

A Primer of Revolutionary Idealism

POLITICAL IDEALS. By Bertrand Russell. (Century; \$1.)

"In dark days, men need a clear faith and a well-grounded hope, and as the outcome of these the calm courage which takes no account of hardships by the way. The times through which we are passing have afforded to many of us a confirmation of our faith. We see that the things we had thought evil are really evil, and we know more definitely than we ever did before the direction in which men must move if a better world is to arise on the ruins of the one which is now hurling itself to destruction."

The emotion with which one reads these opening sentences of Bertrand Russell's must be like nothing so much as the thrill which went through the men who opened "*Le Contrat Social*" and saw on the first page: "*L'homme est né libre, et partout il est dans les fers.*" Just as they must have felt that in Rousseau were the liberating ideals of the immediate future, we feel that it is around the ideas expressed in this book that the younger generation will rally for a clear faith and a well-grounded hope. Mr. Russell has expressed these ideas in his other books. But here they are organized into what is virtually a primer of revolutionary idealism, written with a

passionate soberness that stirs the mind as deeply as it moves the heart. In him intellectual power and concern for human values have fused at a more intense point than in almost any other mind of our time. He has welded together ideas from the newer psychology, from syndicalist socialism, from the philosophy of internationalist aspiration, into a coherent and creative philosophy, at once the basis for a personal as well as a social idealism. The need of liberating the creative rather than the possessive impulses, the principle of growth, the value of reverence towards individuality, the obsolescence of a society based on property and power, the inadequacy of security and liberty as sole political ideals, the need of autonomy within the state for subordinate groups, the hope for gild socialism, and the organization of an international order that shall harmonize with the true community of sentiments among mankind—these are the ideas which have been made familiar in "*Justice in Wartime*" and in "*Why Men Fight*." In this summary, one finds the same style, the calm, clear, pragmatic flavor of science and not of religion. Without any mystical taint, and with none of the traditional vague symbols that have become charged with emotion, Bertrand Russell's fusion of intelligence with what we can only call "love for humanity" gives these ideas an emotional drive that we are accustomed to associate only with the mystical. This is the novel power of his writing.

"Political ideals must be based upon ideals for the individual life. The aim of politics should be to make the lives of individuals as good as possible. There is nothing for the politician to consider outside or above the various men, women, and children who compose the world. The problem of politics is to adjust the relations of human beings in such a way that each severally may have as much good in his existence as possible."

Is there not a peculiar appeal in these clear old truths, so almost trite in their expression? Russell keeps something of the noble intellectuality of Huxley and Mill, but with an added de-classed revolutionary spirit that they did not feel. We have no thinker in this country to do this forward-pointing work. What irony that it is Bertrand Russell who comes from the chill and remote regions of mathematics with this liberating idealism!

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