

## 15-Minute Red Revue (1932)

An Agit-Prop play by John E. Bonn  
Prolet Buehne, New York

*Note on the direction:* eleven players are needed. We will not give too many notes on how to direct the *15-Minute Red Revue* as we think that here is a good chance for the groups to create their own way of performing.

It is suggested that: the rhymes be spoken in a strong rhythmic way and that action be paced in the same manner.

Part I, players line up, front stage, one by one, while saying their lines. (The numbers 1, 2, 3, etc., stand for 1st Worker, 2nd Worker, etc.)

Part II, players change their position so that at the end they stand in an angle (like an inverted W) pointing to the map of the Soviet Union at the back curtain.

Notes for the other parts are included in the script.

### I Agit-Prop

- 1: Comrades, workers, listen, stop –  
Prolet Buehne Agit-Prop.
- 2: Agit-Prop – against hunger and destitution –  
Agit-Prop – theatre of revolution –
- 3: Agit-Prop – wakes the masses to fight –  
Agit-Prop – is the workers' light –
- 4: Agit-Prop – in streets and factory gates –  
Agit-Prop – all over the United States –
- 5: Agit-Prop – and the bosses quake with fear –  
Agit-Prop – for the workers' day is near –
- 6: Agit-Prop – against the yellow socialists –  
Agit-Prop – against the preachers and Fascists –
- 7: Agit-Prop – against police terror and exploitation –  
Agit-Prop – against the lying press and starvation –
- 8: Agit-Prop – is the cannon's roar –  
Agit-Prop – is class war –
- 9: Agit-Prop – bears the battle's brunt –  
Agit-Prop – builds the revolutionary front –

- 10: Agit-Prop – strikes the bosses' iron hand –  
Agit-Prop – defends the Soviet Union, the workers' fatherland!
- 10: The workers' news –
- 9: The workers' views –
- 8: Protest of masses –
- 7: War of classes –
- 6: Strong – unyielding –
- 5: Victory wielding –
- 4: Tempo – action –
- 3: Fights reaction –
- 2: In street and shop –
- 1: We never stop!
- ALL: AGIT-PROP!

### II Fifteen Minutes

- 5: Working women, working men.
- 5: Attention. Our play begins.
- 4: We are going to play for you
- 7: A fifteen minute red revue.
- 3: Fifteen minutes goes rapidly.
- 8: Fifteen minutes is eternity.
- 2: In 15 minutes a factory may be shut.
- 9: In 15 minutes your wages may be cut.
- 1: In 15 minutes you may be hired.
- 10: In 15 minutes you may be fired.
- 5: In 15 minutes you may be in jail.
- 6: In 15 minutes you may be out on bail.
- 4: In 15 minutes see war of the classes.
- 7: In 15 minutes learn the strength of the masses.
- 3: In 15 minutes one question you must face.
- 8: In 15 minutes you must choose your place.
- 2: In 15 minutes we must definitely know.
- 9: In 15 minutes, are you friend or are you foe.
- 1: In 15 minutes
- 10: Say what you are
- 1, 2, 3, 4, 5: For
- 6, 7, 8, 9, 10: or against

THE SOVIET UNION

ALL: the USSR.

*(All except 9 off stage.)*

### III What is the Soviet Union?

9: The Soviet Union!

What is the Soviet Union?

What is the Soviet Union to us?

What is a country to us

that is thousands of miles away –

separated from us by two oceans –

whose language we cannot understand –

which the government of the United States does not recognize?

What is the Soviet Union?

What is the Soviet Union to us?

4: The Soviet Union!

One-sixth of the earth –

161,000,000 people

The Soviet Union!

the workers and peasants have driven out

the profitmakers

the landlords

the exploiters.

The workers and peasants

have destroyed

a system of profiteering and exploitation!

The capitalist dictatorship of the bosses

have been replaced

by the Soviets of the workers and peasants.

The chaos of capitalism

has been replaced

by socialist construction.

The Soviet Union

One-sixth of the earth

belongs to the workers and peasants

belongs to the producing masses

belongs to the proletariat.

2: This is the death sentence of capitalism!

If the workers and peasants of Russia

Could throw off the leeches and exploiters –

Then the proletariat of other lands

Can throw off their leeches and exploiters –

If the workers and peasants of Russia

Can rule themselves –

Then the proletariat of all other lands

Can rule themselves.

The success of socialist construction in the Soviet Union

Is the death blow to capitalism.

Will the capitalist willingly give up their rule?

Will the capitalist stand for that?

CAPITALIST: I will not stand for that.

I will not give up my power.

Above everything, I must have – my profit.

And don't forget

I'm not dead yet

Attention – Attention – to the attack!

Beat the Soviet Union back!

### IV Capitalism and its servants

*(March in: Press, Censor, Radio, Justice, Art, Church, Science, Police – line up, bow to Capitalist during his next line)*

I've done all I'm able

To keep my rule stable

But that's not enough.

My slaves you must bluff,

You must show them the way

To work for less pay

And keep them afar

From the USSR.

CENSOR: We will not pause

JUSTICE: We'll twist the laws

CHURCH: We'll blindfold the eyes

PRESS: Of the workers with lies

POLICE: We'll keep them slaves

RADIO: With my radio waves

ART: We'll lull them to sleep

SCIENCE: Into slumbers deep.

CAPITALIST: Fine, gentlemen, fine.  
The workers are mine  
If you keep them afar  
From the USSR.

WORKER: (*enters*) We, the workers and peasants of the capitalist countries have heard that our brothers in Russia have driven out the bosses, that our brothers in Russia have taken over for themselves the land and the factories, that our brothers in Russia are building a new classless, socialist society.

PRESS: This is the truth about the Soviet Union. Russia is terrorized by a minority, which refuses to pay the debts to the United States. We stand for honesty and reciprocity. We will not recognize the so-called government of Russia before she pays what she owes us.

SOVIET UNION: (*stands near map*) The revolutionary workers and peasants warned the United States government not to lend money to the Tsar or to Kerensky. The Soviet Union will not rob the proletariat of one cent to finance the tsarist and white terror. Workers and peasants of the world . . .

CENSOR: Halt – Enough – Bolshevik propaganda is censored – Films of Soviet Russia must be cut – Second class mailing rates denied – Importation of subversive literature prohibited.

RADIO: Stand by, ladies and gentlemen, and hear the real treat of the evening. This is station GOLD, of the Wall Street Broadcasting System. Ladies and gentlemen, I have the honor to present to you Mr Babbitt, who has just returned from a trip to Soviet Russia. Hear the truth about Soviet Russia. – Good evening my dear folks of the radio audience. Russia, one-sixth of the earth, is darkened by terroristic activities of the Bolshevik home police, the GPU. The prisons are overfilled, innocent blood flows in streams. The people of Russia are shivering in fear. Nobody knows who is next.

SOVIET UNION: The saboteurs of socialist construction are trembling because the GPU guards the land of the workers and peasant against the counter-revolutionaries, because the GPU protects the freedom of the workers and peasants against the white terror, because the GPU strengthens the

step forward for the world revolution of the workers and peasants. Workers and peasants of the world . . .

JUSTICE: Look out! There is still justice in America. Your interest in the Soviet Union is suspicious. Propaganda for the Soviet Union means treason. Militant workers are thrown into jail if they are citizens, they are deported if they are foreign born, they are lynched if they are Negroes. The fate of Mooney and Billings, of Sacco and Vanzetti, of Harry Sims, of the four workers shot in Detroit, of the nine Negro boys in Scottsboro, serve as examples that justice still lives in America.

ART: And also art, free of propaganda. Workers and peasants of the world, there is something higher than the wage problem, and that is love. There is something higher than the defense of the Soviet Union – to fight and die for your fatherland.

SOVIET UNION: The workers have only one fatherland, the Soviet Union.

CHURCH: The fanatic Bolsheviks have no respect for the most sacred sentiments. They have forbidden religion, they are destroying the churches. In the name of all religions I call upon you to join the holy crusade against these church wreckers.

SOVIET UNION: Religion is not forbidden in the Soviet Union. But the Soviet Union has no money to support fat and lazy priests. The Soviet Union uses its unnecessary churches as hospitals and rest centers for the workers and peasants. Workers and peasants of the world . . .

SCIENCE: We still have science in the United States, that proves to you that the capitalist system is the best and only correct system, that proves it with figures –

SOVIET UNION: That's a lie.

SCIENCE: With facts –

SOVIET UNION: That are twisted.

SCIENCE: Worked up by official experts –

SOVIET UNION: Bribed by the bosses. Because press, radio, censor, church, justice, art, science –

POLICE: And the police –

SOVIET UNION: And the police – are in the service of the ruling class, are in the class struggle on the side of the bosses, the

exploiters, the profiteers. Workers and peasants of the world

CAPITALIST: This is too much. Fight these Bolsheviks, with God, for business and fatherland.

*(Press, Radio, etc. shout to the Worker, each one his previous speech attacking the Soviet Union, while they crowd around the Worker. Then they go down from the stage and stand in front of the stage, pointing and hissing at the Soviet Union, while each repeats his verse from the rhymes that accompanied their entrance)*

CENSOR: We will not pause  
JUSTICE: We'll twist the laws  
CHURCH: We'll blindfold the eyes  
PRESS: Of the workers with lies  
POLICE: We'll keep them slaves  
RADIO: With my radio waves  
ART: We'll lull them to sleep  
SCIENCE: Into slumber deep.  
CAPITALIST: Fine, gentlemen, fine.  
The workers are mine  
If you keep them afar  
From the USSR.

*(The Capitalist's servants rush behind the stage)*

CAPITALIST: Ha, ha, ha, ha. What do you say now? Who laughs best?

WORKER: Who laughs last. Ha, ha, ha, ha. You have most money, you tell the biggest lies. But the truth about the Soviet Union I can learn from there.

*(Points to left of stage, where enter Worker with sign Red Press, then other workers each with one of the following signs: Daily Worker, Young Worker, Working Woman, Liberator, New Pioneer, Moscow News, Soviet Russia Today. Each shouts the name of his paper as he faces the audience and lifts up his sign)*

SOVIET RUSSIA TODAY: Facts –  
MOSCOW NEWS: Facts –  
WORKING WOMAN: Facts –  
YOUNG WORKER: Facts –  
DAILY WORKER: About the –

ALL: Soviet Union!

SOVIET UNION: *(takes his place at end of workers' press line, next to Soviet Russia Today)* And this fact, the Five-Year Plan! The Five-Year Plan has created –

ALL: Factories, railroads, collective farms, electric power, new cities.

NEW PIONEER: The workers and peasants of the Soviet Union . . .

MOSCOW NEWS: Have gone ahead of their own plan . . .

SOVIET RUSSIA TODAY: The Five-Year Plan in four years.

*(All rise. AFL enters from left, Socialist from right)*

AFL: The Five-Year Plan?

SOCIALIST: In four years?

AFL: Socialization of industry?

SOCIALIST: Socialist construction?

AFL: That's bad for our reputation.

SOCIALIST: That's bad for our jobs.

BOTH: We've got to do something.

*(To audience)*

AFL: Forced Labor in Soviet Russia.

SOCIALIST: Dictatorship in Soviet Russia.

AFL: Friends.

SOCIALIST: Brothers.

AFL: Protect freedom.

SOCIALIST: Protect democracy.

AFL: Against forced labor.

SOCIALIST: Against dictatorship.

*(Both exit. Song behind stage: 'We are the Builders . . . ' Seven Workers of the Soviet Union march on stage from left with signs, line up back stage. Five Workers (8-12) representing the USA with signs come slowly from right, lie down on floor front stage. All lift up signs with next slogans)*

8: Where is freedom?

1: Where is forced labor?

12: Where is the worker free?

7: Where is the worker oppressed?

10: In capitalist USA the worker is oppressed.

4: In the Soviet Union the worker is free.

- 9: In capitalist USA 15,000,000 unemployed are thrown out on the street.
- 2: In the Soviet Union is work for all.
- 11: In capitalist USA the workers are beaten up when they ask for social insurance.
- 5: In the Soviet Union the workers are protected by social laws: vacations without pay, free hospitals, free sanatoriums, free doctors, free medicine.
- 8: In capitalist USA the working time is lengthened.
- 1: In the Soviet Union the working time is shortened.
- 12: In capitalist USA wages are cut.
- 6: In the Soviet Union wages are rising.
- 10: In capitalist USA everything for the capitalists.
- 4: In the Soviet Union everything for the workers.

#### V For the Soviet Union

- 5: Fellow workers.
- 3: Comrades.
- 5: Where is your future?
- 6: In the capitalist decline of the USA
- 2: or in the socialist construction of the Soviet Union?
- 7: This is the question:
- 1: For or against?
- 5: The answer is clear:

*(The workers of the USA rush to sign 10 and tear it down, then all turn to sign 4, the Soviet Union, all pointing to Soviet Union)*

ALL: For the Soviet Union!

*(All turn to audience)*

- 8: Every step forward in the Soviet Union –
- 10: is a step forward –
- 11: toward the Soviet Union –
- 12: of the United States of North America!

*(All rush into one line, facing the audience)*

4: Therefore

ALL: For the Soviet Union!!

- 4: Every attack against the Soviet Union –
- 9: is an attack –

8: against –

ALL: *(pointing to audience)* YOU!

4: Therefore fight

ALL: FOR THE SOVIET UNION!

*(with clenched fists)*

FOR THE SOVIET UNION!!!

*(Source: Workers Theatre, June–July 1932)*