

**BOLSHEVISM. MR.
KEELING'S FIVE
YEARS IN RUSSIA**

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Bolshevism. Mr. Keeling's five years in Russia by H. V. Keeling

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BOLSHEVISM

*Mr. Keeling's
Five Years in Russia*

BY
H. V. KEELING

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PREFACE

THE narrative of Mr. Keeling which appears in the following pages is bound to excite the interest of a large number of people; it is the first hand evidence, direct and explicit, of a *bonâ fide* English workman who has lived and worked with Russian peasants and town factory employees for the last five years.

In the ordinary way no question of his credibility would ever arise, but it so happens that the strongest political passions are aroused by the direct and implied conclusion to which his story leads.

When first introduced to Mr. Keeling, I had the greatest difficulty in consciously believing much that he said, and I do not



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think I should ever have given complete credence unless I had seen the man and tested him inside and out.

I mention this in no personal sense, but simply because I happen to be in the same boat as most of my Labour friends, who felt that the Russian Revolution has never had a fair chance. This, together with the cumulative effect of a four and a-half years' censorship, distorted news and the drop in the value of official statements, has produced an atmosphere of suspicion which takes a long time to dislodge. At the moment, statements of first class public importance backed by incontrovertible evidence are regarded with either indifference or suspicion of motive.

In times of public stress this is the more unfortunate, because it often prevents the right thing being done; men and women are playing with the ideas of Bolshevism without in the least knowing what it means in practice, being content to see it through the hazy mists of meaningless Decrees, which look, on the face of

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them, that a new heaven and earth for the workman has arrived.

It will be noticed throughout that Mr. Keeling makes no attack on the theory of Bolshevism, he is only concerned with what he saw of its day by day practice. He pleads hard and strongly for help from the men of England and the United States for the unfortunate Russian workman whose fortunes are now at their nadir and who have lost the power of helping themselves.

Among the many reasons for presenting this book to the public is the desire to escape from the constant attempts to use only part of his story for political propaganda. No party is quite clear of this charge.

In order that there may be no doubt of the exact position it ought to be at once stated that neither Mr. Keeling nor myself have received one single penny from any Government source, neither are we in the employ or pay of any political organisation. The whole thing is an individual effort.

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Mr. Keeling has been interviewed by several individual persons and by a certain number of Labour Organisations; he has also been seen by the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Unionist Party. He has delivered one lecture at Hampshire House Club, Hammersmith. That is the sum total of his activities.

For the introduction to the Labour groups in the Provinces and in Scotland I was responsible, believing that it would be of great advantage to those who I know are keen on Russian affairs to have a chance to see Mr. Keeling and get his story first hand.

In most cases there was the same old difficulty of getting credence, followed by a generous attitude after the first half hour. In one or two cases theoretical Bolshevists thought they were defending Russian Bolshevism by being rude to Mr. Keeling, but these were fortunately unimportant exceptions.

I was present throughout all these interviews and took some hundreds of

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notes ; it is from these notes, together with a continuous collaboration with Mr. Keeling, that the book is compiled. In every case the exact words of Mr. Keeling are used, not the slightest attempt has been made to colour or distort anything, and if one's word counts at all I ought to add that although I have heard Mr. Keeling telling his story under all kinds of conditions, in friendly and unfriendly atmospheres and in the close questioning of long-extended private conversation, I have never detected the slightest variation in his story.

The hostile attitude of some of the irreconcilables has occasionally made him impatient, indeed tempted him into saying, " I wish they would go and live under the Bolsheviks for a time."

Mr. Keeling's great idea is to get help for the Russian friends he left behind, and he makes a few tentative suggestions of how it might be done. He hates the idea of sending soldiers, and would do anything to escape from such a conclusion ;