Two German works on Russell

by Harry Ruja

Walter Langhammer. *Bertrand Russell.* Leipzig, Jena, Berlin: Urania-Verlag, 1983. Pp. 120. DDR 7,80M.

THIS IS AN illustrated account of Russell's life and thought, similar in many respects to Ronald Clark's *Bertrand Russell and His World* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1981). It is brief, as is the Clark, it has some of the same photographs, and it too provides a chronology of the main events in Russell's life. It documents the sources of the illustrations (the major source was the Archives at McMaster), as does Clark, and the sources of the quotations (Vols. I and II of the *Autobiography* more than any other), as Clark does not. Though, as in Clark, there is some exposition of Russell's philosophical and political views, the major concern is with the outer events of the man, rather than with his inner thoughts. Both list Russell's principal publications, Clark in a "Select Bibliography" and Langhammer as part of the Chronology, but Langhammer fails to mention a number of significant books of Russell's, including *Philosophical Essays* (1910), *Mysticism and Logic* (1918), *An Outline of Philosophy* (1927), *An Inquiry into Meaning and Truth* (1940), and *Portraits from Memory* (1956). Clark has a full index, Langhammer has none.

For those who know German but not English and know little or nothing about Russell, this volume will serve to acquaint them with one of the great men of our century. Those who know both languages may profit from consulting this book in addition to, or instead of, the Clark by reason of some of its special features. It offers more attention to German figures important to Russell's development (Cantor, Dedekind, Leibniz, Husserl, Hilbert, Mach). It displays some illustrations rarely, if ever, seen elsewhere: my favourite is a charming shot of Grandpa Bertie and step-Grandma Edith with John's three daughters dressed in school uniforms.

But the most distinctive aspect of Langhammer's treatment derives from his affiliation with the Marxism-Leninism section of the University of Halle/Wittenberg in East Germany. As is to be expected, the author devotes a significant amount of attention to Russell as a "progressive" social critic struggling to overcome his "aristocratic" background. He quotes Russell's disillusionment with his fellow-students at the "crammer" he attended in his youth: despite the fact that they were sons of

upper-class parents of a "civilized and presumably moral land", they showed themselves to be vulgar and anti-intellectual. Langhammer understands Russell's reluctance to take extreme positions as a manifestation of the British love of compromise and moderation, and calls attention to the faith which animated the Apostles, faith in "ordered progress by means of politics and free discussion". Russell's opposition to World War I ("I knew it was my business to protest"), his visit to Russia, his meeting with Lenin, his campaigns against nuclear war starting with the Russell–Einstein Manifesto (a better starting-point is the broadcast in December 1954 of "Man's Peril from the Hydrogen Bomb") and continuing with the Pugwash Conferences, the CND and the Committee of 100, and his indictment of President Lyndon Johnson's war against the Vietnamese—these all receive sympathetic and prominent attention.

The author depicts three Bolshevik generals planning strategy to repulse the White Army in the 1920 counterrevolution, and he quotes Russell's remark that "War is only the final flower of the capitalist system" leading to the conclusion that to abolish war one needs to overthrow that system. Though Langhammer quotes Russell as saying, "I know that no good thing is achieved without fighting", he omits the adjacent statement, "For collective action, the individual must be turned into a machine." He quotes Russell as saying of his stay in Russia, "I lost all power of balanced judgment", but deletes the qualifying phrase which preceded this remark, "With every day that I spent in Russia my horror increased, until I lost...." He compares the proposals for general disarmament that America and Russia have been submitting since 1946, to the former's disadvantage.

On the whole, however, Langhammer manages to discharge his task objectively, with a minimum of axe-grinding. (He even brings himself to quote Russell's characterization of Lenin as "boshaft grausam", maliciously cruel, but Russell had said "impishly" cruel.) He omits all mention of the proposal of Russell's in 1948 which horrified all friends of the Soviet Union—to threaten Russia with the nuclear bomb unless she agreed to nuclear disarmament and to joining a world confederation to maintain peace.

I noticed a few errors. Alys Pearsall Smith was not Russell's wife on 3 September 1894; they were not married till December (p. 21). Russell received his Fellowship in 1895, not 1894 (p. 21). That is Ottoline on page 60, not Colette. That is Conrad on p. 75, not John.

Ernst R. Sandvoss. *Bertrand Russell in Selbstzeugnissen und Bilddokumenten*. Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag GmbH, 1980. Pp. 155. 68 illustrations. Softcover. DM 6.80.

THE SANDVOSS VOLUME similarly is a brief and even more clearly written introduction to Russell's life and thought, also generously illustrated (though the matte paper reproduces the photographs less crisply than Langhammer's hard-finish pages). It too contains a Chronology of the main events in Russell's life and documents the sources of the quotations and illustrations. For the former, it relies heavily on the *Autobiography*; for the latter, on Farley and Hodgson's *Life* (1972). In addition, it provides a full list of Russell's books (including slight items like *The Good Citizen's Alphabet* and *The Art of Philosophizing*), German translations of his works, a list of secondary materials (a typo sets Ronald Clark as the author of *Christianity and Bertrand Russell* by Cecil Clark), and an index of names.

The contrast between the two treatments is suggested by comparing the portraits chosen by each to launch their respective volumes. Langhammer has on his dust-jacket one of the grim portraits from the tense 1960s, the passionate years of Cuba, Vietnam, CND, and the Committee of 100. Sandvoss has on his front cover a portrait from the 1930s, showing the clear-eyed, composed, perceptive essayist for the popular press and expositor of science and morals. Of his sixty-eight illustrations, six may be designated as political portraits of the later years compared to twenty-two of Langhammer's seventy-six illustrations. In Sandvoss but not in Langhammer are portraits of Lord and Lady Amberley, Lord John Russell, Frank Russell, Moore, Alys, the Webbs, T. S. Eliot, Whitehead, D. H. Lawrence, Colette, Woodrow Wilson, Eisenhower, Khrushchev, and John F. Kennedy. In Langhammer but not in Sandvoss are portraits of Husserl, Mach, Schoenman, J. D. Bernal, Cyrus Eaton, Vladimir Dedijer, Peter Weiss, and Sartre.

Sandvoss quotes and paraphrases Russell's words from his books and ties them together by comments. Mostly he limits himself to straightforward exposition, occasionally indulging in an evaluative or interpretive remark. For example, he calls attention to the contrast between the young Russell's discomfort at his fellow-crammers' sexual vulgarities and his conviction that sex without love is brutish, and the mature Russell's advocacy (is that an apt characterization?) of free love and his view that Western marriage codes are the product of Christian dogma. Sandvoss notes Russell's awareness of his failure to match his theory of tolerance of infidelity with his inability to forgive when his wife practised his theory. On the other hand, Russell's views on German theory and

practice of power were confirmed, says Sandvoss, in the close relationship which manifested itself in the 1930s between Nietzsche's philosophy of power and Hitler's politics of power.

The author resists the easy but unproductive temptation of dealing with *Principia Mathematica* by simply reproducing some of its pages of technical symbolism, as Langhammer, Clark, and Denonn and Egner do. Instead he presents, in simple symbols of his own devising and in words, five of Russell's seven primitive propositions (Sandvoss calls them axioms). This is a more meaningful approach for the non-specialist.

In a section entitled "Zeugnisse" (testimonials, or more loosely, characterizations), the author quotes Priestley, Ayer, Einstein, and various others on different aspects of Russell's persona. Marcuse dislikes Russell's labelling of Plato as a fascist, accusing Russell of having failed to distinguish between rule by an elite and rule by an oligarchy.

Sandvoss is Professor of Philosophy at Saarbrucken and has published studies of Socrates, Nietzsche, Hitler, and Leibniz. This monograph is one of an extensive series of similar volumes; others have dealt not only with the standard philosophers but also with Ernst Bloch, the Buddha, Cicero, Gandhi, and Jesus of Nazareth.

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