *Daily Herald* which was taking a strong pro-Moscow line. These were two of the reasons he was declared *non grata*. Once the war with Poland was concluded the Russians were able to withdraw forces to fight the remaining White forces, fighting under General Wrangel in the South of Russia.

When Kamenev did return to Moscow he invited both Wells and Clare Sheridan, a sculptor and

cousin of Winston Churchill, to visit Russia. Clare Sheridan travelled back to Russia with Kamenev where she stayed for a short time and sculpted heads of the major Bolsheviks and was in the care of Mikhail Borodin, a well-known Comintern member who was in the 1930s to become the Soviet liaison with revolutionaries in China.

Wells had renewed his relationship with Gorky when sending him the *Outline of History* early in 1920 and suggesting he might think it suitable for translation into Russian.

According to Lord Beaverbrook, the proprietor, Wells's reports from Russia sent the circulation of the *Sunday Express* up by 80,000, reports which were overwhelmingly in favour of trade with Russia and recognition of the Bolsheviks as the rulers of Russia. As Kagarlitskii sees it,

*Wells's book was a more telling argument in the discussion of policy [in Britain] in that it was directly addressed to a public opinion, accustomed to listen to what this man had to say.*

Lloyd George, like Lenin, thought of trade as a means of undermining his opponent. Trade would, by its very nature, he thought, bourgeoisify the Bolsheviks. Indeed, he attributed to trade the mystical powers that the Bolsheviks attributed to the masses.<sup>10</sup>

*We have failed to restore Russia by force. I believe we can do it and save her by trade. Commerce has a sobering influence in its operations. The simple sums in addition and subtraction which it includes soon dispose of wild theories.*

It was not only Russia that Lloyd George felt would be saved by trade. Britain would be saved too. He feared an increase in unemployment in Britain which he felt was a "far more formidable peril than all the lunacies of Lenin" as a cause of revolution in Britain. 'Labour' too was calling for an end to the economic blockade of Russia and Krasin, who had not been expelled with Kamenev during the break in negotiations, had been assiduously cultivating 'the City' and promising large contracts if a trade agreement could be achieved.

Foreign trade was needed by Soviet Russia to modernise the country and to invest in industry. "It was not coincidental", writes Shapiro, "that an Anglo-Soviet trade agreement was signed in London by Krasin on behalf of Soviet Russia the day after Lenin had announced NEP to the Tenth Party Congress"<sup>12</sup>.

The Anglo-Soviet Russia Trade Agreement of March, 1921 was followed later in the same year by agreements with Germany, Finland, the Baltic States, Poland, Norway, Czechoslovakia, Austria and Italy, i.e., *de facto* recognition of Soviet Russia.

The Russians were in no doubt of the importance of the Anglo-Soviet trade agreement and Maisky was to write,

*In the early history of the Soviet Government the trade agreement with Britain concluded in 1921 played a very important role. This was not simply a diplomatic pact between two powers. It was a decisive breakthrough of the capitalist blockade established around the country after the October revolution, a breakthrough after which was to follow the complete abolition of the blockade. The Anglo-Soviet agreement of 1921 was clear evidence of the victory of Soviet power over its enemies and a factual recognition of that victory by the bourgeois world.<sup>13</sup>*

Mendelevich, who became a frequent writer on Wells in the 1950s, makes clear the purpose of Wells's invitation:

*On September 26, 1920, at the invitation of the Soviet government extended by the Soviet Trade Delegation in London, Wells again came to our country to see a new social order with his own eyes. In inviting Herbert Wells, the Soviet government was sure that the English writer would give true information about Soviet Russia and refute the tendentious reports of the foreign press.*

(It is worth noting that Mendelevich could not refer to Wells's having been invited through Kamenev as the latter was still at that time a non-person).

Kagarlitskii<sup>14</sup> writes, "His [Wells's] task, as was Russell's<sup>15</sup> was to force the Western powers to lift the blockade and to commence trade with Russia, but Russell devoted several paragraphs to this matter, interspersed in the flow of the discourse of the dangers for world civilisation that revolution carries. Wells devotes his whole book to it." And continues that the main theme of *Russia in the Shadows* is, a description of the "troubles of Russia all intended to show that only the Bolsheviks can save the country" and notes that in the list of "statesman-like elements in the Bolshevik government" Wells includes that of Krasin, the head of the London Trade Delegation.

The likely effect of Wells's book in relation to the trade negotiations on the public and government alike was not lost on the Whites. Emigres from Soviet Russia who had congregated in Berlin, Paris, Prague and Sofia and continued their publishing activities published through the Russian-Bulgarian Publishing House in Sofia a translation of *Russia in the Shadows* early in 1921<sup>16</sup>, i.e., almost immediately after its English publication. In the Introduction to the 1921

Sofia-edition, Prince Trubetsky writes that

*Wells very much wants to trade and so he approaches the Russian problem from the point of view of the English merchant.<sup>17</sup>*

Zaitsev' in the March edition of *Russkaya Mysl'* (Russian Thought)<sup>18</sup> - the month in which the Trade Agreement was signed - gave the book a three-page review showing considerable concern about Wells's position:

*The book contains both much interesting material and no less valuable observations. But its significance lies not in this, but in the figure of Wells, in a photograph not for nothing inserted in the book, where he is depicted side by side with the characteristic figure of Lenin. Wells and Lenin extending their hand to each other: not only physically but also spiritually. Wells is no longer with us, he is with them. Nor does he convince us otherwise by the Olympian impartiality with which he notes the mistakes and sins of the young rulers of Russia, and even less does he convince us with his mockery of Marx. Wells is already 'on the other side'. It is possible that Wells himself does not know it. It is entirely possible that he would just shrug his shoulders if he were to come to know about these lines - but we know it, we know it. And the fact that Wells himself is not conscious of his kinship with Lenin arouses in us a feeling of resentment and bitterness. A nagging question disturbs the reader: Does Wells perhaps really express the real attitude of Europe? And if that is that case, then are the Bolsheviks as naive as the naive Wells thinks?*

Wells asserts that he "had come to judge Russia not to praise it" but in the event, praises it more than he judges it. Voronskii, the editor of *Krasnaya nov'* (Red Virgin Soil)<sup>19</sup>, agrees that Wells is calling for renewed trade links and the re-establishment of diplomatic relationships, but argues that

*he [Wells] sees the fall of civilisation in general not only in Russia, but in the entire world, if some known 'modus vivendi' is not established between the world of capital and Soviet Russia. In these observations of Wells very likely is contained the main interest of the book....<sup>20</sup>*

From this we can see what a good choice Wells with his apocalyptic nature was, and how successful it had been to send him to stay with Gorky, for Wells himself acknowledges that Gorky's thinking was affecting him. After writing,

*Anyone who destroys the present law and order of*

*Moscow will, I believe, destroy what is left of law and order in Russia. A brigand monarchist government will leave a trail of fresh blood across the Russian scene . . . . in a tremendous pogrom and White Terror . . . . and vanish. Asia will resume.*

Wells continues, "He [Gorky] is obsessed by a nightmare of Russia going east. Perhaps I have caught a little of his depression."

Wells's invitation came at a time when the trade talks were still halted but there was increasing agitation for them to recommence. His first article was published in the *Sunday Express* on October 31st, 1920. The trade negotiations recommenced in the second half of November.

The hostile H.A. Jones<sup>21</sup>, who has been accepted on Wells's terms as a "silly and incoherent" eccentric, can be seen from his *Letters* to be a person with a knowledge of the political consequences of Wells's book who occupied a different and, at the least, equally valid political position.

Although the emigre press translated Wells's book into Russian very speedily, it was not published with the same speed in Soviet Russia. Voronsky reviewing it in *Red Virgin Soil* in 1922, from the Sofia edition, after noting that the book was the work of "an average English bourgeois philistine", a description he may well have culled from Lenin based on Wells's rejection of both Marx and the class struggle, wrote:

*We communists can be satisfied with the results of Wells's trip to Soviet Russia . . . . Soviet Russia won Wells over. That is not a bad result at all!*

So the Whites and Reds were at one on one thing. Wells was on the side of Soviet Russia.

A Russian-language edition of the book did come out in Ukraine in 1922.

Lenin's annotations, which were included as a foreword to the first edition of the book published in Russia in 1958, were made in the margins of the English-language edition sent to him by Wells. They indicate which aspects of the book were of interest to him. For example, on p.12 the following section is underlined three times, with three vertical lines plus as NB in the margin;

*The dominant fact, the threatening and disconcerting fact, is that a social and economic system very like our own and intimately connected with our own has crashed.*

("for the Western reader," is not underlined).  
On p.27

*It was not communism that plunged this huge, creaking, bankrupt empire into six years of exhausting war. It was European imperialism.*

is underlined and marked with three vertical lines and NB in the margin.

On pp.54-55

*...[instead of] the English D.O.R.A. you have the Extraordinary Commission [the notorious Cheka, MM]. What are nuisances in England are magnified to disasters in Russia. That is all the difference.*

is underlined and marked by three vertical lines plus NB in the margin.

On pp.89/90 the paragraph beginning "The Russian refugees in England" down to "superman" is marked with two vertical lines plus an NB in the margin. The following sections in that paragraph are also underlined. "They rehearse endless stories of 'Bolshevik outrages'; (of) chateau-burnings by peasants ...." and "... or they sicken you with the praise of some current superman...."

Between pp.145/148 the following passage is marked by being underlined and there are three vertical lines plus an NB in the margin:

*The collapse of the civilised system in Russia into peasant barbarism means that Europe will be cut off for many years from all the mineral wealth of Russia and from any supply of raw products from this area....*

On pp.152/53 "Big business is by no means antipathetic to Communism" is underlined and is marked with three vertical lines plus NB in the margin.

The passage "It is highly improbable that the collapse will be limited to its boundaries. Both eastward and westward other great regions may, one after another, tumble into the big hole in civilisation thus created. Possibly all modern civilisation may tumble in" is underlined and marked with an NB and four vertical lines in the margin.

The passages marked by Lenin are, in the main, those where Wells states that the Bolsheviks are not responsible for Russia's dire state and where Wells attributes Russia's woes to a variety of causes, mostly the war, European imperialism and the blockade. He also notes that passages where Wells writes that Western Europe and America could face the same fate; where Wells criticises the Whites; and Wells's references to trade, i.e., passages that could encourage readers in the direction of re-establishing trade relations and which present the Bolsheviks in a better light.

Zinaida Gippius<sup>22</sup>, writing not long after the appearance of Wells's book, in an article unpublished until 1972 in the emigre journal *Grani*<sup>23</sup>, compared the Wells article with the response of Churchill in the *Sunday Express*<sup>24</sup>. An emigre from Soviet Russia her sympathies are with Churchill and she finds his reply to Wells, "full of intelligent and restrained dignity and, most importantly, of a human truth to which we have become unaccustomed." She notes

Churchill's rejection of Wells's expression, "the Soviet Government" and comments,

*For many of us - not only Russians, but also the French and other foreigners, for all of us who know bolshevism - these words uttered by an Englishman were a great relief, in that they removed from us the suspicion that Wells was speaking for the English: that the majority in England were all Wellses.*

By using the expression "the Soviet Government" Wells was in effect pre-empting the decision about whether to accord the Bolsheviks diplomatic recognition.

She comments in relation to Wells staying with Maxim Gorky that "At the pretty tea-table, by the light of the lamp, in the company of Gorky and his (then) wife Andreeva (the commissar of Theatre and since the previous Autumn 'Minister of Trade and Industry') - Mr Wells had heart-to-heart talks with all the well-known representatives of the 'soviets' and of the Extraordinary Commission [Cheka]. He was completely enchanted with Zinoviev<sup>25</sup> and Zorin<sup>26</sup>. 'My friend Zorin .... I wouldn't like to offend him ....!'"

In relation to the final chapter of Wells's book, which is entitled 'The Envoy', Gippius writes that Wells wishes to persuade Europe to form an international trust for the exploitation of Russian resources, in order to be able to do business with the Russian "government" (sic). "Mr Wells warns that 'the take' can only be obtained from them and therefore it is 'mad' not to commence to recognise the 'Soviets'."

Wells's book received attention again from commentators in the Soviet Union in the late 1950s. By this time writers were concentrating on two matters in relation to Wells's book, both of which came from the chapter 'The Dreamer in the Kremlin'; the fact that as Soviet writers described it, the great prophet had not been able to foresee the electrification of Russia and the fact that what he had written about Lenin, of whom he clearly thought highly, could, sometimes with slight amendments, be used as part of the Lenin cult.

## Notes

1. The edition I have used is *The Open Conspiracy and Other Writings* (London: 1933, Publisher?) p.213.
2. Leonid Krasin, a leading member of the Bolshevik Party from 1904, was an eminent electrical engineer and industrial manager, and in 1920 was Commissar for Foreign Trade and Commissar for Transport.
3. *Documents on British Foreign Policy (British Documents)*, vol.VIII, p.669.
4. Maxim Litvinov (1876 - 1952) The British Government refused to allow Maxim Litvinov to enter Britain as part of the Trade Delegation and he remained in Copenhagen as an advisor. It was asserted that he had engaged in political activities when resident in Britain as the unofficial Soviet Representative in 1918 when he had been arrested and imprisoned as a hostage in exchange for R.H.Bruce Lockhart arrested in Moscow. In 1920, Litvinov was Deputy Commissar in the Commissariat of Foreign Affairs.

5. Georgi Chicherin (1872-1936) a Tsarist diplomat who became a Menshevik and subsequently a Bolshevik. People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs 1918 - 1930.
6. Kamenev had signed an agreement not to interfere in the political affairs of Great Britain when he was permitted to enter the UK and his meetings with the Council of Action, a pressure group supporting Russia, violated this agreement.
7. 'Iz perepiski M.Gor'kogo s zarubezhnymi literatorami' (From Gorky's correspondence with foreign writers) in *Voprosy Literatury (Problems of Literature)*, 1957 1,180/181.
8. MacKenzie, N & J *The Time Traveller* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1987) p.332.
9. Kagarlitskii, Yu.I *Vglyadyvayas' v gryadushchee (Looking into the Future)* (Moscow: Kniga 1989) p.317.
10. Lloyd George *The Times* (February 11, 1920).
11. In 1921 the New Economic Policy (NEP) replaced War Communism which was the policy in practice when Wells was in Russia and which contributed considerably to the hardship of daily life, a fact of which Wells was unaware. Under NEP the government ceased the appropriation of surplus (much of which was not surplus) grain from the peasants, private businesses were permitted and foreigners were allowed to lease concessions.
12. Shapiro, Leonard *The Communist Party of the Soviet Union* (London: Methuen, 1963) p.222.
13. Akademik I.M.Maiskii, 'Anglo-Sovetskoe torgovloe soglasenie 1921 goda' (The Anglo-Soviet Trade Agreement of 1921) in *Voprosi Istorii (Problems of History)* 1975, 5 (May), p.60.
14. op.cit.p.315.
15. Russell, Bertrand *The Theory and Practice of Communism* (London: 1920)
16. Rossiya vo Mgle translated from the English, with a foreword by N.S. Trubetskii (Russian - Bulgarian Publishing House, 1921) 96 pp.
17. I have been unable to obtain a copy of the Sofia edition of *Russia in the Shadows*. The Trubetskii quotation is therefore from Voronskii's article, 'G.D. Uel's'o sovetskoi Rossii' (H.G.Wells on Soviet Russia) *Krasnaya nov'* (Red Virgin Soil) Moscow: June, 1921, pp.285/291.
18. Zaitsev, K 'G.D. Uel's (H.G.Wells), Rossiya vo mgle (Russia in the Shadows)' in *Russkaya Mysl'* (Russian Thought), Sofia: 1921, 3/4, 206/8
19. *Red Virgin Soil* was a Soviet version of the literary monthlies which were at the centre of Russian cultural life pre-1917. It had the backing of three important people, Lenin, his wife Krupskaya and Gorky. Its first issue came out in June, 1921 and carried the review of Wells's book on pp.285- 91.
20. See above.
21. Jones, H.A. *My Dear Wells: A Manual for the Hater of England* (London, Nash & Grayson 1921).
22. Zinaida Gippius (1869 - 1945) Russian Symbolist poet and patron of the young Acmeist poet Mandelstam. She emigrated to France after in 1919.
23. Gippius Zinaida *Roman o Mistere Uellse (A novel about Mr Wells)*, in *Grani* (1972) 83, p.117-128.
24. 5 Dec. 1920.
25. Gregorii Zinoviev (1883-1936) one of Lenin's earliest associates. He was elected Chairman of the Communist International (Comintern) in 1920. The Chairman of the Northern Commune (the Petrograd area) and editor of *Petrogradskaya Pravda* in which Wells's speech to the Petrograd Soviet was published he called for a "holy war" against Britain at the Baku Congress of Oppressed Nations in September, 1920. He was shot after a show trial during the Purges in 1936.
26. Zorin was involved with the organisation of the Baku Congress according to Wells, a conference which was organised against "British imperialism". See pp.239-40.
27. This is the translation from the Russian. The original English is "I hope I shall not offend comrade Zorin, for whom I have a very real friendship." p.240.