

RUSSIA IN 1919

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Russia in 1919 by Arthur Ransome

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ARTHUR RANSOME

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

On August 27, 1914, in London, I made this note in a memorandum book: "Met Arthur Ransome at —'s; discussed a book on the Russian's relation to the war in the light of psychological background—folklore." The book was not written but the idea that instinctively came to him pervades his every utterance on things Russian.

The versatile man who commands more than respect as the biographer of Poe and Wilde; as the translator of and commentator on Rémy de Gourmont; as a folklorist, has shown himself to be consecrated to the truth. The document that Mr. Ransome hurried out of Russia in the early days of the Soviet government (printed in the *New Republic* and then widely circulated as a pamphlet), was the first notable appeal from a non-Russian to the American people for fair play in a crisis understood then even less than now.

The British *Who's Who*—that Almanach de Gotha of people who do things or choose their parents wisely—tells us that Mr. Ransome's recreations are "walking, smoking, fairy stories." It is, perhaps, his intimacy with the last named that enables him to distinguish between myth and fact and that makes his activity as an observer and recorder so valuable in a day of bewilderment and betrayal.

B. W. H.

INTRODUCTION

I AM well aware that there is material in this book which will be misused by fools both white and red. That is not my fault. My object has been narrowly limited. I have tried by means of a bald record of conversations and things seen, to provide material for those who wish to know what is being done and thought in Moscow at the present time, and demand something more to go upon than secondhand reports of wholly irrelevant atrocities committed by either one side or the other, and often by neither one side nor the other, but by irresponsible scoundrels who, in the natural turmoil of the greatest convulsion in the history of our civilization, escape temporarily here and there from any kind of control.

The book is in no sense of the word propaganda. For propaganda, for the defence or attack of the Communist position, is needed a knowledge of economics, both from the capitalist and socialist standpoints, to which I cannot pretend.