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BRITISH RADICALS AND SOCIALISTS  
AND THEIR ATTITUDES TO RUSSIA, c1890-1917

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A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
in the University of Glasgow

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University of Glasgow.

TEXT BOUND CLOSE TO THE SPINE IN  
THE ORIGINAL THESIS

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"British Radicals and Socialists  
and Their Attitudes to Russia, c1890-1917"

By Ron Grant

Summary of Contents of Thesis  
Written for the University of Glasgow

In British historical scholarship there exists a line of thought, stretching from Carlyle to E. P. Thompson which stresses the uniqueness of the British experience. An exemplum of such ideas is George Orwell's "The Lion and the Unicorn: Socialism and the English Genius",<sup>1</sup> written when Britain stood alone against the Nazi horde. For the writer national loyalty is a force beside which international Socialism is as "weak as straw". His heroes are the working class, most English of the English: "Patriotism is usually stronger than class-hatred, and always stronger than any kind of internationalism. Except for a brief moment in 1920 (the 'Hands off Russia' movement) the British working class have never thought or acted internationally."<sup>2</sup>

In fact, however, the settlement in Britain from the early 19th Century of large numbers of immigrants and exiles from Europe ensured the origin and development within the host community of a knowledge and understanding of external affairs. Internationalism took root in Britain and was to form a component part of the weltanschauung of significant numbers of the informed British public. The Introduction to the thesis examines the origins of this internationalism and seeks to show how Russia became the principal focus for this perception of the world beyond Britain. In the period following the waning of the enthusiasm of British/

British radicals for the causes of Polish and Italian nationalism the struggle for civil rights in Russia became the focal point of British internationalism.

Why should this be so? What was the nature of this internationalism? In part the answer is one of assessment of the impact of the work of vigorous anti-tsarist publicists such as George Kennan; it is also one of estimating the origins and importance in the political beliefs of British Radical Non-Conformist (in the main) Liberals of a concern with "the world beyond the British Isles". At the same time, however, the significance of the propagandist activities of Russian émigrés in this country is considered. Thus in Chapters 1 and 2 the history of the Society of Friends of Russian Freedom is scrutinised.

The Friends of Russian Freedom stemmed from the friendship of the leading Tyneside Liberal Robert Spence Watson and the former terrorist Sergius Stepniak. The origins and flowering of this unlikely confraternity are charted in Chapter 1. The following chapter traces the multi-faceted work of the Society - humanitarian, vigilante, protestant, philanthropic, propagandist and clandestine. Through the collaboration of the British members and several Russian émigrés the Society ensured the percolation into informed British opinion of an awareness of Russia. Russia became an object of sympathy.

Such works were complemented by the activities of a unique anti-Tsarist publicist, Jaakoff Prelooker. Chapter 3 traces Prelooker's life story and the making of his idiosyncratic cosmology. The chapter seeks to explain why he remained a "franc tireur", largely shunned by the Russian émigré community. The chapter further attempts to show the influence that British life had/

had on this kenspeckle figure.

Chapter 4 is a survey mainly based on the press and publications of the British labour movement and identifiably Radical societies.<sup>3</sup> Thus it evaluates the response in Britain to the 1896 strike movement in Russia and proceeds to chart the impact on British opinion of the resurgent Russian revolutionary movement of the later 1890s. Special emphasis is laid on responses in Britain to the Russian Revolution of 1905 and a detailed examination is made of "The Cartridge Mystery of 1907", an episode in which Russian revolutionaries and British socialists collaborated to send guns and ammunition into Russia to aid the anti-tsarist cause.

The chapter which follows traces responses in Britain to the 1907 Anglo-Russian agreement over Persia and Tibet. The work of the Parliamentary Russian Committee is scrutinised and particular attention is paid to the vigorous defence of Persian liberty made by E. G. Browne. There were now discernible changes in the nature of British attitudes to Russia. Less important were Liberal-Radical notions of a bountiful British democracy dispensing liberty to oppressed Russia. At this juncture as the "formal" relationships between Britain and Russia became increasingly complex in the spheres of diplomacy, commerce and investment, the SFRF went into decline. This throws into relief the publicist activities of the Anglo-Jewish journalist, Lucien Wolf, with his eloquent denunciations of Tsarist pogrom and plot.

Chapter 6 shows how the onset of the Great War with Tsarist Russia and Britain fighting as allies created a crisis for friends of Russian freedom. The journal of the SFRF ceased publication and the Society itself collapsed. Lucien Wolf's Darkest Russia disappeared/

disappeared as did Prelooker's Anglo-Russian. The chapter outlines the manner in which radicals and socialists reneged from their earlier attitudes towards Russia. A minority of internationalists were not chloroformed by the vapours of chauvinism.

The anti-Tsarist cause was, however, revived by the propagandist labours of G. V. Chicherin. This revolutionary Marxist came to Britain in autumn 1914 where his political development continued. This process took practical shape in the Russian Political Prisoners and Exiles Relief Committee, then in the Committee of Delegates of Russian Socialist Groups in London, where he led the campaign against the British government's plans to conscript Russian aliens. In this political and agitational work Chicherin was aided by many British radicals and revolutionary Socialists, the chief of whom was Mrs. Bridges Adams. He thus continued the generation-long history of political work conducted by Tsarist émigrés in the host community, but gave this work a qualitatively new dimension.

The successful overthrow of Tsarism gave fresh impetus to the agit-prop work of Chicherin and his comrades who proceeded to orchestrate the response of the British labour movement to this dramatic event. The final chapter attempts to survey the response to the Revolutions of 1917 across the spectrum of organized labour in Britain, from the fury of the super-patriots of the British Workers League on the right, to the enthusiasm of the revolutionary left. Special emphasis is placed on the activities of Ramsay MacDonald, John Maclean and the Socialist Labour Party.

The seizure of power by the Bolsheviks qualitatively transformed attitudes to Russia. Once an object of compassion, Russia was now in the van of proletarian internationalism. But only/

only a minority of British socialists were prepared to "learn to speak Russian" as one contemporary socialist put it.

The Conclusion suggests that the ~~A~~riadne's thread running through the thesis is the work of a generation of exiles from Tsarism from the populists Stepniak and Volkhovsky to the Marxists Chicherin, Theodore Rothstein and Alexander Sirnis.

- 1 George Orwell "The Lion and the Unicorn: Socialism and the English Genius" (London, 1941; reprinted in The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell , Volume 2, Harmondsworth 1968).
- 2 Ibid., p. 75; p. 84.
- 3 The appendices on Marxism in Britain 1905-1914 and The British Labour Movement 1914-1918 aim to help the reader understand the disposition of parties, groups and individuals across the spectrum of organized labour.

"British Radicals and Socialists  
and their Attitudes to Russia, c1890-1917."

INTRODUCTION

In the preface to "The Making of the English Working Class", E. P. Thompson faced up to the problem of how to define "working class", seeing it as "a descriptive term which evades as much as it defines", tying "loosely together a bundle of discrete phenomena."<sup>1</sup> It is likewise with the "radicals and socialists" to which the title of this dissertation refers; these people can be isolated and specified in organizational or institutional terms. But this is no help when the task appears of measuring the "attitudes" of these people. How is one to gauge and measure the impact of the ideas and opinions shaping the awareness and active testimonies of these "radicals and socialists"?

Is there an escape from the slough of despond, from the mire of eclecticism and impressionism? Again, E. P. Thompson offers a lifeline, arguing that, "If we stop history at a given point, there are no classes but simply a multitude of individuals with a multitude of experiences. But if we watch these men over an adequate period of social change, we observe patterns in their relationships, their ideas and their institutions."<sup>2</sup> So, in this dissertation the attitudes of British radicals and socialists to Russia are viewed across a generation of time. This method allows patterns and change to be projected and measured, and large definitions made. The subject matter and findings of the dissertation make it both a chapter in the history of internationalism and a contribution to the historical debate on the "peculiarities of the English" first fuelled by Thompson and his protagonists in the New Left Review, Perry Anderson and Tom Nairn.<sup>3</sup>

The latter authors sought to develop a coherent historical account of British society in which there evolved by turns a supine bourgeoisie and a pachydermatous proletariat impervious to the message of revolutionary socialism. Because of the addled nature of the 17th Century revolution the English bourgeoisie never developed a strong ideology. It remained gripped by what Messrs. Anderson and Nairn termed "a weak pseudo-empiricism". This saccharine eclecticism was in turn transmitted into the labour movement by "villains" first identified by Engels, the aristocracy of labour.

Anderson's and Nairn's arguments, for all their superficial attractiveness, must be rebutted. They have distorted, indeed inverted the real significance of the English Revolution of the 17th Century. The empiricism of the bourgeoisie was not a sign of its weakness but of its strength! Anderson and Nairn ignore the "Scientific Revolution" in which the inductive method served as the basis for some of the most remarkable advances in natural science. The power of the revolution was revealed by the penetration of capital into all areas of economic life. Further, with their fetishistic stress on "the peculiarities of the English", Messrs. Anderson and Nairn deny that in all the peaks of the history of the working class national and international forces simultaneously operated in the same direction. This process is observable from the 1790's. E. P. Thompson has revealed how Jacobin ideas gave a powerful impulse to British radicals<sup>4</sup> while the Chartist legacy to later radicals and socialists included the concept of internationalism.<sup>5</sup>

In polemicising against Anderson and Nairn, E. P. Thompson re-articulated the leitmotif of his magisterial "The Making of the/  
the/

the English Working Class". Here Thompson had sought to rescue some of History's "losers" from the rubbish bin to which Whig historians had consigned them. Poor stockingers, Luddites, a veritable convocation of radical and revolutionary sects were rescued by him "from the enormous condescension of posterity". In so doing Thompson focussed attention on the need to comprehend the welter of influences which came together to shape the culture and class-consciousness of the infant working class. But in his celebration of the "native" revolutionary tradition Thompson became intoxicated. Thus in his account of the "illegal revolutionary tradition" of the extremely radical "poor stockingers" Thompson overlooked the ideological link between these sections and the radicalism of the committees of middle class reformers and self-educated artisans in London. Thus Mr. Thompson minimised the extent to which Owenism - which anticipated Bolshevism in coming from outside the working class - transformed the thinking of so many proletarian activists. "Beware spontaneity" is the warning sound!

The dissertation which follows thus seeks to chart the attitudes of British radicals and socialists to Russia across a generation. It seeks to explain why these people were peculiarly receptive to ideas and appeals brought to them by a succession of refugees from Tsarism. It traces the percolation of these ideas into the movement of organized labour and attempts to gauge the impact of these ideas.

Where to begin? While it is beyond the remit of this thesis to trace and measure the growth and development of the social classes in Britain in the 19th Century, it is certainly relevant to delineate major episodes in the growth of internationalist attitudes/



attitudes among working class and radical leaders, beginning with Chartism. Here was a nation-wide organization pledged to the realisation of a dovetailed package of extreme radicalism. An array of talented leaders agitated, educated and organised British working men across a decade and more. One historian has measured the impact of Chartism thus: it "not only fostered and encouraged political activity among working men; it also influenced the form which that activity would, in future, take. It was a seed-plot of working-class internationalism...it was the Chartists who first made fraternization with continental revolutionaries an organized and systematic practice."<sup>6</sup>

Chartist internationalism was stronger in London rather than in the industrial north. To the metropolis there came continental exiles and in particular the Poles of the Great Emigration. These men acted as a catalyst to help create the internationalism of the Fraternal Democrats. Chartists such as G. J. Harney and Ernest Jones stumbled towards a class interpretation of events such as the revolutionary upheavals of 1848. These men argued that what had happened in Berlin, Vienna and Paris raised the question of the working class seizing power, over the heads of the bourgeoisie which had passed through the "heroic" stage of its existence: the Jacobin experience.

The incursion of Russia into Poland in 1831 saw the birth of Polonophilism among British radicals and socialists. The Polish cause was in the useful label of Dr. Henry Weisser "transcendental", standing as it did "for the struggle of all men everywhere for liberty."<sup>7</sup> Polonophilism received further stimulation from the Cracow Uprising of 1846 and from the visit to England in 1851 of the Hungarian nationalist Louis Kossuth. The final wave of enthusiasm/

enthusiasm for the Polish cause came in the aftermath of the unsuccessful revolt of 1863. The other side of Polonophilism was Russophobia: "For thirty years, Russia, by a long series of insults and repressions...has tried to root out every sign of national life, every vestige of liberty...that still dwell with the race."<sup>8</sup>

After the failure of the Third Petition the prolonged death agonies of Chartism began, when "its anti-capitalist aims were lost in the triumph of middle-class ideology between 1850 and 1870".<sup>9</sup> In this period the ideas of the French philosopher, Comte, and the exiled prophet of Italian nationalism, Mazzini strongly influenced British radicals. So the First International, the International Working Men's Association (hereafter the IWMA) was to become a battleground for rival theories of internationalism. The German exile Karl Marx marshalled the forces of proletarian internationalism against French "Proudhonistes", Mazzinians and the followers of the Russian revolutionaries, Herzen and Bakunin.

In the 1850's there emerged a caste of craftsmen and artisans. The labour aristocracy was born in the meridian period of Victorian capitalism when "the exhausted quiescence of the class struggle coincided with the maximum florescence of British society in the world outside."<sup>10</sup> The leaders of the working class were ambitious skilled and semi-skilled tradesmen who bottled up the rascally genie of revolutionary politics. The unions came together to form the "Junta", a sort of TUC General Council in embryo. This was a significant development, the labour movement now had a stable and relatively permanent leadership. There began the build-up of organizational strength, the creation of a durable structure as constitutions were written, rule books drawn/

drawn up, full-time officials employed and negotiating procedures established. From the outset the Junta was politically orientated. Leaders such as George Howell who became the secretary of the Parliamentary Committee of the infant TUC opined that the healthy development of the child lay in suckling the ample bosom of the Liberal Party. The Junta had no wish to lead an independent working class movement in the tradition of Chartism - their watchword was conciliation. In a period of general prosperity there ensued class relationships based on co-existence rather than confrontation - the other side of the "New Model" union leaders were "New Model" employers such as the great contractors, Brassey and Peto.<sup>11</sup>

Such a climate facilitated the gravitation towards the movement of organized labour of many intellectuals, in particular the Positivists, the British disciples of Comte, successors in the world of ideas to the Benthamites and progenitors of Fabianism. Rejecting the Marxian concept of the class struggle for Comte's secularised version of the Trinity, "Love, Order and Progress", the Positivists viewed the future of society as depending on a balance between capital and labour.

What, then, was the influence of the Positivists? At one level they played a decisive part in securing a satisfactory legal basis for trade unionism: "With their influence in parliament and friends in the Civil Service, these people played a crucial mediatory role by bringing the unions imperceptibly into the councils of state."<sup>12</sup> On another, "They helped to make Trade Unionism conscious of itself as a movement...and encouraged it to concern itself with foreign and imperial policy and to engage in independent political action."<sup>13</sup> In the history of the labour/

labour movement's attitudes to Russia we shall see that one Positivist, J. F. Green, was to be of enormous importance.

Yet for all that "respectability" was the keynote of the 1860's it was still a decade remarkable for one event - the foundation of the International Working Men's Association, the First International. The precipitating factors leading to the formation of the IWMA were syndicalist rather than political,<sup>14</sup> yet the idea of such an organization was audacious. The founders of the IWMA were to constantly reiterate the notion that the workers had a distinctive and real contribution to make in the development of a foreign policy based on morality and justice. As with the Fraternal Democrats it was forces based in London who helped launch the IWMA. The Secretary of the London Trades Council, George Odger, became the first President of the International.<sup>15</sup> And yet again, foreign exiles played a major part in the politics of a British internationalist organization.

In its early years the IWMA was strongly under the influence of Mazzini. The Italian exile implanted several key concepts into the burgeoning British internationalist movement. Chief among these was Mazzini's anticipation of that epoch when social classes would have withered away and all nation states would be linked by one single moral law in the association of mankind.<sup>16</sup>

But it was Marx who gave the IWMA its strength: "He gave the organization a cohesion and sense of purpose which kept it going."<sup>17</sup> Thus Marx strove to divert the attention of the IWMA from a preoccupation with the Risorgimento and struggled to bring to the fore the Polish question and the light it shed on the role of Europe's gendarme, absolutist Russia. In so doing Marx warmed to an old theme. In 1849 through the offices of David Urquhart/

Urquhart he had bitterly attacked the reactionary role of Nicholas I and Palmerston, thereby contributing to the onset of Russophobia among British radicals and socialists.

Russophobia was not so much a single episode in the history of ideas as a slow burning fire at intervals bellowed into life. In any survey of Russophobia the key figure is that of David Urquhart. In the 1840's and 1850's this genuine eccentric massaged an already existing body of prejudice against Russia. Urquhart roundly denounced Palmerston whom he accused of being in the pay of the Tsar.<sup>18</sup>

In 1853 there was the crisis over the Crimea. The prospect of a war with Russia excited internationalists such as Mazzini and Harney as a noble cause. Urquhart took a more perverse line, arguing that the reason why there was British military incompetence was that "the war was actually being run for Russia's benefit".<sup>19</sup> In an attempt to mobilise British working men Urquhart attempted across two decades to form Foreign Affairs Committees, finding his greatest successes in the seaports of Newcastle and Glasgow where there already existed strong pro-Polish sentiment.<sup>20</sup> Urquhart had some success in proselytizing the Chartist movement but many of them distrusted a man who advanced the bizarre theory that the Chartist movement was being infiltrated by Russians seeking to create a Chartist rising in order to paralyse Britain in preparation for a conquest of Europe by Tsardom.<sup>21</sup> Ever the innovator, it was Urquhart who introduced Britain to the Turkish bath (installed - appropriately - at Blarney) while in the history of ideas he anticipated by several generations the school of historians specialising in exposing the subvertive Russian influence at work in Britain's labour movement.

Thus/

Thus as a result of the agitational work of both the Polish exiles and Urquhart there had by mid-century developed "an antipathy towards Russia which soon became the most pronounced and enduring element in the national outlook on the world abroad."<sup>22</sup> As yet there was no discrimination among British people between the autocracy and the revolutionary opposition within Russia. More significant were economic factors such as trade rivalry, and jingoism. It was to become a fundamental task of a later generation of Russian exiles to deschool British public opinion and replace Russophobia with a grasp of the necessity to support the revolutionaries in the overthrow of absolutism.

As we have observed, in 1849 Urquhart had helped Marx reach a wide reading public in Britain. Now in the 1860's Marx resumed his attacks on the semi-Asiatic autocracy: "The Polish movement, he believed, was not just another instance of a nation struggling for independence. It was uniquely important because the Russian Empire was...the bulwark of European reaction. Any revolution on the Continent stood a good chance of being strangled by Russian military intervention combined with financial pressure from England. Reaction was therefore being maintained by the most backward and the most advanced of the great nations."<sup>23</sup> Marx's dialectical subtleties were far removed from the unsophisticated Polonophilism of the 1830's and the crude Russophobia of Urquhart - revolutionary proletarian internationalism was being preached.

In fact it was to be a decade and more before such perspectives on Tsarist Russia were to be placed before informed public opinion again for by the beginning of the 1870's the IWMA had ceased to exist. Indeed the politics of the First International, significant/

significant though they were in terms of the principles involved, had operated very much on the fringes of British political life. Immensely more significant in terms of the masses of people involved was the agitation in 1876 over the "Bulgarian Horrors" which, like a lightning flash, briefly illuminated all corners of British political life. Analysis of the brouhaha adds significant dimensions to any understanding of the factors colouring mid-Victorian attitudes to foreign policy. It enables comprehension of what may be termed some of "the peculiarities of Victorian internationalism" at a time when "the British masses were susceptible to gusts of outward-looking moral indignation... Victorian religious and ethical sensitivity was at its apogee."<sup>24</sup>

When Premier Disraeli sought to play down the massacres of Bulgarian Christians by the Turks in order to preserve his "real-politik" of the preservation of Turkey there was an outburst of protest throughout Britain from what - with characteristic flourish - Disraeli termed "this Hudibrastic crew of High Ritualists, Dissenting ministers, and 'the great Liberal party.'"<sup>25</sup> On 6 September 1876 Gladstone's polemic against Disraeli and the "unspeakable Turks" was published and through the exercise of monumental moral appeal Gladstone rallied these disparate social forces to his side. But the groundwork had been prepared for him by the publicist and journalist W. T. Stead and his aide, the flamboyant apologist for Tsarism, Madame Olga Novikov. The historian of the Bulgarian Agitation has remarked, "it was Stead more than any other who supplied the great national movement emerging in the last days of August with a voice, a method and a direction."<sup>26</sup>

It has been the achievement of Dr. Shannon to show that the protest/

protest movement of 1876 was possible...only in 1876! How is this tautology to be explained? In the Bulgarian affair British Nonconformists could see an analogue of their own grievances: the Sultan's Christian subjects had been called the 'non conformists of Turkey' by Palmerston. In ensuing chapters the phenomenon of Non conformists eager to identify themselves with a form of religion discriminated against by the state is analysed. In 1876 the moral sensibility of High Victorian Christianity was at its peak: "Two evangelical revivals and the Oxford Movement between them made Victorian England a religious society in a deeper and completer sense than any Western country since the Reformation." The Dissenting press gave prominence to "thrilling accounts" of rapine on a vast scale - the atrocities had powerful prurient appeal.<sup>27</sup>

It is Dr. Shannon's verdict that the crisis of 1876 was a vast "seismic shock" in British political life in which "national fault lines opened up". This may be illustrated by his analysis of the stances taken by professed Radicals both in and outwith the House of Commons. Nineteen of the identifiably Radical MPs supported Gladstone on the issue, while "out of doors" William Morris and the Pre-Raphaelites condemned Disraeli but H. M. Hyndman, who bears some claim to be "the father of British Marxism" supported the Premier.<sup>28</sup>

By 1876 Urquhart was a sick man but his anti-Russian stance lived on in his old stamping ground of Newcastle upon Tyne where the Foreign Affairs Committee supported Disraeli. But the confusion of attitudes among radicals and the divisions among them is exemplified by a comparison of the attitudes of Newcastle's Radical M.P., Joseph Cowen and his agent Robert Spence/



Spence Watson.

Cowen abandoned the evangelical Christianity of his youth, tasted but rejected secularism and in adulthood embraced "a romantic progressive sensibility" - "the democratic religion of humanity" - Mazzini-ism.<sup>29</sup> Cowen was a man of considerable means owning the Blaydon Burn firebrick works and the Newcastle Chronicle. He supported the Chartist movement but retained a belief in the virtue of self-help. It was for his internationalism, however, that Cowen merited the description of extreme radical. He became friend of a wide circle of émigrés including Kossuth, Louis Blanc, the Poles Mieroslawski and Worcell, Herzen and Bakunin, and Mazzini.<sup>30</sup>

During the Bulgarian Atrocities Crisis Cowen was bitterly critical of Russia much to the chagrin of Spence Watson. Watson accused Cowen of whipping up the old bogeyman of Russia, arousing a phobia which had lain dormant since the time of Crimea. Watson pointed out that feeling towards Russia was divided throughout the land: "There is a widely spread distrust of Russia no doubt and it is right that there should be such. A nation like an individual must pay the penalty of continued misdeeds, and Russia is paying that penalty in this distrust with which her present action is regarded." Watson urged a policy of "watchful non-intervention" believing "that Russia has a great future but it will have to be gained slowly and painfully by the Russian people and in spite of the men who now direct its affairs."

In reply Cowen insisted that "It certainly was the furthest thing from my mind to advocate a war policy...It is because Gladstone has been so bellicose that I have not been able to go for him. I am and always have been for absolute neutrality. The/

The question at issue is not purely one of nationality, as was the case in Italy or Poland or Hungary. Religion is mixed up in it...I am not afraid of Russia, but I don't want a despotic power like her to extend too far."<sup>31</sup>

From whence originated Cowen's stance on the Eastern Question? The influence of the Urquhartite Foreign Affairs Committee may have played a part. But more intriguing is the evidence of Cowen's long standing acquaintance with Alexander Herzen. When asked whence originated the aphorism "Russian aggression would explode delusion" Cowen replied that he owed the phrase to the Russian populist: "I suppose if I used the expression I would have had in my head the Herzen argument."<sup>32</sup> Though the friendship between the two men had long since ceased (Herzen died in 1870) we are entitled to assume that Cowen's attitude to Russia and the Eastern Question were influenced by Herzen.

In the end, Gladstone and Stead's legions achieved little. Beaconsfield (the title Disraeli had taken for himself) sat tight and let the storm ride out.<sup>33</sup> For all the labours of Stead and Novikova, Russophilism never won the loyalty of the broad mass of public opinion. In part this was the achievement of the Polish exiles of an earlier generation and in the Russophobia generated by Urquhart. The sentiments of Cowen and Spence Watson were shared by many Radicals. The real beneficiary was Gladstone. The High Anglican harnessed the mighty engine of Nonconformity, abandoning Peelite miniaturism in government for the broad canvas of missionary politics. Thus in his victorious election campaign of 1879-1880 Gladstone painted word pictures that thrilled the moral passions of Dissent and excited their religiosity - "Remember that the sanctity of life in the hill villages of Afghanistan,/"

Afghanistan, among the winter snows, is as inviolable in the eye of almighty God as can be your own."<sup>34</sup>

The Bulgarian Crisis provides the "locus classicus" of this Christian internationalism, but it was to linger on. Ironically much of the virtuous passion unleashed against Turkey was again revived, in the later 1880's and 1890's...this time against Tsarist Russia. The achievement in energising and transforming the moral fervour of "Victorian homo protestans" lay with the émigré Stepniak. As we shall see, his key convert was to be Spence Watson, who abandoned his stance of "watchful non-intervention" for two decades of work in the cause of freedom for the Tsar's peoples.

In the early 1880's attitudes towards Russia among British radicals and socialists were confused and ambivalent. Russophobia was half a century old. Many did not choose to progress beyond this essentially negative attitude towards a knowledge, understanding and empathy with progressive forces inside the Russian Empire. And, though many did see Russia as a reactionary force, Europe's gendarme, they viewed it as a lesser evil than the "dissolute Turks." From July 1884, the date when Stepniak's exile in London began, this confusion of attitudes began to be resolved.

Footnotes to Introduction

- 1 E. P. Thompson, "The Making of the English Working Class"  
(London 1963, 1965 edn) p. 9.
- 2 Ibid p. 11.
- 3 Perry Anderson, "Origins of the Present Crisis" in New Left Review (pp London) No. 23; Tom Nairn, "The English Working Class" and "The Fateful Meridian" in New Left Review, No. 24 and No. 60; E. P. Thompson, "The Peculiarities of the English" in Socialist Register (London 1965) pp. 311/359.
- 4 E. P. Thompson, op. cit., p. 156.
- 5 Henry Weisser, "Chartist Internationalism 1845-8" in Historical Journal 14(i), 1971 and British Working Class Movements and Europe, 1815-1848 (Manchester 1975).
- 6 F. C. Mather, Chartism (Historical Association Pamphlet - General Series 61, London 1966) p. 30.
- 7 H. Weisser, British Working Class Movements... op. cit., p. 123.
- 8 J. P. Hopps, In Memory of the Poles Who Fell at Warsaw (published by "the Polish Exiles in Sheffield" 1861) p. 8.
- 9 John Saville, "Some Aspects of Chartism in Decline" Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Labour History 20, 1970, p. 18.
- 10 T. Nairn, "The Fateful Meridian" loc. cit., p. 5.
- 11 Terry Coleman, The Railway Navvies (Harmondsworth 1970edn) pp. 58/61.
- 12 Tony Lane, The Union Makes Us Strong - The British Working Class, Its Politics and Trade Unionism (London 1974) p. 85.
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Chapter One: "The Origins of the Society of Friends  
of Russian Freedom"

"We began too late: had we set ourselves to the work of propaganda among foreigners some four or five years earlier...the effect would have been much greater, for it would have corresponded with the epoch of the greatest intensity of the struggle at home...Now we come forward at a dead hour, when there is a lull in the actual fight and consequently a flagging of the interest for it abroad."<sup>1</sup>

Thus wrote the Russian émigré S. M. Stepniak-Kravchinskii to the prominent Newcastle Radical Liberal, Robert Spence Watson. The men had first met but a year earlier. Their friendship and collaboration was to come to an end in less than a decade with the accidental death of the Russian. But in this space of time the men had launched the Society of Friends of Russian Freedom (hereafter SFRF) and its journal Free Russia. The Russian revolutionary and his British confrère had laid the foundations of a unique form of propagandist activity in the Russian revolutionary movement and in British political life.

This fruitful collaboration was, to all outward appearances, remarkable. Stepniak-Kravchinskii was a nihilist who in 1878 had assassinated the Chief of Police in St. Petersburg. Spence Watson was a devoutly Christian pacifist wedded to the concept of gradualism in political life. What, then, are the origins of the comradeship of the two men?

The career of Stepniak-Kravchinskii encompassed many of the trends and tendencies in the Russian revolutionary movement across three decades. The son of a military doctor, S. M. Kravchinskii had himself entered St. Petersburg's military academy. In the early/

early 1870's he became involved in the main Populist group, the Chaikovskii Circle, which based itself on the teachings of Pëtr Lavrov. Lavrov's philosophy hinged on the necessity of the cultured élite in society to repay the enormous debt it owed to the common people: "The soil upon which the educated minority grows is the passive majority, which lives in misery and suffers while it relieves the minority from cares and enables it to do creative work."<sup>2</sup> Lavrov developed the theory that this élite should be self-destructing, to repay their debt they must educate the rural poor out of their dull idiocy.

In this spirit of self-denial and service, Kravchinskii and his comrade Rogachev had "gone to the people" disguised as woodcutters in order to directly carry out revolutionary propaganda. The young men were arrested but with the help of some peasants they escaped. Their story that it was possible to meet with the peasantry perfectly well without intermediaries encouraged the idea of a mass movement "V narod". On the run in Odessa, Kravchinskii first met Felix Volkhovsky with whom he was to enjoy many years of collaboration in exile in London. Volkhovsky was to tell how Kravchinskii later attempted to rescue him from gaol in Moscow.<sup>3</sup>

Attracted by the combination of nationalist revolt and peasant rebellion, Kravchinskii then fled to Italy where he took part in the Benevento rising of 1877. He was arrested once more, but took advantage of an amnesty to return to Russia. He now took an active part in the literary work of "Zemlya i Vol'ia" ("Land and Freedom"). But in Italy Kravchinskii had learned how to use the stiletto, a skill he now put to deadly use. Incensed by the brutal treatment of political prisoners by St. Petersburg's Chief of Police, General Mezentsev, Kravchinskii audaciously stabbed him to death on 4 August 1878. He had put into practice



P. N. Tkachev's Old Testament style of revolutionary morality, the teaching of "Sm'ert za Sm'ert" ("a death for a death".)<sup>4</sup>

Pursued by every agent of the Third Section, Kravchinskii was eventually persuaded by his comrades to go into exile. It is recorded that he did not want to find himself in the emigration, far from practical revolutionary activity, but he grudgingly departed to Switzerland so as to learn the skills of the incendiarist intending to shortly return to Russia.<sup>5</sup> But he never saw his native land again. He left Switzerland for Italy where he wrote a collection of revolutionary silhouettes which anticipated Lunacharskii by many years. "La Russia Sotterranea" soon became a European best seller. Kravchinskii was now at the crossroads of his career as a revolutionary. Equally skilled in the use of dagger, bomb and pen he chose the last, believing that it was through writing and propaganda that he might best serve the Russian revolutionary movement in its present phase.

On 5 July 1884 Kravchinskii arrived in London where he was to live until his death on 23 December 1895. The Geneva police had warned him that the Swiss Government were considering returning him to Russia; he would be much safer in London where there existed an "almost unlimited formal toleration" of political refugees.<sup>6</sup> The British reading public already knew him as Stepniak. This is what he now called himself. The adoption of a new name symbolised the transition made from assassin to propagandist, from the philosophy of the "revolutionary deed" to immersion in a tradition formulated by Alexander Herzen (1812-1870).

It was a specific feature of the Russian revolutionary movement from the time of Herzen that activities on Russian soil worked/

worked in tandem with the labours of those "from the other shore", the exiles in Western Europe and America. Herzen had been one of the founding fathers of Russian populism. Socialism was essential for the fullest development of human potential but its economic base was not to be that of the Western Industrial Revolution. Herzen believed that the Russian village commune contained the foetus of socialism, it was the function of the intelligentsia to act as midwives.

Herzen had gone into self-imposed exile in 1847 and was never to return to Russia. Most of his twenty-three years of exile were spent in London where Herzen launched Kolokol (The Bell). The free word had begun to appear in the Russian language unhampered by the baleful scrutiny of the censor: "It was the first systematic instrument of revolutionary propaganda directed against the Russian autocracy, written with knowledge, sincerity and mordant eloquence; it gathered round itself all that was uncowed not only in Russia and the Russian colonies abroad, but also among Poles and other oppressed nationalities."<sup>7</sup> Herzen had not been the first Russian political émigré but he "was the first to look on emigration as a base from which one could try to influence intellectual and political developments at home, and in this sense he was the father of the modern Russian political emigration."<sup>8</sup>

In his own words Herzen found life in London "about as dull as the life of worms in cheese." He was critical of the English for their diffidence, insularity and aloofness towards the revolutionary cause. Herzen was victim of one of History's crueller ironies, one writer has spoken of "the paradox underlying his relations with the English. Their tolerance, which made/

made possible the one thing he needed - freedom of speech, bred that diffidence and apparent lack of enthusiasm."<sup>9</sup>

Herzen's dilemma exactly foreshadowed the problems faced by Stepniak, the leader of a later generation of émigrés. In his London exile Stepniak took on the task of educating and organizing British opinion towards an understanding, committed sympathy for the Russian revolutionary cause. On the one hand he was aware that he could pursue such propagandist work in a tolerant environment. Stepniak saw, however, that the informed opinion to whom he was to appeal lived in a society with wide civil rights, freedom of speech and assembly, a wide male suffrage and - Ireland excepted - no underground political activity. This meant that the British public, and in particular radicals and socialists, might not readily see in Russia an analogue of their own collective experience. Stepniak's achievement was to be the resolution of this contradiction which lay at the heart of the task he had set himself. In the itinerary of the revolutionary movement in search of the most effective tactics, Stepniak was always in the van, a man ever-sensitive to new developments, tendencies and moods in his native land, in Western Europe and the USA, and in the revolutionary movement.

In 1882 Stepniak had made a bold statement to the Executive Committee of the People's Will, focussing attention on the character of propaganda "among the foreign public". This had to be qualitatively different from the nature and character of the agitation among the Russian youth. Stepniak had declared that at this present stage the Russian socialist movement could go no further than the achievement of bourgeois political freedoms, the achievement of civil rights "one bone and one flesh" with those of "progressive/

"Progressive Europe." Not in the name of socialism ought the revolutionaries to wait for sympathy. Instead the task of the Russians was to acquaint European opinion with the present stage of the revolutionary struggle in order so as to elucidate exactly the identity of their aspirations and to understand the cruel necessity of terror.<sup>10</sup>

Thus motivated, Stepniak came to London in July 1884. Before long a pattern emerged in his activities in terms of his political development, his life in the émigré community, his literary and propagandist work and his attempts to build up organizational support among British people sympathetic to the cause of Russian freedom.

In October 1884 Stepniak met Frederick Engels for the first time and a long and comradely friendship ensued. In the following year there was published "Russia Under the Tsars" and "The Russia Storm Cloud" followed in 1886. On 7 August 1885 Stepniak unsuccessfully attempted to launch a "Society of Friends of Russia". Stepniak was by now becoming a kent face in radical salons. By August 1886 his friends included the Tyneside Quaker and Fabian pioneer, Edward R. Pease. It was to Pease that Stepniak confided his enthusiasm for the revelatory journalism of the American traveller, George Kennan. Kennan's articles on the brutal treatment of Russian political prisoners were to have a huge impact in the English speaking world in the late 1880's.

But the decisive event in Stepniak's early years in Britain was his first contact with Robert Spence Watson in May 1887. The two men were to first meet in February 1888 and from 1889 acted in close accord in launching the SFRF.

One biographer of Stepniak has entitled his sketch, "From Terrorism/

Terrorism to Liberalism". He argues that Stepniak's "Russian experience had endowed him with an immunity to most of the aspects of Marxian socialism which was becoming more popular among his English associates and fellow Russian exiles during the decade of the 1880's...He had no special interest in the proletariat...Content with many of the liberal solutions and values...Stepniak was settling on the right wing of the Socialist movement by the end of the 1880's."<sup>11</sup> Such a summation of Stepniak's London years is wide of the mark. A more opposite encapsulation might in fact be "From Terrorism to Marxism."

As early as October 1884, Stepniak met Engels and was to be responsible for the founding figure of Russian Marxism, G. V. Plekhanov, meeting the great man. Later, in 1891/2, three articles by Plekhanov were to appear in the journal, Free Russia, edited by Stepniak. Stepniak was to enlist Engels' help in the attempt to launch a German edition of Free Russia, while the second number of Sotsial Demokrat, organ of Plekhanov's Emancipation of Labour group, contained articles by both Engels and Stepniak.<sup>12</sup>

In his ominously-titled "The Russian Storm Cloud" Stepniak made a determined effort to explain the threat posed by autocratic Russia to the democracies of Europe: "Ever since the creation of the Russian Empire by Peter the Great, Europe has felt uneasy, and still feels apprehensive at the vicinity of a colossal State obedient to the despotic will of one man and the continual extension of the empire in all directions."<sup>13</sup> He endeavoured to show the reason why an expansionist foreign policy was a necessity to the autocracy, arguing that a free Russia meant a Europe freed of fear: "every step Russia makes towards liberty will diminish the danger of its military encroachment. And/

And the more the interior transmutation is radical, the surer such a result becomes."<sup>14</sup> Such internationalism deeply impressed Engels who, in an article of 1890, was to view Russian foreign policy through the prism of Stepniak's ideas.<sup>15</sup>

Reading the works of Stepniak's London years one sees his relative indifference to theory yet there is ample evidence to sustain Vera Zasulich's comment of autumn 1889: "I was very glad to read in your letter that you are coming over to our ideas."<sup>16</sup> As early as 1886 he had written: "The peasants' revolution...is in the background. The revolution of today is a town revolution, which is quickly approaching;" "the conversion of so many workmen to revolutionary ideas is undoubtedly one of the most important and useful services performed by the revolutionist of the present generation."<sup>17</sup> By 1892 Stepniak was stating that if capitalism's growth proceeded in Russia for a few more years, urban workers would really become the paramount strength and support of each progressive movement.<sup>18</sup> It is thus a matter for speculation how Stepniak's political itinerary would have proceeded had he not been accidentally killed, aged only 43, in 1895. Unquestionably in his essay Mr. Hulse has allowed himself to become fascinated by only one side of the varied activities of a tirelessly energetic littérateur and propagandist.

The Soviet historian, E. A. Taratuta, has argued that Stepniak was finally persuaded to come to London not only because of Britain's good record in cases concerning political asylum but because his fellow émigré, N. W. Chaikovskii convinced him that Britain offered the most favourable milieu in which to conduct the propaganda campaign, the lines of which had been laid down by him in 1882. Stepniak's publications of 1885 and 1886 were well received/

received but in other directions his strategy was less successful. On 7 August 1885 the "friend of the match-girls", Mrs. Annie Besant, held a meeting at her home attended by Stepniak, the Russian Anarchist-Communist, Peter Kropotkin, Charles Bradlaugh and George Bernard Shaw. The idea of a Society of Friends of Russia, to mount a campaign of agitation and propaganda, was mooted, but it came to naught.<sup>19</sup> Stepniak needed to find a comrade-in-arms possessed of a dedication and capacity for hard work equal to himself. It was to be two years before Stepniak's search was to be rewarded.

By autumn 1884 Stepniak had become friendly with E. R. Pease whom he had first met when the Englishman was engaged in Red Cross work on behalf of the People's Will.<sup>20</sup> In the beehive of English radical life Pease was a tireless worker and doubtless opened many doors for Stepniak. In view of Pease's Quaker background and his residence in Newcastle, and given his later activity in the SFRF it is not unreasonable to suggest that it may well have been Pease who brought the name of Stepniak to the attention of Spence Watson.<sup>21</sup>

Robert Spence Watson (1837-1911) was the son of a Newcastle solicitor and liberal of the 1820's and 1830's; he went on to follow his father's profession and politics, becoming in the view of his biographer-nephew probably the leading Liberal outside Parliament.<sup>22</sup> A founder member of the National Liberal Federation (founded by Joseph Chamberlain and kindred spirits in 1877 with the aim of encouraging rank-and-file Liberals to participate in the formation and direction of party policy), Spence Watson was President from 1890 to 1902. He had been the driving force behind the efficient organization of the party in Newcastle/

Newcastle itself, and as we have seen, was Joseph Cowen's agent.

On the great Imperial issues of the day, India and Ireland, Spence Watson held forceful views. He supported the National Congress programme of limited, constitutional demands, while on Home Rule he made 163 speeches between 1885 and 1890. Among his many honours and offices Spence Watson was for several years President of the Peace Society. What was the impulse for such activities? His biographer opines that his "creed of brotherhood was in reality a paraphrase of the golden rule, 'Do unto others as ye would that they should do to you.'" As Spence Watson himself stated, "It is ours to combat tyranny and oppression of whatever kind, whenever and wherever they may be found. It is ours to love our country so well that we cannot bear to see her do wrong to any people. However the cynical may sneer the fact remains that no man who refuses to acknowledge his duty to Humanity can properly perform those which he owes to his family and his State."<sup>23</sup>

In widely differing spheres, Spence Watson was a pioneer. Committed to scientific progress, he was one of the founders of Newcastle's Swan Electric Light Company. In his youth an ardent traveller and Alpinist, he was the first European Christian to enter the sacred city of Wazan in Morocco. An active education-  
alist he was one of the founders of Durham College of Science and for twenty-three years sat on Newcastle School Board.<sup>24</sup>

The public-spirited Spence Watson also firmly believed in the arbitration principle. As an arbiter in industrial disputes he gave about one hundred judgments. In 1876 the TUC invited him to be President of the Congress gathering at Newcastle. Spence Watson's attitude to the movement of organized labour was enshrined/



enshrined in his belief in the virtue of what he termed "systematic self organization" from within the working class. He had no fear of the growing power of the working class but he was opposed to the notion of an independent Labour party.<sup>25</sup>

Like his friend, Fridtjof Nansen, Spence Watson was a committed humanitarian and philanthropist. Between 1871-3 he was one of the administrators of relief to the non-combatant victims of the Franco-Prussian War and launched a fund raising campaign in England.<sup>26</sup>

Here was a remarkable man. The range of his activities is both testimony to the force of mid-Victorian liberalism and a powerful antidote to the misconceived critiques of that creed penned by scholars such as Messrs. Anderson and Nairn. Spence Watson's vigour in part stemmed from the twin principles of voluntarism and individualism.<sup>27</sup> Two further factors were integral to Spence Watson's personality - his Quaker beliefs and his internationalism.

Spence Watson abhorred Christianity based on mindless repetition of texts, sacerdotalism and formalism. By contrast he emphasised the significance of divine guidance in the life of the individual, believing in the principle of the "inner light" or "Christ within you." The priesthood was one of all believers, every personality was sacred. From this stemmed Spence Watson's life-long pacifism and his sturdy individualism, while it may also explain his friendship with Stepniak.

His long relationship with Joseph Cowen meant that Spence Watson became acquainted with many political exiles and their causes. He frequently met Felice Orsini, heard Garibaldi deliver a lecture, in halting English, to a Newcastle public meeting and had/

had a high regard for Louis Kossuth.

The relationship between Spence Watson and Stepniak began in 1887.<sup>28</sup> In so many ways, the Englishman was the antithesis of the Russian. A devout Quaker a man who would not strike a child, or kick a dog befriends an unrepentant, atheistic assassin. There is no evidence of Spence Watson engaging in any revision of his political beliefs while Stepniak's political itinerary saw him progress from Bakuninism to Lavrovism to the brink of Marxism. Spence Watson and his family lived in comfort in their home at Bensham Grove while Stepniak was a man of little wealth and few material possessions, never outgrowing the bohemianism of his youth. Yet between 1887 and 1895 the relationship between the two men developed from acquaintanceship, probing letters and doubts to the closest political comradeship. Wherein lies the resolution of these contradictions? Both men were talented writers and speakers, both were determined characters and both were impelled to selfless labours by a sense of duty. But did the antiszygy of their comradeship lie in Spence Watson's Quakerism and the Russian's principled expediency? Convinced of the indwelling Christ in each person, Spence Watson was enabled to regard Stepniak in a most objective manner, free from prejudice about Stepniak's blood spattered past. Likewise, the Russian was no dogmatist, moral honesty was for him more important than mechanistic interpretations of the class struggle.

Their friendship began at an opportune period. It developed against a background of revelations about the nature of Tsarist absolutism and the negation of civil rights in Russia. The American traveller, George Kennan, wrote a series of articles for the Century magazine in the period November 1887 - September 1891.<sup>29</sup>

Testimony/

Testimony to their impact came from Frederick Engels: "...The slogan about the liberation of oppressed peoples by the all-powerful Czar has played out; at best it could still be used in Crete and Armenia and this has no more effect in Europe even on the pious English Christian liberals. Even Gladstone the admirer of the Czar would not risk a European War for the sake of Crete and Armenia, since the American Kennan, revealed to the entire world the beastly means by which Tsarism represses every slightest stirring of resistance in its own Empire."<sup>30</sup>

On 15th May 1887, Stepniak wrote to Spence Watson, regretfully informing him that pressure of literary work prevented him from coming to deliver a lecture in Newcastle.<sup>31</sup> One scholar has commented, "By the end of 1888 Stepniak must have felt freer to take on speaking engagements, for when Spence Watson renewed his invitation he accepted it, speaking in Newcastle in February 1889."<sup>32</sup> In fact, it was on Sunday, 24 February 1888 that the two men first met. Spence Watson later recorded that the Russian lectured to an audience of 1500 in the Tyne Theatre under the auspices of the Tyneside Sunday Lecture Society of which Spence Watson was President. Stepniak's English was as poor as his sense of timing, he over-ran, many of the audience left.<sup>33</sup> We are perhaps afforded another reason as to why Stepniak was unwilling to travel to Tyneside in 1887!

At the end of the lecture Spence Watson had met Stepniak, "Then I took to thinking; I felt that something had to be done."<sup>34</sup> In fact the active relationship between the two men did not begin until over a year later. Spence Watson wrote to Stepniak, enclosing a contribution towards the exiles' cause and declaring his willingness to help. Stepniak replied by return: "Your letter of March 21 I will consider as one of the most encouraging and agreeable/

agreable<sup>(sic)</sup> among the many agreable impressions I had during my four years stay in your country." The latter was "like a drop of dew to a parched ground."<sup>35</sup>

By the onset of winter 1889, Spence Watson had begun to lay the foundations of what was to become the Friends of Russian Freedom, and had approached Kropotkin for advice. In a letter of 15 November 1889 Stepniak appealed to Mrs. Spence Watson, "I hope you will be able to do more than spreading truth about Russian conditions. That is well and good for us. But your society may be able to get at the truth and bring it out to the light. Of this fuller when we meet with Mr. Spence Watson."<sup>36</sup> Spence Watson came to London to talk with Stepniak on the 25th or 26th of November and then returned home to draft an appeal in the form of a circular. Mulling over the draft, Stepniak then wrote to Spence Watson in terms which reveal the emphasis laid by Stepniak on making the venture appear the spontaneous combustion of British wrath over Tsarist atrocities. Stepniak was unhappy at the names of Kropotkin and himself appearing alongside those of Spence Watson, Thomas Burt, M.P. and W. P. Byles: "Then on second thought it seems to me that it is better not to mention at first the plan of starting a Russian paper in London. If the appeal is answered vigorously and subscriptions will amount to a considerable sum nothing easier and more natural than to propose and make that second step." Stepniak wanted to ensure "that no suspicion or doubt can prevent a man from giving his active sympathy to it, - supposing as we hope, there are latent sympathies for our cause wanting a chanel<sup>(sic)</sup> to be poured forth."<sup>37</sup>

But Stepniak was over-ruled. The names of Kropotkin and himself/

himself appeared with those of Burt, Byles and Spence Watson in a circular of 24 January 1890. Seven replies and thirty shillings was the response of the British public. Was the 1889 initiative to prove as addled as that of 1885? Spence Watson was not a man easily squashed. "'Then', said Spence Watson to me, 'I took to writing personal letters. These had effect and we could start the Society...'"<sup>38</sup> By winter's end Spence Watson's multitude of social, religious and political friendships bore fruit. On 31 March 1890 he presided over a meeting in London at which the Society of Friends of Russian Freedom was formally constituted. Shortly afterwards the decision was made to issue a paper in English, Free Russia. This journal was to be published across the next quarter century. Stepniak and his English collaborator had laid the foundations of a unique form of propagandist activity in the Russian revolutionary movement.

As we have seen, Stepniak feared that the work may have begun too late "at a dead hour" but in fact working to the advantage of the SFRF was the furor occasioned by Kennan's articles and the disturbing news of the massacres in Yakutsk. An excited Kropotkin urged strong action on Spence Watson: "the watchword must be 'Return of all exiles!' The work must be wider than the creation of 'the Russian review'."<sup>39</sup> But Spence Watson preferred the counsel of Stepniak who had written to him on the Yakutsk horrors. However lamentable they might be - "Such things as the Yakutsk massacres are exceptional even for Russia" opined Stepniak - nonetheless they could serve as a potential catalyst for the mobilisation of British sympathy. Stepniak had urged that his pamphlet be issued simultaneously with the appeal from the English advocates of a "society of Friends of Russian freedom"/

freedom": "When do you think to send the request for signatures? I think we must do the thing as quickly as we can whilst the impression of the Yakutsk story is not swamped in the sea of oblivion." The Russian showed his acclimatisation to English ways. To head the appeal "Could not we lay hold upon some lord or bishop?" he asked.<sup>40</sup>

A letter written to Spence Watson in these early days of the movement is indicative of the breadth of Spence Watson's contacts and reveals in part at least the sympathies tapped by the appeal: "If I can do any work on your Committee I shall be very glad to join it. Or if you think my name would be of any use I am glad it should be so used. In many years my sympathy has been with the sufferers in Siberia. It seems to me their misery and suffering are great as those endured by the victims of slavery. May I ask if any steps have been taken to bring your movement before the Friends...I think they would take it up with warmth as they have always done with other humane and philanthropic efforts."<sup>41</sup>

Stepniak had, however, to run the gauntlet of criticism from Russians exiled in Paris. Thus Lavrov wrote asking him - were these British citizens to be trusted, was the proposed venture serious? In reply Stepniak painted a glowing picture of Spence Watson as "a man in the full sense of the word excellent and beautiful ("prekrasni"). I have never met a finer man in England. On the question of Russia he sympathises with all his soul and will work for it with all the persistence and energy of the Englishman. He is a very influential radical, and is held in high regard throughout political circles, and with the English worship of authority, this is most important."<sup>42</sup>

M. N. Polonskaya (Oshanina) then wrote to the SFRF on behalf of the Paris-based Central Committee of the People's Will and its allies. She accused Free Russia of misrepresenting the nihilist movement's aims, that these were for the "limitation of autocracy by means of a liberal constitution."<sup>43</sup> Stepniak urged his British friends not to take the accusation too seriously. He sought the reason for the alarm of his Paris comrades in the peculiarities of émigré life whereby "metaphysical distinctions" could assume exaggerated significance.<sup>44</sup> Thus Stepniak did not allow himself to be diverted from what he saw as his immediate task - not the propagation of socialist ideas in Free Russia but the enlistment of all shades of social opinion against the autocracy.<sup>45</sup>

Ironically, Spence Watson had also sought out character references of Stepniak as he prepared to launch the SFRF.<sup>46</sup> That both sides of the movement should seek counsel on the motives and integrity of their brethren is unsurprising. The spectacle of a nest of English gentlefolk becoming involved with their cause must have puzzled many Russian émigrés. And, for the English there always existed a certain distrust of the physical force tactics of the revolutionaries. It is testimony to the tact and wisdom of both the Russian and the British leaders of the SFRF that both sides remained true to themselves yet the contradiction never became a chasm, allowing the SFRF to exist for twenty-five years, weathering many storms and crises in that time.

The combined labours of Stepniak and Spence Watson began at a time when objective circumstances were especially favourable. The writings and lecture tours of the British and Russian leaders of/  
of/

of the SFRF were to reach a mass audience both literate and organized. The Education Act of 1870 had produced mass literacy. There existed a labyrinth of clubs, societies and institutes on the British "lecture circuit."

The work of the SFRF began at a time of fundamental changes within the movement of organized labour. The base factor was the unionisation of the skilled and semi-skilled masses. Dockers, gas workers, general labourers and transport workers became unionised. The hitherto artisan-dominated Amalgamated Society of Engineers broadened its base. The "new unionism" was born. Politically there was a move to independence and a rejection of the tradition of collaboration with Liberalism.

Such developments within the working class were reflected both in the revival of the International in 1889 and in the emergence of new socialist organizations such as the Social Democratic Federation and the Socialist League. Large numbers of middle-class intellectuals, of whom H. M. Hyndman and William Morris were only the most celebrated figures, were drawn into socialism.

In response to the rousing of the working class from its long slumber there arose at this period the remarkable phenomenon of the conscience-stricken bourgeoisie. One manifestation of this was that secularized evangelism which lay at the heart of Fabianism. Thus Sydney Olivier and Sydney Webb supported the dramatic announcement by the young economist, Arnold Toynbee to the people of the abyss: "We have sinned against you...if you will forgive us...we will devote our lives to your service."<sup>47</sup> One who took this sense of obligation to practical lengths was Edward Pease, a prototype of that tortured social species, "the drop-out"./



out". Following on the revelations of "General" William Booth in "Darkest England and the Way Out" there was a movement "To the People" on British lines. The word "slumming" entered the language at this period.<sup>48</sup> The cause of Russian freedom was to benefit from this recently-emerged sense of conscience and obligation.

But among all the socio-political forces extant in Britain at this juncture the SFRF was to achieve greatest success in its penetration of the infrastructure of Nonconformity. Organized Protestant dissent though somewhat eroded and altered was possessed of a leathery strength. Religious revelation and zeal, voluntary charitable work, political activism were ingrained traditions which made Nonconformity both "a social dynamic" and "a political dynamic" of extraordinary potency.<sup>49</sup> A seismic upheaval in British political life in the manner of the Bulgarian Atrocities campaign was not to occur in the 1890's, yet haemophiliac outpourings of the Nonconformist conscience were to happen in response to the horrors and atrocities revealed by Kennan and by the activists of the SFRF.

Footnotes To Chapter One

- 1 Sergius Stepniak to Robert Spence Watson, 23 Mar 1889,  
Robert Spence Watson Papers, File 2.
- 2 Quotation found in S. V. Utechin, Russian Political Thought - A Concise History (London 1964) p. 130.
- 3 Felix Volkhovsky, "The Russian Bayard - Stepniak-Kravchinsky" in Free Russia 7(ii) Feb 1896.
- 4 The literature on S. M. Stepniak - Kravchinskii has grown appreciably in the last two decades. It supplements both his own prolific writings and earlier biographies. See section on Stepniak in the Bibliography.
- 5 M. Ermasheva(ed.), V Londonskoi Emigratsii (Moscow 1968) p. 370.
- 6 Bernard Porter, "The British Government and Political Refugees, c1880-1914" in Immigrants and Minorities 2(iii), 1983 p. 24.
- 7 Isaiah Berlin, "Introduction" to Alexander Herzen My Past and Thoughts (translated Constance Garnett, revised Humphrey Higgins) (London 1968), p(xxvi).
- 8 S. V. Utechin, op. cit., p. 117.
- 9 Monica Partridge, "Alexander Herzen and the English Press" Slavonic Review 36, 1958, p. 470.
- 10 Stepniak's theses of 1882 are reprinted in M. Ermasheva, V Londonskoi Emigratsii op. cit., p. 373. This volume contains a supplementary essay by V. F. Zaxharina which examines the political significance of Stepniak's career.
- 11 James W. Hulse, Revolutionists in London - A Study of Five Unorthodox Socialists (Oxford 1970), the chapter, "Stepniak from Terrorism to Liberalism" pp. 39/40.

- 12 E. A. Taratuta, "Fridrich Engels i S. M. Stepnyak-Kravchinskii",  
Naooka i Zhizn' 7, 8, 9 (Moscow 1965).
- 13 S. Stepniak 'The Russian Storm Cloud' (London 1886) p. (iii).
- 14 Ibid., p. 91.
- 15 F. Engels, "The Foreign Policy of Russian Tsarism" printed in  
Sotsial-Demokrat (pp. Geneva), 2, 1890 and in the journal  
Time (pp. London) which was edited by the British Marxist,  
E. Belfort Bax. The article is reprinted in the anthology,  
K. Marx and F. Engels, The Russian Menace to Europe,  
selected and ed. P. W. Blackstock and B. F. Hoselitz, (London  
1953) pp. 26/53.
- 16 Quotation found in E. A. Taratuta, loc. cit., No. 8, p. 53.
- 17 S. Stepniak, 'The Russian Storm Cloud' op. cit., pp. 21/2,  
p. 31.
- 18 V. F. Zakharina's essay in M. Ermasheva V Londonskoi  
Emigratsii p. 383.
- 19 M. Ermasheva, 'V Londonskoi Emigratsii op. cit., p. 419;  
Arthur H. Nethercot, 'The First Five Lives of Annie Besant'  
(London 1961) p. 235.
- 20 V. F. Zakharina, loc. cit., p. 385.
- 21 Norman and Jeanne MacKenzie, The First Fabians (London  
1977) have written a perceptive vignette of Pease, his life  
and character, on pp. 15/21, 67, 81. They portray Pease as  
an intellectual beset by doubts. His Christian faith had  
been sorely tested by the new sciences such as Darwinism.  
But for him, and many like him, the habit of belief remained  
as did a powerful sense of duty and morality. In 1886 Pease  
had quit the City returning to the north-east, joining a  
furniture-making co-operative in Newcastle.

- 22 P. Corder, op. cit., p. 202.
- 23 Ibid., pp. 197/8, 247.
- 24 Ibid., passim.
- 25 Ibid., pp. 170, 180/1.
- 26 Ibid., pp. 91/107. The Spence Watson Papers, File 37, contains letters passing between Spence Watson and Nansen.
- 27 Ian Bradley, The Optimists - Themes and Personalities in Victorian Liberalism (London 1980) p. 251 in part explores this theme.
- 28 The Spence Watson Papers, File 2, contain 13 letters from Stepniak to Spence Watson and a letter from the publisher, T. Fisher Unwin, to Spence Watson.
- 29 The articles were to form the backbone of the book by George Kennan Siberia and the Exile System (London 1891).
- 30 F. Engels, loc. cit., found in Blackstock and Hoselitz op. cit., p. 51.
- 31 Stepniak to Spence Watson, 15 May 1887 Spence Watson Papers, File 2.
- 32 David Saunders, "Stepniak and the London Emigration: Letters to Robert Spence Watson, 1887-1890" Oxford Slavonic Papers, 13, 1980 p. 84.
- 33 Spence Watson's obituary of Stepniak in Free Russia 7 (ii) Feb 1896 pp. 10/12.
- 34 P. Corder, op. cit., p. 191, quoting Spence Watson.
- 35 Stepniak to Spence Watson, 23 Mar 1889 Spence Watson Papers, File 2.
- 36 Stepniak to Mrs. Spence Watson, 15 Nov 1889 ibid., File 2.
- 37 Stepniak to Spence Watson, 19 Dec 1889 ibid., File 2.
- 38/

- 38 Felix Volkhovsky's obituary of Spence Watson Free Russia,  
n/v July, 1911, pp. 1/3.
- 39 Kropotkin to Spence Watson, 15 February, 1890, Spence Watson  
Papers, File 1. The deaths of political prisoners at Yakutsk  
in Siberia and the brutal conditions in Kara prison were  
highlighted in the pamphlet published by the S.F.R.F. - 'The  
Slaughter of Political Prisoners in Siberia', (London, 1891).  
By 1894, 28,000 copies had been printed (Free Russia 5(iii),  
March, 1894).
- 40 Stepniak to Spence Watson, 2 Jan, 1890, ibid., File 2.
- 41 Hesba Stretton to Spence Watson 6 May, 1890 ibid., File 5.  
Hesba Stretton, the pseudonym of Sarah Smith, was the highly  
popular author of moral tales for children. Jessica's First  
Prayer, 1866, sold over a million and a half copies. Tsar Alex-  
ander III ordered all copies of it in Russian schools to be  
burned. Elizabeth Lee 'Sarah Smith' in Dictionary of National  
Biography, 1901-11 (Oxford, 1912) pp. 346/7.
- 42 Lavrov to Stepniak, 29 Jan, 1890; Stepniak to Lavrov 6 Feb, 1890,  
found in M. Ermasheva 'V Londonskoi Emigratsii,' op cit., pp269/72.
- 43 M. N. Polonskaya (Oshanina) to the SFRF 11 April, 1891 found  
ibid., pp. 427/8.
- 44 Stepniak to E. R. Pease end of April/beginning of May, 1891  
found ibid., pp. 301/2.
- 45 Engels likewise had no doubts - refer Engels to Vera Zasulich 3 Apr.  
1890, found in E. Taratuta Naooka i Zhizn' loc. cit., No. 8 p.57.
- 46 David Saunders, loc cit., pp. 87/8 touches on this but not on the  
Paris refugees' concern as to the credentials of Spence Watson.
- 47 N. and J. Mackenzie, op. cit., p. 62.
- 48 Refer Oxford English Dictionary, 1933; 1961 edn. Vol. 9.
- 49 The phrases belong to Stephen Koss and may be found in his  
Nonconformity in British Politics, London, 1975, passim.

Chapter Two: "Sergius Stepniak, Felix Volkhovsky,  
Robert Spence Watson and the Society of Friends of  
Russian Freedom."

In June 1890 the first issue of Free Russia went on sale; its editorial pointed out that "The publication in English in the Capital of the English speaking race of a paper, intended to forward the cause of freedom in Russia, is a new departure in journalism." The author continued, "Foreign public opinion has a great influence in Russia. The Government knows it and is far from being insensible to it."<sup>1</sup>

Paying tribute to the investigative journalism of George Kennan, Spence Watson was concerned that indignation over the Siberian atrocities might prove transitory. He appealed to the weight of old tradition: "It is in the belief that these old traditions were among the noblest which a people can possess, and that our own freedom places upon us in a very peculiar way the duty of aiding others to obtain the same blessing, that some of us have, after long and careful consideration, determined to take up the Russian question."<sup>2</sup>

By 1891, Free Russia was on the monthly standard. Management of the SFRF's affairs was in the hands of an executive committee, with the day-to-day business being conducted by a managing sub-committee of four Englishmen. There was also a broader, 'prestigious' committee of twenty-eight members, including nine M.P.'s. Free Russia rapidly became known as the best source for authentic information on Russian internal affairs, thanks to the contacts of Stepniak, Volkhovsky<sup>3</sup> and their London circle with the underground movement in Russia. By April 1891 Free Russia was available from agents in the provinces and in the U.S.A. (an American/

American edition was published between August 1890 and July 1894). Stepniak reckoned that Free Russia had as many as 5000 regular readers in the English-speaking world. And by this time the journal was being reproduced, by means of lithograph, in St. Petersburg. A German-language version was launched with high hopes: "If the prophecy of Friedrich Engels about the next general election in Germany is verified...in five years hence we shall be able to transfer our headquarters from London to Berlin...establishing our printing offices at the very threshold of the huge prison called Russia."<sup>4</sup>

As significant as the sales of Free Russia were the pamphlets published by the SFRF. The secretary's report for 1892 recorded the sale of 10,000 copies of "The Slaughter of Political Prisoners in Siberia" and 14,000 of "A Journey Under Arrest". By 1894, 28,000 copies of the former pamphlet had been printed.<sup>5</sup>

In addition, there was the work done by the SFRF at local level in the form of the establishment of local branches of the Society and the sponsorship of lectures and meetings. In December 1891 the SFRF had branches in Edinburgh, Leicester, Cardiff and Perth; by the end of the decade the complement had extended to include Birmingham, Burnley, Derby, Leeds, Manchester, Newcastle, Oxford and Plymouth.

The Leeds branch of the Society was especially active. Here there existed a fortuitous combination of Russian immigrants and a strong tradition of radical dissent. The Leeds branch was formed in December 1892. It had as its secretary a young Russian immigrant, Theodore Rothstein. His helpers included the Quaker Socialist Isabella O. Ford and the Nonconformist clergymen, the Reverends Westrope and Martin. Activities of the branch included the/

the organization of lectures on subjects such as the persecuted Russian Baptists, participation in a mass protest against the 1893 Russo-American Extradition Treaty, and involvement with the smuggling of literature into Russia. In 1895 the branch circulated 2000 pamphlets on the work of the SFRF.<sup>6</sup> The able pen of Rothstein commented "upon every Russian topic which happens to come before the local public" in the Leeds Mercury.<sup>7</sup>

The anti-tsarist cause was carried by SFRF lecturers, both Russian and English into the labyrinthine maze of Wesleyan Institutes, Congregational Guilds, Baptist Unions, Gladstone Working Men's Clubs, Pleasant Sunday Afternoon meetings, and local Literary and Philosophical Societies. Radical Christian ministers such as Stopford Augustus Brooke, John Page Hopps and Richard Westrope were attracted to the SFRF, and offered its lecturers the facilities of their churches and halls.<sup>8</sup>

Charles Cook, author of "Prisons of the World" said that "he had never seen more sympathy for the cause of Russia than among his own countrymen"; the topic of Russia drew the largest crowds - thousands had been turned away from his lecture at the Metropolitan Tabernacle.<sup>9</sup> In the winter season of 1891/2 over one hundred lectures on Russian subjects were arranged throughout England and Scotland.<sup>10</sup>

Thus within a few years of its foundation, the SFRF was the biggest and most efficiently run internationalist body in Britain. Yet it owed its success to the labours of relatively few people and it was never far from financial embarrassment. There was the added problem of having to refute charges of condoning terrorism and supporting revolutionary politics. The SFRF activists were under no illusion as to the enormity of their task, /



task, they appreciated that to many they might appear quixotic.

Free Russia reported of an early meeting: "...The public evidently came with an earnest desire to hear and understand an idea so novel as that of fighting, by means of speeches, meetings and periodicals an autocracy thousands of miles distant and commanding millions of bayonets."<sup>11</sup>

But Stepniak had no doubt as to the rightness of his strategy while Spence Watson was no Sancho Panza. The Russian revolutionist stressed the importance of "permanent moral pressure" being exerted against Tsarism: "Foreign public opinion has a great influence in Russia: The Government knows it and is far from being insensible to it."<sup>12</sup> Spence Watson was firmly convinced that a leap over the hedge was better than the prayers of good men. Man's best service was help to the oppressed: "no matter to what nation he belonged or of what colour he was, that man was their brother, and they were called upon to help him."<sup>13</sup>

The causes which the SFRF supported, and Free Russia publicised were ones which appealed to many layers of the informed public. The immediate claims of the Russian reformers - for political amnesty, elections, a free press, freedom of the subject, freedom of assembly - excited support in Britain in addition to the publicity given to the odious barbarities of Tsarism. The readers of Free Russia thrived on a diet of outrage. As an example, one issue bore an article "The Stewing", which told of the eating of putrefied flesh in graphic manner.<sup>14</sup>

By mid-decade the Society had embraced a wide range of activities ranging from the humanitarian to vigilante, to the political and propagandist. It falls now to review each in turn./

turn.

The July 1891 issue of Free Russia carried a leader on "Famine in Russia" and an appeal for aid to the suffering. It was the first instance of what was to be an unceasing concern for the material well being of the Russian peasantry. The SFRF appeal was quickly copied by the Nonconformist weekly Christian World, which had previously given favourable publicity to the work of the Society.<sup>15</sup> Stepniak estimated that over 100,000 lives had been saved by the aid which poured in from Britain and the U.S.A.; he quoted Tolstoy's remarks to the English Relief Committee "that the universal brotherhood of man is no longer an abstract idea, but an accomplished fact."<sup>16</sup>

At a meeting of the Oxford SFRF held in 1897 the host, Andrew M. Fairbairn, Principal of Mansfield College and leading Congregationalist theologian had declared that "what appealed most to the hearts of many in this country was the cruelty and injustice meted out to the Russian Nonconformists in their fatherland."<sup>17</sup> Between its formation and this date the treatment of two Russian Christian sects - the Stundists and the Doukhobors - had excited much concern and sympathy among British Nonconformist Christians. In the moulding of attitudes towards Russia this was as significant as the propagandist work of the émigrés among the British. Going beyond the level of humanitarian concern for the famished Russian peasantry, there emerges the phenomenon of an internationalism based on shared, radical Christian principles.

Free Russia readers had been enlightened as to the beliefs of the Stundists as early as October 1890. Persecuted by the Russian Government for their rejection of the State Church the Stundists/

Stundists received the support of British Baptists. In April 1892 a resolution of "deep regret of the persecution" and "of earnest sympathy in the heavy trials which they have to bear" was unanimously passed by the Baptist Union and a copy sent to Spence Watson.<sup>18</sup> Free Russia readers were told that the Stundists were egalitarian, "they do not admit 'baptism by water', considering that the 'baptism by living water' about which Christ spoke to the Samaritans, must be understood in the sense of practical Christianity. This shows that the Oukrainian<sup>(sic)</sup> Baptists present a most favourable soil for the propagation of those universally humane, moral and social ideas for the realisation of which the English, American and Dutch Baptists work so hard at home and abroad."<sup>19</sup>

The Doukhobortsi ("Spirit Wrestlers") and their conflict with the Tsarist authorities came to prominence late in 1895. This sect preached that Christian doctrines were manifested in the nature of man. The life of Jesus was an allegory, symbolising a spiritual development which anyone may undergo. They rejected ritual, believing in an "inner light", in the divinity within man. In practice they were pacifists, primitive agrarian anarchist-communists. Their refusal to bear arms brought down the wrath of persecution by the authorities: their lands were confiscated, four thousand believers were exiled to the mountain villages of Georgia and their leaders imprisoned.<sup>20</sup>

The news horrified Russia's most celebrated "spirit wrestler" Tolstoy, whose long search for an answer to the chaos of existence had resolved itself in the formula "resist not evil." Tolstoy's belief in moral purity, peasant communism and the "inner light" residing in all people led him to defend the civil liberties of the Doukhobors. To avoid censorship of his tirade against "The Persecution/

Persecution of Christians in Russia" Tolstoy had his article printed first anonymously in the London Times,<sup>21</sup> and then in the Contemporary Review of November 1895.

The cause of the Doukhobors was quickly adopted by the Executive Committee of the SFRF as "a fresh illustration of the need for popular government in Russia", in spite of some members' misgivings about Tolstoy's belief that good may come out of persecution.<sup>22</sup> The Society regularly publicised the struggles of the Doukhobors throughout 1897 and 1898. Thus a Free Russia leader of March 1897 praised the labours of Tolstoy and the inner circle of his disciples: their appeal of December 1896 had been printed in the Christian World - "we should like to believe that our contemporary, commanding so enormous an audience of Evangelical Christians, will start a regular movement in this country on behalf of the Doukhobors." In the spring of 1897 the SFRF published the pamphlet "The Religious Persecutions in Russia" thanks to the generosity of H. M. Thompson and Mrs. Charles Thompson. The pamphlet received favourable reviews in the Methodist Times and the Unitarian Inquirer.<sup>23</sup>

It was in 1897 that Tolstoy's Père Joseph came to Britain; V. G. Chertkov had been exiled for his agitations over the Doukhobors. He was to take the fullest advantage of the deep-rooted<sup>24</sup> concern among British Christians for the suffering people of Russia. Chertkov's pamphlet "Christian Martyrdom in Russia", "made a great impression among pacifists, radical Christians and the English political Left...The book sold widely and resulted in a flow of donations. At the same time, the Society of Friends officially took up the Doukhobor cause and set up its own assistance fund."<sup>25</sup> A printed appeal was sent to eight/

eight thousand Quakers "reminding them that their own predecessors had endured persecutions similar to those inflicted on the Doukhobors for opposing war."<sup>26</sup> The large sum of money raised was used along with the profits from Tolstoy's "Resurrection" to finance the Canadian exodus of the sect.

Christian internationalism thus flourished in Britain. The radical creed of the Stundists and Doukhobors evoked a powerful and sympathetic response from British Christians who rejected ritualism and priestly intercession. The stifling bureaucracy of Pobedonostsev's Holy Synod cast a bogeyman's shadow the length of Britain's shores; Nonconformists could readily identify with the struggle of the sects for their independence. The SFRF of the 1890's with its large complement of radical Christian members both reflected and activated this Christian fraternalism.

The SFRF's humanitarian activities extended also to succour for the victims of tsarism in Russia in a manner that anticipated the activities of organizations such as Amnesty International by generations. Volkhovsky, himself a former zek, pinpointed the fate of the political prisoner: "Cut off from the whole world, he gets the impression that dead silence reigns where formerly the gallant war-cry for liberty resounded."<sup>27</sup> But from its foundation the SFRF had raised the spirits of many prisoners and exiles. One such political exile wrote from Siberia, from beyond the Arctic Circle, thanking Spence Watson - "'The boundless power of sympathy' has already revived us." The Englishman's comment was that "Our little movement, begun under a sense of duty...has awakened hopes and aroused feelings in the hearts of those who are suffering in the cause of freedom which we are bound to do all that lies in our power to have fully accomplished."<sup>28</sup>

From/

From Britain the SFRF watched, Argus-eyed, quick to expose any ploy of the autocracy. Vigilance extended not only to revelations of Tsarist policy abhorrent to all progressives but to exposure of the intrigues of the autocracy to harass their opponents abroad. Thus in 1892 the construction of prison ships on the Clyde was first revealed in Free Russia. The Daily Chronicle commented that "during the last Russian scare several firms of coal owners refused to coal Russian ships, and they received much praise for their patriotism." Stepniak's attitude was that "the Dumbarton ship builders will help the Tzar in transporting his prisoners to their destination. But they will not in any way help the Tzar in capturing these prisoners, or in maintaining his tyranny over the millions of the Russian people, as is done by every foreign banker who subscribes to a Russian loan..."<sup>29</sup>

The same year was also that of the trial of the Walsall anarchists: "Citizen Charles said that on being invited to join in the manufacturing of bombs he was assured that they were intended for Russia, a country where the political regime renders bombs justifiable instruments of progress." The author of the Free Russia report then commented: "As a warning to others: whatever be your opinion of the use of bombs in Russia, the moment you hear of their being manufactured in England you may say with certainty that Russian spies and agent provocateurs are at the bottom of it."<sup>30</sup>

Such an assertion was far from fantastic. After 1881 the Tsarist police system was reorganized in response to the peculiar features of the revolutionary movement. The Security Division, "Okhrannye Otdelenii", spawned a Foreign Agency, "Zagranichnaia/

"Zagranichnaia Agentura", based in Paris: "...perhaps half of the external agents were in Paris. A handful were in London, two or three in Germany, and after 1912, about six in Italy."<sup>31</sup> But the success of the Foreign Agency's work depended on the "internal agents" ("seksoty"), traitors within the émigré groups and on the collaboration of foreign governments and their police. This latter factor was crucial. Here what might be termed "Kimball's Law" came into effect: "Conditions of exile grew more difficult almost everywhere in the last years of the century" - "But they grew distinctly worse where Russian diplomatic relations grew better."<sup>32</sup>

As the French and Russian Governments moved from entente to alliance, so their police forces enjoyed a closer working relationship. Almost simultaneously, Tsarist Russia concluded an extradition treaty with the U.S.A. Spence Watson was depressed, it was "a victory for Ahriman",<sup>33</sup> but this meant that British friends of Russian freedom must "remember those higher duties which they owed to their common humanity."<sup>34</sup> Aware that Great Britain now stood virtually alone as a haven for refugees, the Society battled on through 1893 and 1894. Thus in June 1893 the SFRF welcomed George Kennan who had come to Britain on a lecture tour in the aftermath of the Russo-American Extradition Treaty. Wherever he went, the American drew huge crowds (estimated at between 2 to 3000 in Leeds, 1100 in Cardiff and 650 in Newcastle).<sup>35</sup> A highlight of his lecture was a sudden exit followed by a dramatic reappearance - clanking on stage in chains and convict garb.

In less spectacular fashion the Society came to the aid of harassed exiles such as Selitreny, banished from France after ten years stay there. Volkhovsky urged that the Society should bring before/

before the public "the international hunting of Russian refugees" and "to point out the danger of the existence of any sort of alliance for the purpose of banishing refugees between the police of the various European countries." The Executive Committee thus resolved "that the London press should be urged to bring before the public the facts about the recent banishment of Russian refugees from the various countries of Europe."<sup>36</sup>

But the sternest test to which the vigilance of the SFRF was put in the first period of its existence concerned the prosecution of Vladimir Burtsev.

Burtsev had become a revolutionary in the 1880's and after a spell in jail and in Siberian exile continued agitational work. Forced to flee before Tsarist agents, Burtsev found himself in Gibraltar; he sought help from Volkhovsky and Stepniak, doubtless fearing that as neighbouring Spain had an extradition treaty with Russia he might be re-arrested. Writing to Spence Watson Volkhovsky stated, "Bourtzev was in danger and in all probability if he escaped he owes it solely to your influence and intervention."<sup>37</sup>

Once in Britain, Burtsev had launched Narodovolets, a journal which willed modest political ends by drastic means, namely regicide. In spite of warnings that he courted prosecution Burtsev continued publication and fell foul of the increasingly close liaison between Scotland Yard and the Foreign Agency. In December 1897 Burtsev was charged with incitement to regicide. It is the verdict of the historian of the case that "Prosecution of the case may well have resulted from Russian insistence; conviction was all but assured by the nature of the evidence."<sup>38</sup>

The/



The case turned into an example of the revolutionary turning the tables on his accusers, and as such the affair attracted much publicity. But the presiding judge reminded the jury that the justice of Burtsev's cause and the nature of the autocracy were irrelevant; Burtsev was found guilty and was sentenced to eighteen months hard labour. The SFRF had been in the van of Burtsev's defence raising £166 to pay counsel's fee and asking questions in the House over improprieties in Scotland Yard's handling of the case. In Free Russia Volkhovsky argued that Burtsev "started his periodical to vindicate the 'Narodnaya Volya' and its tactics in the past, and to prove that his party was working on the only ground left for political warfare by the relentless government persecution of all peaceful means of political struggle."<sup>39</sup> It had all been in vain. Spence Watson wrote with sadness after the trial: "We have bowed down before the despots of Europe so long that we begin to imitate them and thus flatter them into tolerating us. In India we are doing violence to all good British traditions as to a free press. In England we deny free speech to Russian exiles: how long shall we have it for ourselves?"<sup>40</sup>

Vigilant the SFRF might have been, but this quality alone had not sufficed to ensure the cessation of Tsarist harassment of its enemies abroad. Yet all was not gloomy. In its political and propagandist activities the organization proved more than a merely irritating flea on the back of the Russian bear. From its formation the SFRF carried on the battle for truth in both the English and Russian languages. The Russian exiles provided Free Russia with a steady supply of translations from the Russian press and correspondence from inside the Russian Empire. In turn, the donations of British sympathisers enabled the formation of both/

both an Exile Escape Fund and - to carry on the tradition begun by Herzen - the Russian Free Press Fund (R.F.P.F.). Such propagandist activities were in keeping with the strategy and tactics formulated by Stepniak at the time of the conception of the SFRF: "No, dear madame: in Russia, as everywhere else, freedom will be won by fighting and not otherwise. The foreign friends and sympathisers can help the cause of our freedom by strengthening the fighting body, or more exactly the opposition - as far as it is morally possible to do to foreigners. This is at all events the only really valuable assistance they could give us."<sup>41</sup>

The April 1892 issue of Free Russia carried a full page advertisement for the work of the Fund of the Russian Free Press. Later issues measured the impact of this side of the activities of the SFRF: "During the first eighteen months of its existence the Free Russian Press Fund sold of its own and other people's publications prohibited in Russia 12,776 copies and gave away free of charge 291 copies." The work was likened to that of an "underground railway" (a figure of speech evoking memories of the anti-slavery cause in the U.S.A.) - "though at times damaged seriously and blocked in certain directions, it has never for long ceased working altogether" - "we are sorry to say that there have been already three victims of the Tzar's inquisition among men who generously and courageously worked for the F.R.P.F. as smugglers of the 'underground'." The good news was that one of the trio had escaped "by means of some money collected for the purpose at Dr. Spence Watson's house some time ago."<sup>42</sup>

Stepniak's pamphlet, "What Do We Want" published by the RFPF had a sale of over 8000 copies while Free Russia had been translated into Russian and five numbers reproduced by hectograph in Warsaw.<sup>43</sup> By the beginning of 1895 it was recorded/

recorded that since 25 December 1893 when the first R.F.P.F. flysheet was published in London, over 70,000 copies had been put into circulation: "We receive information stating that the flysheets are widely read and reproduced. The number of valuable correspondents has greatly increased, and pecuniary help is also received from Russia, as well as from Russians in other countries."<sup>44</sup>

The English supporters of the SFRF were at pains throughout to insist that they were not promoting political conspiracy, aiding and abetting Nihilism: "our funds are used solely for the purposes set forth in our programme, that is, for obtaining and diffusing accurate information on Russian affairs, and so rousing the sympathy of Europe and inspiring the hopes of Russia."<sup>45</sup> The need for such careful and principled delineation of the aims of the SFRF were justified as it came under increasingly heavy fire both in Russia and in Britain. Alarmed at the energetic work of the Society the Tsarist government hacked at it with a double-edged sword, sponsoring a pro-tsarist publicity lobby in Britain and impugning the motives of the SFRF.

From the outset the SFRF polemicised against the defenders and whitewashers of Tsarism. One of these was the Gobi Desert explorer, Harry de Windt, who had been commissioned by the Tsarist government to tour Siberia and then write and lecture on "Siberia As It Is". It was hoped that de Windt would counter the unfavourable publicity given to official Russia by George Kennan. Felix Volkhovsky lost no opportunity of revealing the inaccuracies and omissions in de Windt's writings.<sup>46</sup>

The tsarist 'ambassador without portfolio' as she styled herself/

herself was Madame Olga Novikov. During the Bulgarian Atrocities campaign she had shared public platforms with both Gladstone and W. T. Stead. Though Gladstone only briefly succumbed to the exotic odours of Russophilism exuded by her (he had recovered sufficiently to threaten Russia with war over the Pendjeh Incident of March 1885) Stead stayed constant.<sup>47</sup> Stepniak viewed this with alarm recognising Stead's qualities as a popular journalist, "he knows well how little value his public sets upon logic." Stead knew the value of "sentimental trash" and how it could be "set against overwhelming charges of the Tzar's misrule."<sup>48</sup>

In Russia itself the SFRF had been attacked as a Trojan horse for jingoistic Russophobes. Free Russia reported that "the Government organs are angry at us and have attacked our works and our motives." A leading article written by E. R. Pease took the writers of the Petersbourgskaya Vedemosti to the task, for "According to these gentlemen, England has thrown up the sponge in Central Asia, and is attempting to fight the Russian aggressors, no longer on the Indian frontier, but by means of fomenting intrigue amongst traitors and assassins within the borders of the Tzar's dominions." Pease refuted the charge in terms that read quaintly in our emancipated times. He stated that if there were any Russophobes in the SFRF they were in a minority: "our committee includes well-known peace-loving Quakers and Socialists who are nothing if not internationalists and literary men and women who are not politicians at all."<sup>49</sup>

The attacks on the SFRF were especially vehement in 1894. Evidence that they formed part of a deep-laid strategy by the Russian Government is provided by the consideration given by Salisbury's Unionist Government to pass an Aliens Act. Salisbury hoped/

hoped to invest the Secretary of State "with the power of expelling any foreigner whose presence in this country is either dangerous to the public, or likely to promote the commission of crimes elsewhere." This prompted Lord Rosebery to opine: "There are governments, certainly one government I know, which considers that newspapers are printed in London that are a source of incitement to crime in its dominions."<sup>50</sup> It must be remembered that 1894 was the year of the Greenwich Explosion, an incident which increased public distrust of anarchism: had Russian nihilists arrived in Britain? Just as in the case of the Walsall Anarchists so too the provocateurs had been at work.<sup>51</sup>

In February 1894 Free Russia aimed a counter-blast at its critics. In January 1894 the Tsarist apologist Ivanoff had penned a polemic against the Russian revolutionary movement in general and the SFRF in particular. Kennan leapt to the defence of the Nihilists, "that they were fighting merely for a free republican form of government" while Spence Watson stated; "No country has won its freedom without struggling for it. It is to be won by the people of the country and not conferred on them by foreigners. But it is the duty of Russian patriots to call the attention of free countries to their cause; and it is the duty of the dweller in those free countries to remember the pit from which they themselves have been digged, and to let Russian patriots know, that in their struggle for freedom, all men who love liberty are with them in spirit."<sup>52</sup>

Volkhovsky told readers of a bitter tirade against the SFRF in the columns of the Moskovskaya Vedemosti (Moscow Gazette) of 9 and 10 December 1893: "by trying to make people believe that Miss Hesba Stretton, for example, the Revd. Charles A. Berry, or Mr./

Mr. H. C. Stephens, M.P., are working for anarchism with the purpose of creating difficulties for the Russian Government, and thus compensating their nation in future for the defeat in 1885 by General Komarov, of the Afghans directed by the English against Russia." Volkhovsky countered this accusation by quoting the Revd. J. Page Hopps' open letter to the Tsar which had been printed in the London Echo of 10 January 1894: "...We are feeling, as never before, the profound truth of the ancient saying, 'God hath made of one blood all nations of men, to dwell on all the face of the earth...'"<sup>53</sup> The mischief-making continued, this time in the columns of the Novoe Vremya which alleged that cash raised by the SFRF was used by the refugees "as they like without any control whatever."<sup>54</sup>

Volkhovsky likened this to "belligerent impotence" and quoted the Moscow Gazette with satisfaction: in the last three to four years "the attitude of the English has changed greatly in favour of the Russian opposition and against the present Russian régime, so much so that it has become possible to found a society with the aim of actively helping the Russian liberation movement by winning public opinion for it by means of free agitation, first in their own country and then among other civilized nations." The Gazette spoke of the "alarming success" of the SFRF, "the blow to official Russia is indeed a heavy one."<sup>55</sup>

Hence in these first years of its existence, the SFRF had created considerable impact both at home and in Russia through its various works. How, then, may the first six years of its history be interpreted? Who provided the basis of its membership? How in this contribution to the history of internationalism might the content of its attitudes be measured?

It/

It is possible to analyse the membership of the SFRF through its subscription lists, its appeal for funds and in the reports of Branch meetings. Of this membership, the moving spirits were the members of its General Committee and the local Branch activists. Expressed in the language of class these people were mainly Nonconformist middle-class.<sup>56</sup>

Proletarian internationalism, in theory and in practice, had only just re-emerged from the wreckage of the First International. This was a period in which internationalism had become imbued with bourgeois values. The content of the SFRF's world view is particularly illustrative of this. It was in essence a Christian universalism coloured by a self-confident belief in the bountiful quality of British liberty, a morality born of the buoyancy of Victorian capitalism in its meridian period, part of the tidal surge of British Protestantism in the 19th Century. As one historian has put it, "More than in any country on the Continent the Protestant conscience was the source of efforts to deal with the evils and the social, political and economic problems which were a concomitant of the (industrial) revolution and to create a national life which could be more nearly in accord with Christian ideals than in any preceding age."<sup>57</sup> British Protestantism shrugged off the challenges of materialist philosophy (be it of the Marxian, Positivist, Utilitarian or Darwinian variety), nurturing a sturdy, individual morality, the desire to follow precept with practice leading to an active contribution to political life and a geographic extension of the faith through missionary work.

Transcending the individualistic basis of faith on which each stood, the activists of the SFRF shunned quietism. The bedrock/

bedrock of belief of Hesba Stretton, for example, impelled her to be active and interventionist: Her ideal church was "all people that on earth do dwell, with the four Gospels for their theology, Jesus of Nazareth for their one Master and the pleasures of brotherhood as their holy communion...only spontaneous worship is...worship at all, and its perfection is the daily life of a heart in love with the Father of Jesus and with his great family of man."<sup>58</sup> Again, there was the theology of the Revd. Stopford A. Brooke as revealed in his Easter Day sermon of 1890, "The Resurrection of Russia": "the thought contained in the doctrine of the Resurrection of Jesus is not only concerned with the rising of our life out of the death of sin into a new life of righteousness...it is also concerned with other resurrections; with the rising of a people out of oppression, with the rising of a class out of misery...All these things are bound together in one thought and so universal is the thought, that whenever any of these resurrections occur, each one, almost at every point, symbolises and explains the others." Brooke proceeded to condemn Russian autocracy: "the Government of that country is a hideous iniquity. I wonder how God can stand it, and were it not that I hold that He works no miracle, but demands of men that they should work out their own salvation, I would cease to believe in him."<sup>59</sup>

Beliefs such as these were given added impetus by the conviction of many SFRF activists apart from Spence Watson that Britain had a sacred duty to extend the bounty of political liberty to less fortunate brethren. Herbert M. Thompson, a man with a Quaker background, the driving force behind the Cardiff SFRF branch, epitomised the type: "a Liberal of his day and generation...he believed that on the whole and allowing for a few trifling defects, we had reached the limits of liberty in this/



this country. So beneficent, however, was this liberty...that he was anxious to extend it to all other people."<sup>60</sup>

A concomitant of this type was that of the "conscience stricken bourgeois." For such a person, internationalism became a case of "politics at one remove". The publisher, T. Fisher Unwin, Congregationalist and son-in-law of Cobden, was one of the original Managing Sub-Committee of the SFRF - "Mr. Fisher Unwin showed that what was asked for by the lecturer was on the lines of British Liberalism in the past - that the oppressed nationalities of the Continent had always received sympathy and assistance from this country: and he appealed especially for pecuniary assistance for the Russians who are struggling against enormous odds to make their country free."<sup>61</sup> Yet in his business dealings with impecunious young authors, this man drove hard bargains.<sup>62</sup> It was perhaps more easy for Fisher Unwin to salve his conscience at a safe distance. In this there is a striking parallel with many leading figures in the anti-slavery movement and in missionary societies, people whose notion of Christian obligation drove them to labour on behalf of the oppressed and exploited abroad but who reneged from interventive action when confronted with the needs of the oppressed and exploited in Britain.

This notion of "politics at one remove" is of further relevance when we consider the role of women in the SFRF. The columns of Free Russia provide ample evidence of the significant role played in the leadership and at branch level of the anti-tsarist movement. Disfranchised at home they found a surrogate in the politics of internationalism.<sup>63</sup>

But why should Russia be the focus for the concern of these earnest/

earnest people? In part the propagandist skills and capacity for organization displayed by critics of Tsarism such as Tolstoy, Stepniak, Volkhovsky and Spence Watson ensured the generation of sentiments hostile to Tsarism and favourable to the reformers. But once stimulated by the publicists, these people were able to see in Russia, projected on a wider scale, features which they feared and detested at home. With the sects they shared a common fund of religious radicalism, especially the notion of the inner light, that we are all potentially transcendent beings having no need of ritual or priestly intercession. In Russia these earnest religious radicals could see, distorted into nightmarish proportions, the Gog and Magog of bureaucracy and established religion. They were able to see a powerful, if inefficient, bureaucracy riding rough-shod over dissent, stifling religious sectarianism. The State was ubiquitous. This "mirror image" of Russia was a prime factor in explaining SFRF internationalism.

1896 was as much a watershed in the history of the SFRF as it was for the Russian revolutionary movement. On 23rd December 1895, Stepniak was struck dead by a train on the Hammersmith - Acton railway crossing.

"One man there was ignored a tyrant's will

One resolute voice that thundered o'er the fight

The valiant heart, though dead, is living still

Lo! The sun rises while we wail 'Good-night!'"

Percy Addleshaw.<sup>64</sup>

The burden of news gathering and editorial work for Free Russia now fell on the shoulders of Felix Volkhovsky. A "man of the seventies", Volkhovsky had escaped from eighteen years of gaol and exile in Russia, first to Canada and then to Britain, in/

in July 1890.<sup>65</sup> In spite of indifferent health,<sup>66</sup> he battled hard for the cause of SFRF revealing himself both as a talented journalist and as a shrewd analyst of developments inside Russia.

Thus Volkhovsky was alert to the significance of the 1896 strikes in St. Petersburg: "It was evidence given by over 30,000 men and women in only one place that the Russian peasantry - at least that large portion of it connected with factory work is not a mere herd of sheep...It is evident that the main struggle for personal rights in Russia will develop mainly on the basis of the workmen striving for the bettering of their lives. In this context, strikes will be the most powerful means, and a means which international sympathy and pecuniary help can strengthen to a tremendous extent...Thus the way that lies before the Friends of Russian Freedom is obvious. When the Russian workers are driven into another strike we should be found fully armed and ready to assist them in a few hours. We must have ready cash in hand and good connections with all important British labour organisations to be set in motion on the first notice."<sup>67</sup>

The SFRF now made its first really significant impact on the British labour movement, playing the leading, co-ordinating role in the fund-raising carried out among British workers and sympathisers. A sub-committee of the SFRF Executive along with Volkhovsky and Goldenberg of the Russian Free Press Fund joined with representatives of the labour movement to collect funds. Prominent among the fund committee was Tom Mann, then the general secretary of the I.L.P. and later a founding member of the Communist Party. Other members of the Committee included Will Thorne of the Gas workers' Union, Ben Tillet of the Dockers' Union, J. Havelock Wilson of the Seamen and Fireman's Union, Michael/

Michael Davitt, M.P., the Irish nationalist, Ben Cooper and James MacDonald, chairman and secretary respectively, of the London Trades Council. This latter organization again vindicated the reputation for solidarity with labour abroad that it had won in the years of the First International. Appeals were printed in the press of the labour movement and £188 was raised to be sent to Vera Zasulich in St. Petersburg; the money was forwarded through Russian Free Press Fund channels.<sup>68</sup>

By way of postscript to the 1896 strike and as an instance of the manner in which British labour leaders consciously abhorred Tsarism, the minutes of Aberdeen Town Council prove revealing: In the autumn of 1896 socialist town councillors protested against the Council paying out public money to garland the city when the Tsar passed through en route to Balmoral. The Council Minutes reveal the socialist councillors' opposition to be based on internationalist principles rather than on the legendary meanness of the Granite City!<sup>69</sup>

Events such as the 1896 strike and the pogroms culminating in the Kishinev outrages of 1903, strengthened the international solidarity of the British working class with its Russian brothers and left it well prepared for the events of 1905 when again the SFRF was to play a leading role. From 1896 the centre of gravity in the Society shifted from an internationalism based on Christian universalism and the buoyant optimism of laissez-faire belief (with Britain providing moral leadership for the world) towards a new radicalism voiced by the younger generation of friends of Russian freedom. Old causes still remained important for the SFRF but the Contents columns of Free Russia reveal the increasing significance of items connected with/

with the politics of the Russian revolutionary movement.

The well-springs of belief of these new leaders ranged from undiluted Marxism to a form of Marxist humanism and to ethicism and "new liberalism." But each of these younger men held in common that traditional liberal values were played out and each had faith in the masses as the force on which historical progress must be based.

In a different field of enquiry to that of this dissertation, Bernard Porter has similarly identified the forces and the beliefs of this new radicalism.<sup>70</sup> Dr. Porter's study concentrated on two personalities, J. A. Hobson and E. D. Morel, and in his chapters on the former showed how Hobson abandoned Cobdenism while recognising its historical validity for an earlier generation. While Hobson's intellectual odyssey is best charted through imperialist waters, Dr. Porter stresses that Hobson was more than just a critic of colonialism: "imperialism was treated as an aspect of two more pressing problems - reaction at home and conflict abroad. Imperialism 'per se' he neglected. He was much more concerned with a wider political ideal of his own, a new heaven he was trying to build, or predict, on earth".<sup>71</sup>

Hobson sermonised on these ideals in his study of Richard Cobden: "Modern internationalists are no longer mere non-interventionists, for the same reason that modern Radicals are no longer philosophic individualists. Experience has forced upon them the truth that governments are not essentially and of necessity the enemies of personal or national liberty, but that upon certain conditions they may become its creators...These conditions for the liberative and creative service of the State are summed up in the term 'democracy' ".<sup>72</sup> Hobson's goal was the wresting/

wresting of the conduct and determination of foreign policy from the hands of noble-born castes or bourgeois conspirators and for the needs and interests of the peoples to be met: "the deep constant underlying identity of human interests will constantly react in efforts to mould international institutions that are favourable to co-operation."<sup>73</sup>

Two of Hobson's ideological comrades were active in the SFRF - the pioneer of university sociology, L. T. Hobhouse, and the journalist, G. H. Perris. It is the view of one historian that "the essence of the 'Progressivism' of J. A. Hobson and L. T. Hobhouse was the demand that Liberalism identify itself with the cause of the masses against the classes..."<sup>74</sup> while another has seen Hobhouse as a new kind of Liberal welcoming State intervention and that "on the level of solutions rather than analysis, a form of socialism could be welded into the fabric of Liberalism to ensure the social justice which Liberals sought."<sup>75</sup> Hobhouse joined the General Committee of the SFRF in June 1890 and in November 1904 was still on the General Committee; he also was a leading member of the Oxford F.R.F, occupying the President's chair.

But much more active in SFRF affairs was G. H. Perris. Along with Hobson, Perris was an energetic protagonist of the concept of ethical democracy. In an essay of 1900, Perris talked of "something like an eclipse of organised liberalism", "fragments of truth" were now proclaimed "in a hundred Little Bethels", there was an urgent need for a "new concentration of progressive forces." Perris was disgusted by the "Kaffir Circus" and by the "armed peace". Rhodes and his friends were "banditti", "the 'little wars' they cause but do not wage keep the passions of the mob alive in this new Rome". The "armed peace" was the creature of bureaucracies/

bureaucracies and capitalist-protectionist monopolies. But these evils existed "by popular consent", there existed a crying "need for mass enlightenment." The scales had to fall from the eyes of the British electorate, the chief aim of the new internationalism preached by Perris was "to bring the democratic sentiment of every progressive into contact with that of every other". Then "the nation will find its lost soul...The magic word of words is - Brotherhood."<sup>77</sup>

From his early 20's this minister's son was on the Executive Committee of the SFRF and the columns of Free Russia reveal him as a most resolute publicist.<sup>78</sup> As news of the outburst of the revolution broke in 1905 it was Perris who mobilised the response of the SFRF. The report of the Executive Committee records that it was he who moved that the Society issue a manifesto and appeal - fifteen years of vigilance by the friends of Russian freedom had been justified.<sup>79</sup> An article of May 1905 showed Perris to have a deep understanding of the social forces at work in Russia: "What happens immediately in St. Petersburg is of secondary importance. It is precisely because this is not a rising in the capital after the old-time Western fashion...that I am confident, not indeed of immediate results, for it may last long, but of steady progress and victory in the early future."<sup>80</sup>

The entente of 1907 between Britain and Russia saw Perris break with Liberalism: "For my part in leaving the House I left also my old political association and forthwith joined the little band that had chiefly held up in this emergency the joint flag of Peace and Liberty, the Labour Party."<sup>81</sup>

Another cleric's son, H. N. Brailsford, was one of the younger generation of radicals coming to the fore in the SFRF.  
Brailsford/

Brailsford is best remembered as a writer for "The War of Steel and Gold" - "a Marxist analysis, expressed in English Radical terms".<sup>82</sup> A. J. P. Taylor views Brailsford as a powerful critic of Imperialism, "Hobson had dealt only with British Imperialism. Brailsford ranged over all the European Powers. He was convinced that the leaders of 'finance capitalism' controlled the policy of their respective states."<sup>83</sup> But like Hobson he had belief in the rationality of these men. It might be appropriate to define Brailsford as being a one-dimensional Marxist. Marxism was a convenient analytical tool, but though Brailsford sensed the strength of the working-class he did not see it as the force of revolution, preferring instead the consolations of rationalism.

From November 1904 Brailsford was on the Executive Committee of the SFRF and the following year played a major part in "The Passport Case" when several Society members became involved in underground work on behalf of the revolution. 1908 saw Brailsford involved in less hazardous work as a committee member of the Parliamentary Russia Committee, set up to "monitor" Anglo-Russian relations and publish revelations which would discredit Tsarism.<sup>85</sup>

Also prominent in the running of the SFRF from 1896 was the Anglo-Russian Theodore Rothstein. As we have seen he had earlier been active in the Leeds branch of the Society. For one historian Rothstein became the Svengali of the British Socialist Party - "Russian émigrés participated in a most important fashion in the activities of the B.S.P., and in the post-revolutionary years a number of former BSP members also served the Russian state...The subsequent transition to the Comintern was facilitated by the presence of ex BSP members in Russia and above all by the role/



role played by Theodore Rothstein, a prominent member of the party's left wing and a leading Soviet agent in Britain when once the Bolsheviki had taken power."<sup>86</sup>

Rothstein's son, Andrew,<sup>87</sup> vigorously rejects this view of his father diverting British communism into non-British ways and destroying a 'native' Anglo-Marxist tradition: "My father probably was older than most, when he came here as a young man. But he had no Marxism, or experience in the working class movement, in Russia: he had been in a Narodnik students' group in his native town. In fact he only joined the SDF after several years in this country. It is a fact, of course, that he had his own talents and devotion to the Socialist cause - and also that, after having been a member of the SDF for several years, he began writing for the Russian Social-Democratic press: and so was able to extend his horizon too..."<sup>88</sup>

Aside from the columns of the socialist press the activities and political development of Rothstein are revealed in Free Russia. From 1897 he appeared at SFRF Executive Committee meetings as an "advisory member", and from 1906/8 was co-editor of Free Russia during Volkhovsky's serious illness.<sup>89</sup> His frequent articles for the paper show his belief in the necessity of violent revolution but are more notable for the content of their "new radicalism" (in the style of J. A. Hobson and G. H. Perris) than for any burgeoning Bolshevism. "It was only the need of the support of financial Europe which prevented the Government from repealing the manifesto of 30 October and compelled it to call together the promised Duma..." Thus opined Rothstein on the strategy employed by Tsarism in 1906.<sup>90</sup>

But the most remarkable and important of the "new men" was Joseph/

Joseph Frederick Green. As a young man Green was ordained but in 1886 he quit his charge, rejecting Christianity for Positivism, exchanging the consolations of theology for those of history. From 1893<sup>91</sup> he was involved in the affairs of the SFRF but appears to have had the income and time to devote to a full-time commitment becoming both a member of the executive of the Social Democratic Federation and secretary of the International Arbitration and Peace Association.

Green became a key figure in the SFRF as lecturer, writer and editor. In December 1895 he became Assistant Editor of Free Russia and then the SFRF's Honorary Secretary. During Volkhovsky's illness he edited the journal along with Rothstein and stayed active in the Society until it disbanded.<sup>92</sup> Green's speciality was the "Our Diary" column in which he kept a watchful eye on the British Press coverage of Russian affairs, while he was especially active in mobilising the Society's opposition to the Aliens Bill of 1904-5.

Having reconciled Positivism with Marxism, Green would thus appear as an oddity in any history of the British intelligentsia. But his internationalism owed more to the "religion of humanity" and the Comte-ist trinity of "love, order and progress" than to the centrality of the dialectics of the class struggle. In the marriage of Comte with Marx it was the idealist who "wore the trousers." Green's theoretical perspectives were immersed in that defrocked religiosity peculiar to positivism. Thus Green's criticism of the Aliens Bill of 1904 resounded with the tones of the hellfire sermonizer but lacked any developed Marxist analysis - it was "a measure which, even in a modified form, will be a standing/

standing disgrace to the Parliament and people of this country so long as it remains on the statute-book of the realm."<sup>93</sup>

The gulf between "new men" such as Brailsford, Green, Hobhouse, Perris and Rothstein and the older generation of SFRF members such as Spence Watson was to be clearly revealed in 1905. But before that time all members of the Society had to face up to the threat to internationalism posed by jingoism and hyper-nationalism during the period of the Boer War. It was to be one of History's "dress rehearsals".

As Novikov wooed Gladstone in 1876, "not for herself but for Russia", so in 1899, Rosalind, Countess of Carlisle had resort to blandishment in appealing to Spence Watson, "Will you not return from Oban and head the people who are protesting against war?" - "This staying of a wicked war fever has ever been your task; time after time you have roused and led the Liberals when they were going astray on international matters and you have saved us." The countess reckoned "We ought to have a meeting in each big town in the north and Newcastle should be foremost."<sup>94</sup>

The old pacifist came out of the west to confront the jingoes: "a shouting, whistling, booing, roaring, yelling, singing, perspiring group of unwholesome humanity." The Newcastle meeting on the war had to be closed with no speeches having been made - "It had been a wonderful exhibition of Tory love of liberty of speech and fair play! For half an hour together there was a great cry of 'We want war, we want war', 'Beer' being occasionally substituted for 'war.' "<sup>95</sup>

The war affected the Society directly in that Russia had joined with Germany in encouraging the Boers. It fell to Volkhovsky to patiently explain the motives underpinning Tsarist policy./

policy. This he did in a closely-argued article in Free Russia which intertwined internationalist and anti-imperialist perspectives. The article is notable for the way in which Volkhovsky translated the Hobsonian theory of under-consumption into Russian terms (thus anticipating by many years Lenin's use of Hobson in the pamphlet "Imperialism - The Highest Stage of Capitalism"). Volkhovsky's starting point was that "Russia is at present ruled by a gang of imperialist jingoes". Russia's rulers were incapable of reforming the taxation system which had sapped the peasantry. To do so "would mean the end of a bureaucratic autocracy, its replacement by self-government and the strict rule of law". Thus the centre of gravity of taxation would have to shift from agriculture to manufacture. In return Witte, the Minister of Finance, introduced protectionism and subsidies for industry: "For all this the paying capacities of the Russian masses are being strained to their utmost. But this systematic impoverishment of the masses means a deterioration of home markets, consequently foreign markets must be provided for the hotbed produce of Russian industry." Hence territories had to be acquired around which protectionist walls could be built. This explained the construction of the Trans-Siberian railway, the expansion into Manchuria and re-awakened interest in Central Asia and the Persian Gulf.

But the imperialist hare, Britain, checked the Russian tortoise at every turn. Thus, Russian foreign policy must seek to reduce British power and influence - encouragement of the Boers being an instance: "It offers new opportunities for a vigorous development of Russian imperialism, which is only another expression for the economic exhaustion of the Russian people and

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a further delay in their acquirement of personal security, political liberty, self-government, and progress."<sup>96</sup>

Volkhovsky was concerned to rebuff jingoism and defuse potential Russophobia by patiently revealing the roots of Russian interest in the Boer War. One SFRF member, Professor Ritchie,<sup>97</sup> had - in Volkhovsky's opinion - wanted "the organ of the SFRF to criticise and protest against the Russian views of the South-African affair." This was unacceptable. Volkhovsky forcibly stated to Spence Watson: "he wants that organ to take part in partisan war on the field of English affairs." This would only do harm to the Society, while the "erudite and clever" Professor's logic drove him to the stance "that if a nation has a bad government, another nation is justified in going to war with the former". Volkhovsky was compelled to re-state Stepniak's belief that freedom could only be won by the Russians themselves: "As a matter of the F. of R.F. - both British and Russian - always protested against such an idea (as Ritchie's). All they wanted was - to prevent the Russian bad Government doing harm on foreign soil to Russian<sub>(sic)</sub> aspirations to Freedom, to show active sympathy with the Russian aspirants to Freedom by materially and morally supporting the victims of tyranny, by educating public opinion, and, if possible, by preventing the British Government from taking any step which might be a support to the Russian official system."<sup>98</sup>

So the SFRF entered the twentieth century. "Educating public opinion", the Society gave much prominence to the manner in which through expulsion, exile, or forced military service, the Tsarist authorities broke up the exuberant disorders among students. As early as 1897<sup>99</sup> Free Russia described the unrest among the students/

students and in 1901 when persecutions became especially vengeful,<sup>100</sup> the SFRF led the protests in Britain. The Executive Committee deplored the punishments and decided "that a statement of the case be sent to leading members of the European Universities and that they be asked to sign a protest against the degrading punishment inflicted on these unfortunate youths."<sup>101</sup> In addition, the Executive supplied three members, E. R. Pease, J. F. Green, and N. W. Chaikovskii to the committee set up by Russo-Jewish workmen in London to organize a demonstration against the punishment of the students. This took place on 2 June 1901.<sup>102</sup>

The files of Free Russia record the depth of feeling aroused in Britain. Newspapers such as the Manchester Guardian and Christian World protested, while at its Leicester Conference the I.L.P. "welcomed the alliance which had taken place for the first time in Russia between the industrial and the student classes in the agitation against the despotism of the Government." Prominent in the wave of undergraduate protest was "a unanimous vote of sympathy passed on behalf of 1800 undergraduates" by the University of Glasgow S.R.C.<sup>103</sup>

In April 1903 occurred an act of infamy - the unprovoked and dastardly Kishinev pogrom. Britons of all classes recoiled in horror at this atavistic outrage. Initial comment in Free Russia came from Chaikovskii and Volkhovsky. While the former concentrated on "a statement of facts", the latter contrasted the outwardly civilised appearance of Kishinev, with its granite pavements and street lighting and the barbaric behaviour of the Black Hundreds. Volkhovsky drew the moral: "either the existing Russian rule was unable or it was unwilling to make such events impossible. And in either case such a rule has no longer the right to exist."<sup>104</sup>

J. F. Green and Volkhovsky took part in the meeting and Hyde Park demonstration sponsored by the Jewish labour movement in London. Green blamed the pogrom on the autocracy "which supports and creates anti-Semitism by means of the enactment of the anti-Jewish laws and the subsidizing of the anti-semitic press." Up to 15,000 people marched to Hyde Park where it was resolved that "only the development of a powerful working class movement in Russia can prevent the repetition of similar atrocities." This vigorous expression of proletarian internationalism compared with the failure of the Lord Mayor of London to call a Mansion House protest meeting.<sup>105</sup>

Tsarism's stock abroad had risen as a result of the Tsar's "Eirenikon" of 1898 but the pieties of "the Peace Crusade" now lay forgotten. A net work of revolutionary and anti-tsarist groups abroad carried on effective propaganda work.<sup>106</sup> The autocracy was under increasing pressure. It was significant that at precisely this juncture a variant of the Bourtzev case arose. This was the case of the revolutionary journalist, Michael Gotz, whom the Tsarist authorities attempted to extradite from Italy. The attempt had failed, in no small part due to the voice of "Liberal public opinion in England", according to Volkhovsky. The signatures to the memorial to the Italians provides the reader with a plentiful catch of radicals, both liberal and socialist.<sup>107</sup> Most had a connection with the SFRF.

Intriguingly, when the Jewish labour movement in London and elsewhere was vigorously proclaiming its belief in international solidarity there emerged its opposite - the strident racism of the British Brothers' League and the laying before Parliament of an Aliens' Bill. The SFRF found itself once again in the work of "prevention."/

"prevention."

In 1903 the Edwardian anti-semite, Major Evans Gordon provided documentary evidence of what he termed "the alien threat" in a series of publications.<sup>108</sup> The following year Balfour's Government introduced an Aliens Bill. But were these manifestations of renewed British interest in "the aliens question" entirely spontaneous and indigenous? Was the hand of the "Zagranichnaia Agentura" at work? In May 1904, Bourtzev, now living in France was again uncertain as to his future - being threatened with expulsion from France. J. F. Green in the "Our Diary" column quoted the concern of the Speaker: "If the present Aliens Bill should become law, it will be in the power of the Russian bureaucracy, relying on the freemasonry which obtains among the police of all countries to make our shores very difficult of access to the political refugee."<sup>109</sup>

By this time the SFRF had set up a special sub-committee to consider the threat posed by the Aliens Bill which passed its second reading in the House on 25 April by a majority of 124.<sup>110</sup> However, "thanks to the spirited opposition of Sir Charles Dilke and a few other members", the Bill "could not be forced through the Grand Committee, to which it was referred."<sup>111</sup> Dilke had fought the Bill as it sought to infringe the principle of asylum while it was not the means by which to end sweated labour.<sup>112</sup>

Green opined that agitation in East London has been "carefully fostered" and that "finding that legislation did not follow, a largely-bogus organisation, entitled the 'British Brothers' League' was started to keep the question to the front in the East of London." The 1904 Bill had then followed and after its failure there was a recrudescence of the agitation: "This year the/



the promoters of the agitation have been successful in persuading the Government to introduce their Bill earlier in the Session." Thus, the likelihood of Dilke and his friends successfully blocking passage of the Bill was lessened.<sup>113</sup>

Spence Watson had warmed to the fight at the 1904 Annual Conversazione of the SFRF, reminding his audience of the origins of the Society and, harking back to the Bourtzev Case of 1898, expressed his hatred of "the spread of the Russian spy system into the capitals of Europe." He feared that "This Bill gave almost an absolute power to the Secretary of State over the liberties and practically the lives of political refugees."<sup>114</sup>

As the revived Bill progressed through Parliament the Executive Committee of the SFRF published the basis of its opposition. It pointed out the difficulty of political refugees providing immigration authorities with bona fide proof of their status while "the Bill contains no provision that would exempt persons escaping from prosecution on account of their religious opinions, strikers or reservists escaping from military service."<sup>115</sup> As was to become clear over a decade later when the status of aliens became a matter of urgent political debate<sup>116</sup> such legislation militated against Jews fleeing from pogroms, while many Jews resented and feared the prospect of compulsory national service in the Army.

But protests notwithstanding<sup>117</sup> an Aliens Act was passed by the Tory Government, before its decision to fight the General Election of January, 1906. Spence Watson, ageing and in poor health, wrote with sadness: "The time was when such an Act as this could scarcely have been carried through the House of Commons...But most of the Tories have learned to think Imperially and, until the General/

General Election, a considerable proportion of Liberals were learners in the Imperial school..." Spence Watson urged repeal - the Act would do nothing to eliminate "sweating" but if retained there was a need for "the appointment of liberal minded legal assessors upon whom their duty towards refugees shall be impressed by the Secretary of State."<sup>118</sup> The Society was perhaps able to allow itself two cheers for "We are glad to learn from eye-witnesses that since the issue of Mr. Gladstone's circular the Act is being much more leniently administered, and almost everybody coming from Russia is being accepted as a political refugee, which is as it should be." The vigilance and tenacity of a handful of radical and socialist M.P.'s had been rewarded - Dilke had once again been to the fore.<sup>119</sup>

Indeed the tale was one with a not entirely unhappy ending. Early in the life of the new administration, Herbert Samuel, Parliamentary Under Secretary, Home Department, wrote to Spence Watson to enlist his aid in assisting "in securing a proper administration of the clause in the Aliens Act dealing with political and religious refugees." The Government "propose...to invite a few men who are closely acquainted with present conditions in Russia to form themselves into a voluntary Committee and to appoint persons to testify before the Immigration Boards on behalf of the immigrants who are known to be political or religious refugees."<sup>120</sup>

Spence Watson had been asked to nominate names for this Committee - "the Committee cannot be an official body, and must conduct its operations in its own way." That Spence Watson supplied Samuel with nominees is clear, as Samuel was to ask, "Do any others occur to you of men who are prominent than those you mention?/"

mention? Was not Arthur Acland at one time a member of the Society of Friends of Russian Freedom?"<sup>121</sup>

But even so central an issue as that of the Aliens legislation had been washed to the shallows in 1905 when both the "old guard" of the Society and the younger members had been swept along in the rapids of revolution. Vivid memories still remained of the 1896 Petersburg strike, the suppression of Finnish liberties, the repression of the students and the barbarities of the Kishinyov pogroms. Yet the dramatic events of Bloody Sunday took not only British internationalists by surprise but also the veteran Russian anarchist, Kropotkin. Spence Watson had been quick to write his old friend - "The first greeting of the beginning Russian revolution coming from you, in such friendly, dear and tender accents - will remain one of the bright spots in life." The mighty impact which the events of 22 January must have had on foreign observers is vividly conveyed in Kropotkin's simple prose: "I know how you must have felt the losses of these brave men, going to face slaughter with the conviction that out of their blood a new life would germinate. They were great, these 80,000 men taking the oath of God to meet slaughter and death for the great cause of a whole nation."<sup>122</sup>

The SFRF moved swiftly. On the motion of G. H. Perris it was agreed by the Executive Committee to issue a manifesto and appeal. Perris stated that fifteen years of vigilance had been justified, "In the opinion of this Society such a struggle though it may be long and bloody can only end in one way...all hopes based upon the benevolence of the Monarch and the wisdom of his Ministers are futile."<sup>123</sup> A Russian Strikers' Relief Fund was set up on SFRF initiative; the committee included the entire SFRF/

SFRF Executive together with Edward Caird, the Master of Balliol and the Christian Socialist the Rev. H. Scott Holland. By 30 May, £886 had been raised in Britain.<sup>124</sup> The Society was also active in convening a meeting to protest at the events of Bloody Sunday; joining Green on the platform on 1 Feb. 1905 were H. M. Hyndman, George Bernard Shaw, I. O. Ford, Ben Cooper and James MacDonald of the London Trades Council.<sup>125</sup>

But in 1905 events in Russia moved with awesome speed. The year had begun with a "little ship with a false flag"<sup>126</sup> - the police-sponsored Zubatov trade unions - leading the workers' movement. Their demands, as expressed in Gapon's petition to the Tsar, had been bourgeois-democratic. But by autumn, the spontaneous, elemental activity of the working people in the general strike flotilla had forced the autocracy into political concessions and had won victory after victory from the employers.

Free Russia faithfully charted these events which gripped the attention of Europe. But its files also reveal how, among the "second generation" of its members, attitudes to Russia were being transformed. It no longer sufficed to view Russia as an object of charity. Events in Russia were teaching universal political lessons.

Within the Society, illness removed both Volkhovsky<sup>127</sup> and Spence Watson from the front line in 1905 (though the latter did contribute two articles late in the year). Political analysis of ongoings in Russia thus came to be handled by the populist émigré David Soskice. Soskice employed the imagery of "the three acts of revolution". Act One had centred on Bloody Sunday, "it showed that the Russian autocracy is a danger not only to its own people, but to the whole of the civilized world." At this stage, Soskice viewed the strike wave as only part of the first act, a return to work would be/

be necessary to prevent famine; the workers will "return to work, but with a firm resolve to come out into the streets again, this time with arms." The scenes of Act Two had been variously set in Poland, the Caucasus, Odessa, the Baltic Ports, St. Petersburg and Kronstadt, the wave of revolution had pounded against the dock-gates and barrack-walls of the Tsar's navy and army - "I repeat what I said six months ago - 'Autocracy will not survive this year' and the dynasty is madly digging its own grave." On 26 October, Soskice hailed Act Three - "The Climax": "The unexpected always happens. And by unawaited weapons will the nation break the hated chains...such a weapon has been discovered by the Russian nation in the general strike." Before Russia there were now two alternatives - "either the granting of a Constituent Assembly...or the same institution taken by force." Soskice reckoned the latter would have to occur - "There will certainly still be much bloodshed, but the triumph of a free Russia is now only a question of weeks, nay, perhaps of days."<sup>128</sup>

Brailsford, too, was aware of the vast, class struggle being fought out in Russia. He was suspicious of the "Bulygin Duma": "Before the grant of a Duma it seemed just possible that the Radicals might have been driven by the force of events into revolution. Now it is evident that if anything of the sort is attempted it can only be by the Socialists and the disaffected non-Russian nationalities...the workmen and the professional classes will hardly be content to sit idle while a few landed gentry remonstrate in decorous accents with the Tsar's ministers behind closed doors."<sup>129</sup>

Spence Watson succumbed to illness in 1905, the summer found him recuperating in Tenerife,<sup>130</sup> and although he recovered to be able/

able to write at the end of the year he was "hardly allowed to talk", according to Volkhovsky.<sup>131</sup> In his interpretation of events in Russia, his internationalism appeared superannuated, trailing in the wake of historical forces which he little understood. Thus he wrote, "the autocracy must give way very much further than it has done if it is to avoid the fate which ultimately awaits all one-man governments founded upon the woes of people who are misgoverned...Only by recognizing the wrongs of generations which have driven an all too patient people to revolt can the Tsar secure a peaceful solution of the strife."<sup>132</sup> And further, while Soskice hailed "The Climax", the revolution, Spence Watson in a letter about the Caucasian massacres talked of the need for civilised Europe and America to "speak out and declare that they will hold the Russian Government responsible for the crimes which it is allowing to be committed against its own people."<sup>133</sup>

But in greeting the revolution, the euphoria of Soskice had been tempered with caution. He referred to "the greed of the European financier", ignorant of Russia, who might come to the rescue of Tsarism by floating a loan.<sup>134</sup> But in his interpretation of the reasons for the collapse of the revolution, the Marxist, Rothstein, was strongly critical of the Russian middle-class for failing "to organize local militias to resist the armed hooliganism of the Cossacks...with the result that the country was left defenceless against the 'invaders.'" Russian liberals had thus "forfeited for ever their fine chance as well as allowed the Tzardom to regain its lost power." The upshot was a constitutional charade - "for the benefit of foreign bankers a show of the constitution will be upheld", the autocracy could not be overthrown/

overthrown by peaceful means.<sup>135</sup>

Spence Watson's valedictory for the 1905 Revolution contained no new perspectives. His Christian internationalism was that of a Mr. Ready-to-Halt. While scathingly critical of Tsarist "Government by Brute Force" he seemed to despair of anything being done to prevent massacre and pogrom: "Either the civilized world has lost its sense of right and wrong, or these things must cease...Surely our own Government will speak out...Remember that 'to him who knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin.'" <sup>136</sup>

As in the earlier period of its history, so at this time the SFRF busied itself with underground work. This included obtaining British passports for Russians seeking to return home. "It was the mild and persuasive Volkhovsky who lured me into evil ways," claimed S. G. Hobson, but "I liked to think that some tortured souls found freedom."<sup>137</sup> Also involved in this activity was H. N. Brailsford who in 1905 found himself charged with conspiracy after one of the British passports was found on the body of a man blown up by the explosion of his own bomb in the Hotel Bristol: "The gist of Mr. Brailsford's defence was that the struggle for Russian freedom is a European question that the coming of liberty in Russia must prove a benefit not only to the Russian people but Europe as a whole and to our country in particular and that similar aid rendered to Mazzini and Garibaldi was actually a benefit to England since it laid the basis of a national friendship, based on sympathy and gratitude."<sup>138</sup> Brailsford and his co-defendant each received fines of £100.

S. G. Hobson also relates that in late 1904, N. W. Chaikovskii, asked him to co-operate in gun running. Hobson acted as the "Front/

"front man", with J. F. Green also involved, and the cargo of 6000 Brownings went from an East Ham Warehouse as "hardware and lard" to Reval. At Reval, Hobson claimed he was met by a man "of the priestly order of the Jewish faith and a trusted member of the Jewish Bund." On his return to London, Hobson claims, he was interviewed by Scotland Yard.<sup>139</sup> The historians of the Social Democratic Federation also tell of the gun-running. Particularly intriguing is their statement, "the affair was in fact conducted most astutely by individual members of a body known as the Friends of Russia Movement."<sup>140</sup>

Thus in 1905 the SFRF had been active on many different fronts, never more so. Yet in the ensuing period of Thermidor when Stolypin gave Tsarism fresh hope and when Britain and Russia came to an understanding, the Society entered into a period of stagnation and decline. One issue of Free Russia in 1906...the situation was no better in 1907, while the July/September 1908 issue carried a mast-head appeal for support. The following year, in a plea to 'Help the Starving' it was stated that the SFRF Emergency Fund which dealt with these cases had "long been exhausted...new subscriptions come in so slowly that they hardly cover the expense of our propaganda work."<sup>141</sup>

Why should the SFRF go into decline at this period when anti-tsarism and solidarity with the Russian liberation movement had become an important element in the consciousness of the most politically-conscious layers of the British working class, (as evidenced by the storm of protest over the Tsar's visit to England in July 1909)?

A. J. P. Taylor, that most celebrated exponent of "the hunch", opines that "the Radicals in parliament carried less weight/



weight so far as foreign affairs went...The independent member was being squeezed out by the party machine and it became increasingly unattractive to "split the party" over foreign affairs as parliament did more and in domestic legislation"<sup>142</sup> - a case of consciences sold for a mess of pensions?

It might also be surmised that many radicals might have doubted the viability of a body with such limited aims as the SFRF, particularly at a time when, not to coin a phrase, the mould of kingdoms old was being broken, with the emergence of an independent mass partly of the working people. The defeated Tory leader made a remarkable verdict on the period opening up in British politics: "If I read the signs aright what has occurred had nothing to do with any of the things we have been squabbling over the last few years, C.-B. (i.e. Campbell-Bannerman) is a mere cork dancing on a torrent which he cannot control, and what is going on here is the faint echo of the same movement which has produced massacres in St. Petersburg, riots in Vienna and Socialist processions in Berlin."<sup>143</sup> For the new radicals commitment and activism was to be on a wider and deeper front than that offered in organisations and societies such as the SFRF.

But there are simpler, more substantial reasons for the decline of the SFRF - illness and death. Since Stepniak's death Volkhovsky had been the chief editor of Free Russia but at the beginning of 1906 it was announced: "owing to the departure from England of...(Volkhovsky) in December last, the regular issue of the paper has been suspended..."<sup>144</sup> In 1907 an editorial announced: "It is felt that now that accurate information on Russian/

Russian affairs is published in the general press, there is not the same need for a special journal published so frequently as once a month..." The writer did, however, call for continued support from readers for the many facets of the Society's work.<sup>145</sup> As for Spence Watson his health was declining - thus in July 1909 he was prevented from chairing the SFRF protest at the Tsar's visit - and in July 1911 Free Russia appeared with its front-page edged in black - the Society's "General" was dead.<sup>146</sup>

Yet the activities of the SFRF did continue as before on the humanitarian, vigilante, political and propagandist fronts. Thus on two occasions the Society gave help to the "Potemkin" mutineers to enable many of them to start a new life in America. In 1908 leading SFRF members had raised funds to help the men: "so gratifying was the response that the party were able to sail for South America on 17 September." Before embarkation the men had been guests at a public meeting and at a social, J. Dimchenko speaking on their behalf.<sup>147</sup> Then in 1911 several mutineers and their families were able to go to Canada. This was a result of appeals printed in Free Russia and by leading SFRF members such as J. F. Green initiating fund-raising; the Doukhobors in Canada also assisted, lending £102:14:9 to the men and the trustees of the "Resurrection" Fund also helped<sup>148</sup> (the "Resurrection" Fund had been set up to dispense royalties from the sale of Tolstoy's novel for charitable purposes.).

In the aftermath of the collapse of the revolution the Society had set up a Russian Political Exiles Relief Fund, its treasurers being first an Oxford branch member, Mr. A. Sidgwick then the historian, G. M. Trevelyan. In the period November 1906 to February 1908 the fund dispensed £1780 in relief.<sup>149</sup>

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In 1908 Stepniak's old comrade, N. W. Chaikovskii, had been arrested by the Tsarist police. He had returned to Russia taking advantage of the political "thaw" occasioned by the October Manifesto. The SFRF was at the heart of the campaign to ensure justice for Chaikovskii. The Memorial presented to the Tsar's ambassador in London contained the signatures of nine peers, eleven bishops and four deans and over forty M.P.s. Other signatures included those of judges, philanthropists, and noted luminaries such as Elgar, Thomas Hardy, Henry James and H. G. Wells.<sup>150</sup> The subsequent acquittal of Chaikovskii was hailed by Free Russia as "A Victory". The paper added, "There must have been some special reason which allowed Russian official justice to work decently in this case." The special reason was "foreign agitation in the interests of justice and humanity."<sup>151</sup>

But by far the most important activity of the SFRF in the post-1905 period concerned its response to the 1907 Anglo-Russian diplomatic negotiations: "The Committee of the SFRF prepared a memorial which was influentially signed, protesting against any alliance, "entente" or arrangement between the two Governments as calculated to improve the credit of the Russian Government and to discourage those who were fighting for liberty in Russia." The protest was to no avail but the leadership of the SFRF was undaunted, deciding that there was now the need for more regular publication of Free Russia, and giving maximum publicity to the activities of critics of the 1907 Anglo-Russian agreement.<sup>152</sup>

Thus Free Russia welcomed the birth of the Parliamentary Russian Committee: "A group of M.P.s realised what danger this country was running from its legislators and public opinion remaining unversed in things Russian and resolved to act accordingly."<sup>153</sup>/

accordingly."<sup>153</sup> In order to educate public opinion the P.R.C. issued bulletins. These were edited by David Soskice and Felix Volkhovsky.<sup>154</sup> One of the articles by Peter Kropotkin was published in pamphlet form. Its theme was "The Terror in Russia." Kropotkin's revelations concluded with an internationalist message. Nations had to work out their own destiny, "But one of the greatest achievements of modern civilisation is precisely the feeling of intimate kinship among all nations. Despotism in one part of the world reacts upon all the races of the world..."<sup>155</sup>

Born in 1908, the P.R.C. was later enlarged "and put on a more permanent basis" with Lord Courtney as its President, Arthur Ponsonby as its Chairman and with SFRF members such as Hobhouse and Brailsford on its Committee.<sup>156</sup> Evidence of the success of the P.R.C. can be seen in the size of the protest "Against the Strangling of Finland" both in the Houses of Parliament and "out of doors." In November 1909 the P.R.C. had published a penny pamphlet on Finland. There then followed a Memorial to the Foreign Secretary signed by one hundred and twenty M.P.s while Chambers of Commerce protested in similar vein. The size of the British protest so enraged the newspaper Rossiia that it accused the ubiquitous S. G. Hobson: Rossiia "claims that the whole movement was artificially prepared by the Finlanders through the instrumentality of Mr. S. G. Hobson, a 'paid Jew'." Free Russia gleefully stated, "it is well known that Mr. Hobson is an Irishman, belonging to an old and honourable Quaker family."<sup>157</sup>

After thirteen years the Tsar again visited Britain. But in 1909 he only came to Cowes. In the opinion of Volkhovsky the "surreptitious character" of this second visit was due to Sir Edward Grey having a clear idea of how deeply unpopular the Tsar was/

was in Britain. Once more the SFRF and its members took a leading part in the protests against the visit. SFRF members Green, Volkhovsky, A. Aladin, Soskice and A. S. Headingley spoke at the monster demonstration convened by the Labour Party while the Society held its own protest meeting three days later.<sup>158</sup>

With perfect timing and with a subtle appreciation of dialectics the SFRF had hailed the visit to Britain of the veteran Populist, the revolutionary Vera Figner. Free Russia reported the Hertzen Circle's welcome for this woman who had spent twenty-two years in Schlüsselburg Fortress as a prisoner. Volkhovsky's speech poured scorn on those who thought they might cajole Nicholas II into a change for the better, while Figner stood as the true representative of the Russian people.<sup>159</sup>

So the SFRF continued its broad sweep of activities; but as the Annual Report for 1912 indicates, the consequences of the Anglo-Russian "entente" were the Society's prime concern. By this date the argument, that as a result of the understanding the Russian Government might be "favourably influenced", lay in tatters. By contrast, "the result seems to have been quite the opposite, and the Russian authorities have not only done nothing in the way of giving freedom to the people of Russia but have attacked the freedom of other states without let or hindrance on the part of the British Government." The most notable instance of this had been in Persia.<sup>160</sup>

The energetic defence of Persian liberty had been launched by Professor E. G. Browne and the SFRF joined forces with Browne's Persia Committee, publicising Browne's four-point indictment of the Liberal Government's foreign policy: "I venture to say that seldom, if ever, in the history of this country has a foreign policy/

policy been pursued at once so illiberal, so immoral, so contemptible and so perilous as that pursued by the present Government." Browne alleged that the reputation of Britain for truth, honour and fair play had been ruined by "the lamentable foreign policy of Sir Edward Grey and his lieutenants."<sup>161</sup>

Such sentiments were proof of the moribundity of the internationalism of the Spence Watson variety. No longer could Britain be seen as a repository of bountiful liberty when the labours of men such as Browne revealed Britain as an accomplice in the crimes of Tsarism such as the Tabriz Massacres.

This new reality was further illuminated by the extent of British involvement in the Lena Goldfield massacres. Volkhovsky fairly quivered with indignation as he pointed out that 81% of the shares in the mining company were owned by Britons. Ignorance was no excuse; in fact, "there exactly lies the point. Does it behove a civilized man, a Christian and an Englishman, to invest his money in concerns, at the same time declining to know anything about the blood and sweat out of which his profits are squeezed?" Volkhovsky was bitterly critical of the Professor of Russian History at Liverpool University, Bernard Pares, and the traveller and writer Maurice Baring for the part they took in attracting British capital to Russia: "...If some Englishmen by backing Russian injustice with their capital have done harm to the Russian people, other Englishmen can atone for it by doing some good to the Russians."<sup>162</sup>

By 1912, Liberalism was an ideology in crisis - a crisis which was to be forced to breaking point by the coming of the Great War. The internationalism of Spence Watson and his generation had been coloured by self-confidence and by a belief in the peculiar features of British history which enabled Britain to/

to play a unique role as dispenser of hope, succour and justice to embattled peoples and causes. Now the meridian of Victorian capitalism had passed. A new generation of Liberal intellectuals were faced by this realisation and by the onset of imperialism and its other side, a working class growing and developing in political awareness. Significant sections of the middle class intelligentsia were thus attracted to working-class politics and organizations. The process can be seen in miniature in the history of the SFRF. With their expert knowledge of Russian history men such as Perris and his kind knew and understood the strength of the working class. Cut adrift from a Liberal Party that they now saw as hopelessly compromised, these intellectuals bobbed towards the movement of organized labour. In their reformed world view they saw the working class stand sentinel over international justice.

But there is another strand to the tale. The beliefs which these "new men" brought into the labour movement stemmed from bourgeois ideology. The question of the strength of bourgeois ideas is now raised. These "recruits to labour" attempted to translate in a new setting the basis moral postulates of the liberalism of the era of laissez-faire. The process is well illustrated in the person of G. H. Perris.

As seen above, he had become a Labour Party supporter but his new political perspectives were novel in appearance rather than in essence. Attracted to the working class though he was, the internationalism of Perris was nonetheless bathed in religiosity and a kind of diluted Tolstoyism. Thus he wrote in 1910: " 'My faith is great in time.' We must take larger views, re-read the old religious lessons, re-read history, and eschew the idea of quick/

quick easy and complete victories...Above all, we must learn, in contact with the humble working masses at our doors wherein lies the nobility of man...It is deplorable that we cannot stretch out a hand to save the victims of the foulest tyranny of the modern world, but they have an inner light (R.G.) better than any borrowed lamp and it will bring them home in time."<sup>163</sup>

For men such as Perris, political activism could not be confined to the SFRF. The Society's aims had related to different objective circumstances and to a different displacement of political forces both at home and in Russia. This, along with the deaths or retiral from active political life of the organisation's founders, saw the SFRF decline in size and importance. (For example in the year ending 31 March 1911 subscriptions totalled only £63:10: -).<sup>164</sup>

The SFRF was thus in a state of decay by 1914. Two blows despatched it. These were the death of Volkhovsky, and the outbreak of the Great War in which Britain and Russia fought as allies.

On the 2nd August 1914 Volkhovsky died and was cremated on the 5th; funeral addresses were delivered by H. M. Hyndman, Kropotkin, J. F. Green, W. Tcherkesoff, H. M. Thompson and others. Of these, that made by Thompson, one of the "old guard" came closest to encapsulating the life and achievement of the dead man: "...The life of direct contact with his dearly-loved countrymen, varied by terms of imprisonment in a death-dealing fortress - the life of active striving for the education and enlightenment of his land, partly but not entirely extinguished by his banishment to an inaccessible outlying portion of it - the life which ended with the romance of his escape, had...given place/



place to one in England which presented the outward features of hum-drum middle-class life. Nevertheless the hopes and the griefs of the great political tragedy in which he played his part always kept his mind in a high plane of endeavour."<sup>165</sup>

The old man's death could not have been more timely, for the coming of the Great War shattered the foundations on which the SFRF had been based. Almost all of the Society's members were to adopt the "lesser evil" view as expressed by David Soskice: "Europe is waging a war of a magnitude which has no parallel in history...a war against fratricidal militarism, a war for the consolidation of peace and democratic principles. One of the tragic features of this war is the fact that side by side with the three most democratic countries in Europe...is fighting the most arbitrary power in the world, Russia..." But Soskice argued that "to waste our energies in a fight against the iniquities of Russian Tsardom is not only impolitic but dangerous."<sup>166</sup>

Soskice had opined that, "In the midst of the devastating cyclone it is impossible to see clearly into the future" but in his tribute to Volkhovsky, George Kennan, himself a veteran friend of Russian freedom, was more sanguine as to the future: "The very storm of war which seems to show the impossibility of realizing Volkhovsky's dream of human brotherhood and universal peace may finally result in the overthrow of the Hohenzollerns, the Hapsburgs and the Romanoffs, and bring about a transfer of their power to the people who now bear all the burdens and suffering and all the miseries of war, but have little or no voice in the making of it."<sup>167</sup>

Now in time of war the nature of internationalist politics was to take on a qualitatively new dimension. The SFRF of Stepniak,/

Stepniak, Volkhovsky and Spence Watson exited from British political life. Its place was now taken by the organizations formed by G. V. Chicherin and M. Bridges Adams which appealed directly to the working class of Britain.

Footnotes to Chapter Two

- 1 "Our Plan Of Action" - Written by "A Russian", Free Russia, 1(i) June 1890. The author was certainly Stepniak.
- 2 R. S. Watson, "The Movement in England", Free Russia 1(4) June 1890.
- 3 The importance of Volkhovsky whose "life was a short history of the Russian revolutionary movement" is considered later in this chapter. Victor Chernov's judgment is found in Donald Senese, "Felix Volkhovsky in London" Immigrants and Minorities 2(iii) Nov. 1983.
- 4 S. Stepniak, "The Society's Work Till Now" - Free Russia 2(xii), Dec. 1891. (On the dashing of the hopes for the German edition, see E. Taratuta Naooka i Zhizn', loc. cit., No. 9, pp. 82/83.
- 5 Free Russia, 4(i) Jan. 1893; 5(iii) Mar. 1894.
- 6 Ibid., 4(i) Jan. 1893, 4(iii) Mar. 1893, 4(v) May 1893, 5(iii) Mar. 1894, 6(i) Jan. 1895, 6(iv) Apr. 1895.
- 7 Ibid., 5(i), Jan. 1894.
- 8 Each issue of Free Russia carried a synopsis of lectures and meetings, held throughout the kingdom. Thus on 14 December 1892 Volkhovsky lectured to an audience of a thousand in Inverness.
- 9 Free Russia, 4(i), Jan. 1893.
- 10 Ibid., 3(ii), Feb. 1892.
- 11 Ibid., 3(i), Jan. 1892.
- 12 Ibid., 1(i), June 1890.
- 13 Ibid., 2(iii), Mar. 1891.
- 14 Ibid., 10(vi)/(vii) June/July 1899.
- 15 Ibid., 2(vii), July 1891; Christian World, 2 Apr. 1891.

- 16 On the 1891 Famine refer Richenda C. Scott Quakers in Russia (London 1963), passim; G. Woodcock and I. Avakumovic The Doukhobors (London 1969) passim; Henri Troyat Tolstoy (1965; Harmondsworth 1980 edn.) passim. None of these authors refers to the SFRF's work on behalf of the famine victims. The quotation is found in Free Russia 3(vii) July 1892. The same issue records that the Society had raised £3000 to help the victims.
- 17 Free Russia 8(xii), Dec. 1897. On Fairbairn, refer K. S. Latourette Christianity in a Revolutionary Age. (London 1960) Vol. 2, pp. 326/7.
- 18 Ibid., 3(vi) June 1892.
- 19 Ibid., 3(viii) Aug. 1892, Professor M. Dragomanov: "Baptists in South Russia."
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- 31 Richard J. Johnson - "Zagranichnaia Agentura: The Tsarist Political Police in Europe" in Journal of Contemporary History 7, 1972, pp. 221/242.
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- 33 Free Russia 4(iv), Apr. 1893.
- 34 Ibid., 4(xi), Nov. 1893.
- 35 Ibid., passim; the annual report of the Executive Committee 1893/4 viewed the lectures as the most significant event of the year (ibid., 5(vii) July 1894).
- 36 Ibid., 5(xi) Nov. 1894.
- 37 Volkhovsky to Spence Watson 2 Jan (1895) - Spence Watson Papers, File 3. The extent of Spence Watson's actions is unclear.
- 38 Alan Kimball - loc. cit., p. 65.
- 39 Free Russia 9(iv) Apr. 1898; 9(ii) Feb. 1898.
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- 41 Stepniak to Mrs. Spence Watson no date Spence Watson Papers, File 2.
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- 45 Ibid., 3(i) Jan. 1892.
- 46 Ibid., Oct. 1890: 3(iv) Apr. 1892.
- 47 A. J. P. Taylor writes with characteristic glee on this political "ménage à trois" in The Troublemakers op. cit., pp./

- pp. 73/82. See also J. O. Baylen loc. cit. Stead wrote at length on "The MP for Russia: Reminiscences and Correspondence of Madam Olga Novikoff" (London, 1910 2 vols.) On Stead, see F. Whyte, "Life of W. T. Stead" (London 1925)
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- 52 Free Russia 5(ii), Feb. 1894.
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- 56 The validity of this assertion may be measured by scrutiny of the detailed membership lists published in Free Russia and by survey of the venues for lectures delivered by SFRF leaders published monthly in the journal.
- 57 K. S. Latourette, op. cit., p. 254.
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- 59 Free Russia, 2(i), Jan. 1891.
- 60 S. G. Hobson, Pilgrim to the Left (London, 1938), pp. 123/4.
- 61 Free Russia 2(vi) June 1891, report of lecture delivered by Volkhovsky at the National Liberal Club.
- 62 S. Unwin "The Truth About a Publisher" (London, 1960) Ch. 7.
- 63 Evidence of this may be found in the Appendix to this chapter - "The Russian Relief Fund of 1905 - List of Subscribers." Over 30 per cent are women.
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- 65 Free Russia, number 2, Sep. 1890.
- 66 In January 1906 Volkhovsky was in a Swiss sanatorium  
(Volkhovsky to Spence Watson, 2 Jan. 1906 Spence Watson  
Papers, File 3). For an assessment of Volkhovsky see  
D. Senese, loc. cit., pp. 67/80.
- 67 Free Russia 7(viii), Aug. 1896.
- 68 Ibid., 7(viii), Aug. 1896 to 8(iii), Mar. 1897.
- 69 Minutes of Aberdeen Town Council, Vol. 13, 21 Sep., 19 Oct.,  
30 Oct. 1896.
- 70 Bernard Porter, "Critics of Empire - British Radical  
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- 71 Ibid., p. 236.
- 72 J. A. Hobson, "Richard Cobden: The International Man".  
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- 74 Richard T. Shannon, "The Crisis of Imperialism, 1865-1915"  
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- 75 Porter, op. cit., p. 142.
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- 77 G. H. Perris, "The New Internationalism" in "Ethical  
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- 78 Free Russia n/v, October 1890; ibid., passim, on Perris as  
lecturer.
- 79 Ibid., 16(ii), Feb. 1905.
- 80 Ibid., 16(v), May 1905.
- 81 Concord, 24(vi) n.s. June 1908.
- 82 A. J. P. Taylor "The Troublemakers" op. cit., p. 111.

- 83 Ibid. p. 111.
- 84 Free Russia 16(viii - x) Aug. 1905.
- 85 Ibid., n/v Jul/Sep. 1908.
- 86 Walter Kendall "The Revolutionary Movement in Britain 1900-1921, The Origins of British Communism" (London, 1969), p. 83.
- 87 Who has himself attracted notoreity - refer Andrew Boyle "Climate of Treason" (London 1979; 1980 edn.)
- 88 Andrew Rothstein, letter to R. Grant, 27 Jun. 1969.  
Rothstein père was born in 1871.
- 89 Free Russia 8(iii), Mar. 1896; 17(i) Jan. - Apr. 1906.
- 90 Ibid., n.v., Jun. 1907.
- 91 Ibid., 5(i), Jan. 1894.
- 92 Ibid., 7(i), Jan. 1896; 8(iv), Apr. 1897; 17(i), Jan. - Apr. 1906.
- 93 Ibid., 15(v), May 1904.
- 94 Spence Watson Papers - File 5 - Countess of Carlisle to Spence Watson, 10 Sep. 1899.
- 95 Ibid., File 33 - Spence Watson to Mrs. Spence Watson, 12 Oct. 1899.
- 96 Free Russia, 10(xi), Nov. 1899.
- 97 of St. Andrews, North Britain (sic). Free Russia 7(ii), Feb. 1896 lists Ritchie as a subscriber.
- 98 Spence Watson Papers - File 3, Volkhovsky to Spence Watson, 4 Jan. 1900. The wayward English is perhaps due to Volkhovsky having written the letter in a state of evident agitation.
- 99 Free Russia 8(ii), Feb. 1897.



- 100 Ibid., 12(ii), Feb. 1901 carried an article - "A New Students' Strike Threatened - The Army As A Convict Colony - From Our Kiev Correspondent."
- 101 Ibid., 12(iii), Mar. 1901.
- 102 Ibid., 12(v), May 1901, 12 (vi/vii), June/July 1901.
- 103 Ibid., 12(vi/vii) June/July 1901, 12(iv) Apr. 1901.
- 104 Ibid., 14(vi), June 1903.
- 105 Free Russia, 14(vii - x), July - Oct. 1903.
- 106 Ibid., the series of articles "The 'Over the Border' Literature" 13 (viii/x) Aug - Oct. 1902 to 14(i), Jan. 1903.
- 107 Ibid., 14(v), May 1903.
- 108 See, for example, W. Evans Gordon, "Our Aliens At Home" in World's Work, 3, 1903 and The Alien Immigrant Map (London 1903).
- 109 Free Russia 15(vi) June 1904.
- 110 Ibid., 15(v), May 1904.
- 111 J. F. Green's leading article, "The Anti Alien Humbug" in Justice, 6 May 1905.
- 112 Sir C. W. Dilke, "The Aliens Bill" in Free Russia 15(x), Nov. 1904.
- 113 J. F. Green, loc. cit.
- 114 Free Russia 15(vii/ix) July/Oct. 1904.
- 115 Ibid., 16(vii), July 1906.
- 116 See below Chapter 7.
- 117 Free Russia 16(vii) July 1905 lists signatories to a protest against the Bill.
- 118 Ibid., 17(i), Jan/Apr. 1906.
- 119 Ibid.
- 120 Herbert Samuel to Spence Watson "(Private) Home Office 8 Mar. 1906" Spence Watson Papers File 31.

- 121 Samuel to Spence Watson 13 Mar. 1906. Ibid.
- 122 P. Kropotkin to Spence Watson 10 Feb. 1905 Spence Watson Papers, File 1.
- 123 Free Russia 16(ii), Feb. 1905.
- 124 Ibid., 16(vi), June 1905.
- 125 Justice, 11 Feb. 1905; Free Russia 16(iii) Mar. 1905.
- 126 Rosa Luxemburg, The Mass Strike (1906; Colombo, n/d) p. 26. Trans. P. Lavin.
- 127 Volkhovsky to Spence Watson, Hospital Cantonal, Lausanne, 2 Jan. 1906 in Spence Watson Papers, File 3.
- 128 Free Russia 16(ii), Feb 1905; 16(vi) June 1905; 16(vii) July 1905; 16(xi) Nov. 1905. On the early life of Soskice refer G. H. Perris Russia in Revolution (London, 1905).
- 129 Ibid., 16(viii - x), Aug. - Oct. 1905.
- 130 Ibid., 16(v) May 1905, 16(vi) May 1906.
- 131 Volkhovsky to Spence Watson, 2 Jan 1906 Spence Watson Papers, File 3.
- 132 Free Russia, 16(viii - x), Aug. - Oct. 1905.
- 133 Ibid., 16(xi), Nov. 1905.
- 134 Ibid.
- 135 Ibid., 17(i), Jan - Apr. 1906; (n/v) June 1907.
- 136 Ibid., n/v June 1907.
- 137 S. G. Hobson, op. cit., p. 126.
- 138 Free Russia, 16(viii - x), Aug - Oct. 1905.
- 139 S. G. Hobson, op. cit., pp. 126-8.
- 140 H. W. Lee and E. Archbold Social Democracy in Britain (London, 1935) pp. 148-153. The episode is fully described below (Chapter Four).
- 141 Free Russia, n/v, Jan. 1909.
- 142 A. J. P. Taylor, op. cit., p. 87.
- 143/

- 143 Blanche Dugdale, Arthur James Balfour (London 1936), I,  
p. 335.
- 144 Free Russia, 17(i), Jan. 1906; see also Volkhovsky to Spence  
Watson. 2 Jan 1906. Spence Watson Papers, File 3.
- 145 Ibid., n/v June 1907.
- 146 Ibid., n/v, Oct 1909; n/v, July 1911.
- 147 Ibid., n/v, July - Sep. 1908.
- 148 Ibid., n/v, Oct. 1910, Jan. 1911, Oct. 1911.
- 149 Ibid., n/v Jan - Mar. 1908.
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- 151 Ibid., n/v, Apr. 1910.
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- 154 George Woodcock and Ivan Avakumovic, - The Anarchist Prince  
(London, 1950), P. 372.
- 155 P. A. Kropotkin , The Terror in Russia... (2nd edition,  
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- 156 Free Russia, n/v, Apr. 1909.
- 157 'The Crisis in Finland', . no author (Nov. 1909, London);  
Free Russia n/v, Jul. 1910.
- 158 Free Russia, n/v Oct. 1909.
- 159 Ibid., n/v July 1909.
- 160 Ibid., n/v, July 1912.
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- 162 Ibid., n/v, Jul. 1912.
- 163 Ibid., n/v, Oct. 1910.
- 164 Ibid., n/v, Jul. 1912.
- 165 Ibid., n/v, Oct. 1914/Jan. 1915.
- 166 Ibid.
- 167 Ibid.

March 1, 1905.

FREE RUSSIA.

33.

ear, which gave courage to those who were in distress, which brought home to himself and the great meeting before that if ever their day should come they too should be ready to give all for the great cause.

Mr. BERNARD SHAW evoked much laughter by remarking that he stood before them as an exponent of England's rebuke to the Tzar, or, in other words, an exponent of Satan rebuking sin. Swinburne had called the Tzar a coward. He thought it was because he had calmly looked on while his people were suffering and starving. Well, in that case Mr. Swinburne was also a coward; he (the speaker) was a coward, and they were all cowards. (Applause.) It would be no use sending to Russia a message of virtuous indignation, the strikers in St. Petersburg had marched to the Winter Palace unarmed, and there they had made a great mistake. (Applause.) If they were going to oppose a State they must go with arms in their hands, and the sooner people realised that fact the better it would be for all concerned. (Applause.) Mr. ATHERLEY-JONES, M.P., said: "I am afraid no good response will be served by this great demonstration of the public opinion of Great Britain against the unspeakable deeds of the Russian bureaucracy. The Tzar and his creatures are asensible alike to the voice of reason and the promptings of common humanity; fear, and fear alone, is the influence which Tzardom will yield. And yet it is right and proper that we should meet, if only to let these poor men and women who are struggling for the elementary right of free men know that the democracies of the West are with them heart and soul in the great struggle upon which they have entered, to give their place among the free people of the world.

"To me it is a source of shame and sorrow that those immediately responsible for the government of the great self-governing States of Europe have maintained silence in the face of horrors unparalleled in the history of any State that aims to rank among the civilised nations of the world.

"While our puny voices can avail nothing, can anyone doubt that were the governments of France, Germany, Italy, and Great Britain to join in a solemn protest and warning addressed to the Tzar of Russia, that even he and the countless tyrants by whom he is surrounded would recoil before the deliberate expression of the opinion of the civilised world? Nay, who can doubt that were the Government of this country animated by the spirit which inspired our statesmen in the time of Elizabeth or Cromwell the ambassador of a man who suffered his troops to shoot down an unarmed crowd of defenceless men, women and children who came on a mission of peace and amity to plead with him they had been taught to regard as their 'little father,' led to his palace by a priest bearing the sacred emblems of his office, who, I say, to plead for the starving proletariat of St. Petersburg, the ambassador of that blood-guilty tyrant would have received a peremptory mandate to quit without delay the shores of this great free nation?

"But if Europe, with a civilisation now growing venerable, shrinks with averted head while scenes far worse than the Italian vespers are affrighting humanity, yet let us turn to the Far East for hope and promise. The battle of freedom on behalf of the helpless Slav is being fought by the new civilisation of Japan, and the victory of the Shaho a few weeks hence will, we know, be succeeded by a greater victory the banks of the Neva or the plains of Poland and amid the snow-clad mountains of the Caucasus.

"To us, indeed, the drama that is being acted in St. Petersburg affords a great object-lesson. Cling with all your force to the maintenance of your freedom can be secured. Relax your hold and let power pass into the hands of a bureaucracy, you will find it as ruthless, and its agents as cruel and bloodthirsty, as those whose deeds we are now deploring. For these free institutions your fathers fought and suffered; let not a fancied sense of security, a too credulous faith in human virtue, cause you to remit your vigilance or abandon your trust."

The resolution was carried unanimously amidst great enthusiasm.

A collection was taken to defray the expenses of the meeting and £28 was obtained.

## Russian Relief Fund.

We publish below a full list of subscribers to our Relief Fund. Press of work has prevented our sending any other acknowledgment to them but a mere formal receipt; but we take this opportunity to express our grateful appreciation of the prompt and sympathetic response they have made to our Appeal. Accompanying the various sums of money we received many letters of great interest, for which we thank the writers.

We may here say that although we have been able to send the substantial sum we have received to meet the immediate crisis, the need for help is by no means over. And we should also like to suggest to our subscribers that they should not let their interest in the Russian Reform Movement end with the present crisis, but continue to give it their support by joining the Friends of Russian Freedom. The minimum subscription for membership is 5s. a year, to be sent to the Treasurer, Dr. R. Spence Watson, Bensham Grove, Gateshead-on-Tyne.

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W. F. Barkworthy ...	5	0	0	Mr. & Mrs. E. H. Smith	1	0	0								
J. Joseph ...	0	10	6	Miss Mary Floyd ...	5	0	0								
George G. Gray ...	5	5	0	Mrs. W. M. Green ...	0	10	0								
F. W. Pethick-Law-				A. E. T. ...	1	10	0								
rence ...	50	0	0	E. T. Plant ...	0	2	6								
Henry Vivian ...	0	10	0	Mrs. R. H. Ellis ...	5	0	0								
P. W. Peacock ...	1	0	0	P. W. Shore ...	0	15	0								
Mary J. Harris ...	0	4	0	Elijah Kirkpatrick	0	10	0								
G. H. Grinling ...	1	1	0	M. P. Price ...	1	15	0								
Miss Pease ...	1	0	0	Henry J. Wood ...	2	2	0								
Mrs. Ayerst ...	1	1	0	Miss Bella Duffy ...	0	10	6								
Franklin Thomas ...	2	10	0	Charles E. Lee ...	0	10	6								
C. E. Bretherton ...	1	1	0	T. Fisher Unwin ...	5	0	0								
Captain E. W. Wake-				C. L. R. Depot, Shep-											
field ...	10	0	0	herd's Bush (per J.											
"Prava Cheloveka" ...	1	0	0	Welch) ...	0	11	6								
Agnes Graveson and				G. B. Hunter ...	10	0	0								
Edith Eskrigge ...	0	10	0	Clay Cross Labour Coun-											
L. T. Hobhouse ...	1	0	0	oil (per Joseph Lester)	0	2	6								
Miss S. E. Hall ...	5	0	0	W. W. Brayton ...	0	1	0								
Thos. Russell ...	5	0	0	Moses Da Rocha ...	0	5	0								
J. W. Gilman ...	0	2	6	Canon Bulkeley ...	0	10	0								
Mrs. Hicklin ...	2	0	0	G. M. Trevelyan ...	2	0	0								
F. Merriman ...	1	1	0	Lady Trevelyan ...	5	0	0								
J. Oudot ...	0	5	0	R. G. S. ...	2	0	0								
Col. the Honble. L. P.				Sydney Waterlow ...	5	0	0								
Dawnay ...	25	0	0	Mrs. Tubbs ...	1	1	0								
Lancashire & Cheshire				Miss Clara Symonds...	0	2	0								
Women Workers'				E. Powell King ...	1	13	8								
Committee ...	0	7	6	Mrs. F. Pennington ...	2	2	0								
"Toleration" ...	2	10	0	Mdme. de Carouso ...	1	0	0								
Rosa Allen ...	0	1	6	Miss Crichton Stuart	0	5	0								
W. F. Sedgwick ...	0	10	0	"X. Y. Z." (Oxford)...	1	0	0								
A. M. M. Sennett ...	1	0	0	A. Palace ...	0	1	0								
Rev. S. Udney ...	0	10	6	Miss S. Constance E.											
Wm. F. Scott ...	0	5	0	Smith ...	0	10	0								
Mrs. Bernard Shaw ...	10	0	0	East Finchley Young											
Cunningham-Graham	0	10	0	Men's Institute (per											
Mrs. Moscheles ...	0	10	0	L. F. Wallis) ...	0	11	6								
Lawrence Richardson	1	0	0	Mr. & Mrs. C. E.											
F. F. May ...	0	2	6	Maurice ...	2	2	0								
Edward Carpenter ...	1	0	0	H. G. Hart ...	5	0	0								
Miss Ansell ...	0	1	0	Rev. Cyril H. Norton	1	1	0								
Mdme. Montem Smith	0	10	0	H. G. Dakyns ...	1	1	0								
Mdme. Armstrong ...	0	5	0	Miss Bradby ...	2	0	0								
Mdme. Bessie Cox ...	0	5	0	Miss Hutchins ...	1	1	0								
Miss Bath ...	0	2	6	Rev. F. Ordin ...	0	10	0								
Mrs. E. Nisbet Bland	2	2	0	E. R. & W. W. ...	1	0	0								
Mrs. M. James ...	2	0	0	Dr. Caird ...	1	0	0								

Total up to March 3rd ... £711 12 0

Of this sum £620 have been sent already to Russia and distributed to the victims.

Cheques should be drawn in favour of Mr. T. Fisher Unwin, and forwarded to Mr. J. F. Green, 40 Outer Temple, Strand, W.C.

## America and the Russian Crisis.

(From over the Atlantic).

Since the terrible scenes at St. Petersburg the press of America has literally flamed with indignation. Never was there a time when it dealt so swiftly, so unanimously and so drastically with the Russian problem; never before have American newspapers given day after day so many columns of their space to the cruelties of autocratic rule in the north-east of Europe; at no previous epoch have the essential anachronism and wrong of Russian absolutism been so deeply impressed upon the people of the United States. The uprising in Russia is thus paralleled by an uprising in America; and here, as elsewhere—if the growing solidarity of nations means anything—one more stage has been reached in the movement which is sooner or later to bring the Slav laggard into step with the march of the world.

The note of protest and warning is sounded in editorials in the dailies and weeklies, in special contributions to the monthlies, in all forms of the general and descriptive article; and there is not an influential publication in the United States, whatever its party politics, which does not, in the present struggle, take the side of the Russian people against the Russian autocracy. The great newspapers are generally agreed as to the "infamous" and "cowardly" character of the attack on the unarmed crowd of workpeople in the city of Peter; not a few of them condemn the Tzar for his failure to meet the petitioners, who were so frightfully punished for their reliance on Imperial paternalism; as for the after-thought of receiving in the country "representative" artisans denied an audience in the capital, they regard that as a mere effort to efface the black record earned at St. Petersburg with an absolutist sponge welded at Tzarskoe Selo.

Chapter Three: "Jaakoff Prelooker, the Russian Reformation  
Society and the Anglo-Russian".

The SPRF was only the foremost of several anti-Tsarist groups which emerged in Britain and which were aimed at the British public. Among other organizations and journals specifically devoted to furthering the advancement of free speech, democracy and 'civil rights' in Russia was the Society for the Promotion of Russian Reformation<sup>1</sup> and its magazine, the Anglo-Russian, edited by Jaakoff Prelooker.

Among those Russian émigrés who engaged in propagandist work in the host community, Prelooker has received scant attention.<sup>2</sup>

If Stepniak and Volkhovsky were "men of the 1870s", Prelooker was most certainly a product of the 1880s, a decade of autocratic dominance over revolutionary, radical and dissenting groups: "The working class of Russia still had no sound organisation of its own. The peasant movement was still sporadic and widely dispersed. For these reasons the new social movement that began in the years immediately following the Russo-Turkish War did not lead to a revolution. The tsarist government proved able to maintain its position; more than that, it went over to a more vigorous, reactionary policy. A lengthy period of the darkest reaction set in."<sup>3</sup>

Oppressed by the machinery of the police state, the intelligentsia were alienated from Tsarism. But in the wake of the failure of the movement "To The People!" and with the strategy of terrorism, of "the revolutionary deed" a dismal failure, these worthies reneged the politics of revolution and were shriven of materialism and atheism. Many found solace in mysticism and religion, /

religion, L. N. Tolstoy being only the most notable example. For Tolstoy and his ilk, Russia had become a Gethsemane. But though they disgustedly rejected the evils of autocracy these people preached the doctrine of non-resistance, appealing instead for personal moral reformation as the only hope of mankind: "This gospel of non-resistance fell most appropriately upon the soil prepared by the collapse of the plans and hopes of the People's Will. The quintessence of revolutionary violence having gone bankrupt, what could better replace it than a harmless solvent of Christian 'love.'"<sup>4</sup>

It was in such a climate that Jaakoff Prelooker had matured intellectually. He has himself recorded his origins: "I was born in March 1860, in...Pinsk...bordering on Russian Poland. My father, Moshe Chaim Prelooker, a merchant and voluntary preacher... lived with his wife and two other children at the house of his father, Rabbi Abraham Prelooker...a veritable patriarch." By the age of twelve, Jaakoff was thoroughly versed in the Old Testament and in the Talmud; he was then sent to the Rabbinical Academy in Slonim.<sup>5</sup>

At Slonim Prelooker first encountered, and was attracted by, the 'alien' Russian culture and to the dismay of his elders enrolled at a Government college. Prelooker graduated in June 1880 and in December became a schoolteacher at the second Government School for Jews in Odessa. Prelooker's knowledge now embraced the Russian and German literary and philosophical classics and Shakespeare, Milton, Mill, Spencer and Darwin. But most significant of all he had read the Christian Gospel. The message of love, forgiveness and the brotherhood of man contained in the Sermon on the Mount "was the day-dawn of the first healing and happy heavenly light/

light upon the darkness of my soul." The young scholar now began to conceive a philosophy of the origin and ultimate aim of all religious creeds, a conception which took material form in the "New Israel Brotherhood."<sup>6</sup>

Prelooker's synthetic creed was launched in 1882 and was immediately condemned by the Assembly, the official leadership of the Jews of Odessa, while "My grandfather's house had become a scene of weeping and wailing. Rabbi Abraham proclaimed that he would have preferred to see me dead, dying a faithful Israelite, than living an apostate..."<sup>7</sup> Orthodox Jewish opinion was repulsed by the creed and reviled its founder: "...a new Messiah...who wanted to unite the Jews with the Christians, by reconciling their religious differences, to mix them up in one pudding to be eaten from the same plate. The Jews are to give up the Talmud, Circumcision, Kosher, the Sabbath, introduce inter-marriage with Christians, acknowledge the Christian Church on the same footing as the Synagogue, and finally give up all hope of the restoration of their nationality under the expected Messiah. What the Christians should give up, Mr. Prelooker does not say, apparently they should give up nothing."<sup>8</sup>

But if the heresies of the New Israel Brotherhood outraged orthodox Jews it was significant that the Okhrana did not hinder the proselytisation of the new creed: "I was requested to appear before the head of the secret police and gendarmerie Colonel Katanski...(who)...informed me that the Government was very well pleased with my work, and that there would be no hindrance made to my propaganda." Prelooker then received assistance with the publication of his book on the New Israel Movement from the Director of the Department of Foreign Creeds.<sup>9</sup> Prelooker made the startling/



startling charge that "The Jews are themselves to be blamed for most of their sufferings, their superstition and intolerance forming a barrier to any reconciliation with the outer world." In his "New Israel" work Prelooker "thus made an attack in two directions, and although compelled, as regards the Greek Church, to keep within certain limits indicated by the press censor, I availed myself of my liberty to attack the Synagogue."<sup>10</sup>

Such activities earned lasting distrust for Prelooker among émigrés when he left Russia and came to Britain. Thus Ivan Maisky refused to deliver a lecture under Prelooker's chairmanship. He was suspicious of Prelooker's activities - "from the point of view of Russian Socialists and revolutionaries they are in many respects objectionable" and condemned Prelooker's reminiscences of the New Israel Brotherhood contained in "Under the Czar and Queen Victoria": "Thus the book proved practically an<sub>(sic)</sub> one-sided attack against the most oppressed religion of the Russian Empire...Then Mr. Prelooker was given protection of the police in holding meetings and carrying propaganda, he was encouraged in his work by the official approval...during 4 years. The Russian Government doesn't render its valuable assistance for nothing."<sup>11</sup>

Prelooker himself gives the reasons for this "patronage": "The Minister of the Interior was then the ill-famed Count Ignatieff, whose treacherous policy it was to create and foster in Russia an Anti-Semitic movement, and thus to divert and direct public opinion...into another channel...making the Jews the scapegoat of all the Russian miseries and the iniquities of the ruling classes. It suited this policy very well to countenance any dissension among the Jews themselves, so that Jewish fanaticism and intolerance might come out and afford some justification for repressive/

repressive measures."<sup>12</sup> More than Maisky among Russian émigrés must have felt that by his actions Prelooker "accepted the role of a tool in the hands of the Russian Government to aggravate the intolerable position of the most unfortunate, most oppressed people within the boundaries of the Empire. And for that purpose he used the support and assistance of the authorities."<sup>13</sup>

The autocracy's support for Prelooker proved only a measure of expediency. In 1886 Novoe Vremya, "the organ of Panslavonic tendencies and general obscurantism" again reviewed Prelooker's pamphlet on New Israel, written in 1882. This time Prelooker was "accused of having attempted to lead astray the whole holy Orthodox Russia; that I am only a secret hireling of the Synagogue, which wants to secure for the Jews the civil rights of Russian citizenship by promising to introduce reforms in the Christian spirit which she does not really mean to fulfil."<sup>14</sup> Harassed and badgered by the authorities Prelooker's health began to break down and in 1891 he quit Russia, emigrating to Britain; at first he earned a modest living by giving lessons in Russian and in German. Within a short time Prelooker had begun lecture work.<sup>15</sup>

Prelooker explained why he had chosen to come to Britain: "The land of the just and the free! I had heard of her, I saw her, I dreamed of her, I knew her! I wanted to be one of her own, unfettered, unchained, just and free myself."<sup>16</sup> His arrival coincided with a revival of interest among radicals, socialists and Nonconformists in Russian affairs. George Kennan's exposés of Siberian prisons had shocked British readers, while the SFRF's journal, Free Russia, had been launched in 1890, and the British press gave wide coverage to Tolstoy's public condemnations of the autocracy./

autocracy.

As has been observed, there was much sympathy in Britain for the Christian sects persecuted within Russia. A sizeable sympathy existed for the anti-ritualist Stundists with their abhorrence of the guiding hand of the priesthood in the interpretation of the Bible. For the Doukhobors and their Anabaptist notion of the indwelling soul of God in every man there was much affinity among British radical Nonconformists.

Prelooker had first met Stundists in 1883, occasionally attending their meetings, but his chief work of propaganda was among the Jews of Odessa so his preaching among them was only "fragmentary."<sup>17</sup> In 1892 Prelooker began lecturing on the Stundists and on Tolstoy: "As Prelooker was probably the only man in England who had first-hand knowledge of these sectarians...he was soon invited to various churches particularly the Unitarian, Congregational and Baptist, to tell what he knew about them", while "It is probable that Prelooker was the first in this country to lecture publicly on Tolstoy," as a novelist, reformer and philanthropist.<sup>18</sup>

In 1893 and 1894 Prelooker carried out a lengthy campaign in Scotland. This consisted of lectures, musical "soirées" and magic lantern entertainments. "The result of the interest awakened by Prelooker's lectures and addresses in England was the formation of a representative Scottish committee with the late Rev. William Paterson of the Scottish Reformation Society, as hon. treasurer, with the object of encouraging our reformer's work in spreading knowledge about the Stundists and the Reform movement in Russia generally."<sup>19</sup> On his return to England Prelooker continued this vigorous lecture-work. It was at this time that the/

the distrust felt for Prelooker by the Russian members of the SFRF became public. An article in Free Russia criticised the garb worn by Prelooker as more becoming gypsy singers in Russian music halls. But the antipathy was grounded in principle rather than in points of dress. There was a distrust of Prelooker as an opportunist: "Mr. Prelooker landed on British shores and strait way<sub>(sic)</sub> declared to be...a Stundist. As a matter of fact he was never Stundist, he never belonged to this religious sect in Russia. Nevertheless he called himself in England Stundist, held meetings as Stundist, collected money as Stundist etc. He succeeded even to make good many Englishmen believe he was a leader of Stunda seeking in Britain refuge from the persecutions of the Russian Government."<sup>20</sup> Certainly Press notices printed at the end of "Under the Czar and Queen Victoria" indicate that he may have represented himself as a Stundist. The certainty is that the Russian exiles in Britain distrusted Prelooker and that "Coupled with Mr. Prelooker's previous activities in Russia they didn't want to have any connections with him."<sup>21</sup>

In November 1895 Prelooker's career took a new direction with the formation of the Society for the Promotion of Russian Reformation. While praising the work of the SFRF, Prelooker was nonetheless concerned that it was "being led by a few Russians working at its back in what seems to us not quite the right direction. These Russians are avowedly antagonistic to any religious creed...and the society occupying itself pre-eminently with matters of actual politics has alienated itself from the majority of the British religions and public who would heartily hail general reforms in Russia, especially religious liberty, but who would/

would abstain from fostering any political movement which may result in a violent revolution against the existing Russian Government."<sup>22</sup>

Prelooker was either consistently and disarmingly naive or mischievously devious, but he had again made statements liable to discredit opponents of the autocracy. The SFRF leaders were quick to refute Prelooker's statement. Having discussed the content of the Anglo-Russian's article in their Executive Committee, the SFRF's reply took the form of an open letter from Spence Watson. The SFRF President pointed out that the Russians only advised the British members, while between 1890 and 1896 Free Russia had printed forty-nine distinct articles and countless paragraphs on the persecution of Jews, Roman Catholics, Stundists and Doukhobors.<sup>23</sup>

Prelooker persisted, however. He claimed that the SFRF had more of a political character than a religious one: "What we wanted to make clear is that there being in this country large classes of people who have a kind of hereditary abhorrence of politics pure and simple, but who sympathise deeply with those persecuted for their religious convictions, it was deemed advisable to form another organisation more closely identified with the religious element and appealing to a class which the older Society...is not calculated to reach."<sup>24</sup> Relations between Prelooker and the SFRF never recovered from these quarrelsome beginnings.

Like the SFRF, SPORR had local branches but these proved of little significance. A branch briefly existed in Birmingham (there is one reference to it in the first issue of the Anglo-Russian) while over the years Prelooker established small bands of supporters/

supporters in Hastings and Eastbourne, having settled in the area of "Robert Tressell's" "Mugsborough." Prelooker also combined propaganda with pleasure, taking the waters at Malvern and there finding kindred souls. After an exhibition and lectures by Prelooker a local committee was formed: "The work there is in energetic and experienced hands, guided by the true inward spirit."<sup>25</sup> However, the columns of the Anglo Russian rarely refer to any work done by SPORR while none of its minutes have come to the notice of the author.

The files of the Anglo-Russian show Prelooker's band of supporters to have been Christian internationalists. They were of the type of the Rev. J. B. Paton, who argued that "the religious and evangelistic side of the work should be specially emphasised. Surely the greater need of Russia is such an awakening of spiritual and religious life as will prepare her people for a larger measure of civil and political freedom." This view was echoed by SPORR's treasurer, James Robertson, head of the firm publishing Prelooker's writings, who argued that "the work generally be made more distinctly and warmly Christian, leaving the advocacy of civil liberty to organisations of political character."<sup>26</sup>

The main vehicle for Prelooker's labours was in fact to be the Anglo-Russian. First suggested by him in 1895, it appeared regularly from 1897 to 1914. The finances of the new periodical remained precarious throughout its lifetime. It started in conditions of insecurity: "...I was sorry to hear you had not funds sufficient to carry on the venture. It seems to me a rather mad idea to start a periodical until one has the means to defray the cost of at least one year's issue."<sup>27</sup>

In/

In 1900 the journal still struggled along, the public contributing only £8: 4: -d to its funds. By 1910 the situation was only marginally less precarious and had taken its toll of Prelooker: "Last year after a nervous breakdown I was medically and strongly advised to give up the publication of this paper, the preparation of which involves...incessant strain and anxiety. Prelooker soldiered on, even though only about £50 p.a. came in by way of donations and subscriptions."<sup>28</sup>

Prelooker in fact was largely sustained by the financial assistance and comradeship of Miss E. Reid of Eastbourne. He praised this lady's fifteen years of work for the Anglo-Russian; it was to Miss Reid indeed that "the very inception of the Anglo-Russian was largely due." In 1916 she left £5,500 to Prelooker "for a long time her coadjutor, literary companion and helper."<sup>29</sup>

Among the Russian émigrés, however, Prelooker remained a "franc tireur". In 1898 unity negotiations between the SFRF and Prelooker foundered: "Misunderstandings were explained and removed, and all agreed that both Societies, though aiming at the same end, that of Civil and Religious Liberty in Russia, work on different practical lines, and appeal to different classes of the community..." But, alleged Prelooker, "It appeared at this Conference that the Committee of the Free Russia Society had been misled by some Russians working with them in regard to the personal labours of the Hon. Secretary of the Russian Reformation Society whom they had opposed for reasons they seemed themselves unable to explain."<sup>30</sup>

In fact, the émigrés distrusted the enthusiasm which Prelooker had begun to show in 1898 towards social and political questions. Speaking/

Speaking in the Albert Hall, Edinburgh on 3 February 1898 he had talked of the existence of two Russias entirely opposed and antagonistic one to the other; the small ruling class perpetuated its rule by force: "You will understand, therefore, ladies and gentlemen, that Autocratic Russia cannot and does not in any way represent the interests of the real national Russia, and that when you hear or read of Russia's aggressions, treaties and various doings you must not attach any responsibility to the Russian nation at large."<sup>31</sup> The exiles were suspicious of this new departure: "Strangely enough this change in Mr. Prelooker's activities coincided with the time when the political struggles in Russia began to arouse the sympathetic attention in this country. Simultaneously he tried to come in touch with the Russian political exiles residing in London and sought to get acquaintance and proximity of the late Mr. Stepniak and other leading members among the emigrants. But the revolutionaries knew Mr. Prelooker's past activities too well and he was refused admission to the political exile circles in this country. The Revolutionaries had an impression that Mr. Prelooker's new-borne enthusiasm for the Russian political struggles has the greatest resemblance with his previous enthusiasm for Stundism."<sup>32</sup>

What impact did the Anglo-Russian and its editor have? For all that the journal's finances were restricted and that Prelooker's circle of comrades was small there is evidence of the success of Prelooker's work as a publicist: "From the first issue up to the present the paper has been systematically sent "gratis" every month to the leading newspapers and magazines in Great Britain, America, France, Germany, Austria...also to ambassadors and consuls, important societies, clubs, members of Parliament...  
...It/



...It can be safely said that no other periodical of the kind has been, and is, so widely and so largely quoted in the world's Press...the journal, now in the fourteenth year of its existence, has undoubtedly rendered incalculable services to the Russian cause by popularizing it in the whole civilized world to a degree never attained by any other periodical of the kind."<sup>33</sup>

The columns of the Anglo-Russian indicate that this was no hollow boast as Prelooker recorded those papers which had used his work.<sup>34</sup> Prelooker was also a successful pamphleter; one such, "Count Tolstoy - on Flogged and Floggers" contained "Herod in Russia" a poem written by Minnie McKean, inspired by Tolstoy's report on the abductions of children of the Molokani sect by Orthodox Tsarist officials. The poem was reprinted by the Manchester Guardian and the Manchester Courier, evoking a storm of protest from their readers.<sup>35</sup> Reference may also be made to the impression made by Prelooker's writings on individuals. The Glasgow revolutionary, Tom Bell (at one time editor of the Socialist Labour Party's The Socialist) records that after 1905 he read all that he could lay his hands on about Russia: "...The stories of the revolutionary heroes and heroines of Russia published by Jaakoff Prelooker I had told over and over again in the course of my propaganda work."<sup>36</sup>

Thus, along with the somewhat better-known SFRF and Free Russia, Prelooker, both as a busy lecturer and prolific writer, helped to formulate British public opinion in general and radical opinion in particular about the policies of the Tsarist government. An enthusiastic welcome was given in an increasingly war-weary Britain to the events of March 1917: "I remember so well what happened when the Russian Revolution occurred. I remember the miners/

miners...rushing to meet one another in the streets with tears streaming down their cheeks, shaking hands and saying: 'At last it has happened'...the revolution of 1917 came to the working class of Great Britain not as a disaster, but as one of the most emancipating events in the history of mankind.<sup>37</sup> But such ardency did not suddenly descend from the heavens. It owed its origins to the generation-long percolation into the political consciousness of the British socialists and radicals of the writings of publicists such as Prelooker.

In particular, the Anglo-Russian charts the fascination exerted on British readers by Russian literature, with its unique political content and flavour. Tolstoy above all others entranced this public: "Tolstoy struck the imagination of the whole world first of all by the beauty and nobility of his own imaginary creations. He startled us further by his personal life career, coming down as he did from the top of the ladder to the bottom, impelled by an infinite love for his fellow beings submerged in the very depths of misery and despair, and overcome by an inextinguishable burning desire to do everything possible to raise them from their degradation." Thus spake Prelooker in his obituary of Tolstoy, continuing to define the internationalist message of Tolstoy's writing, "proclaiming the sublime principle: the World is my country, mankind my brethren, and to do good is my religion."<sup>38</sup>

Prelooker claimed credit for giving "probably the first public lecture on Tolstoy in this country," delivered in Spring 1893 in Edinburgh's Greyfriars Church.<sup>39</sup> In his lectures Prelooker stressed the radicalism of Tolstoy's Christianity with its rejection of dogma: "Thus the essence of Christianity...is not incomprehensible/

incomprehensible dogmas of unity in trinity and trinity in unity or baptism or holy communion... but practical Christ-like life renouncing its own self for the sake of suffering humanity."<sup>40</sup>

Tolstoy's "Resurrection", generally regarded as the best of his later works was enthusiastically received in Britain. It was serialised in Robert Blatchford's socialist weekly The Clarion while in February 1903 the Anglo-Russian took the form of a special "Resurrection" number. When the impresario Sir H. Beerbohm Tree decided to launch a dramatised version of the novel he contracted Prelooker to provide a choir: "Prelooker very energetically hunted up Russian singers in England, and...organized them into a perfect choir...His articles, too, in the Anglo-Russian on the ethics and aesthetics of "Resurrection" as a novel and as a play, created much interest, so much so, that the management of the theatre found it advantageous to order large numbers of the Journal and spread them in advance in all those provincial towns to be subsequently visited by the touring company playing 'Resurrection'."<sup>41</sup>

Evidence of the growing interest in Russian literature was provided by an item in The Academy which stated that Mudie's, the leading British subscribing library, had received a more than doubled demand for the loan and purchase of Russian fiction in five years.<sup>42</sup> Assessment of the process of percolation of knowledge and understanding into the consciousness of the British intelligentsia must go beyond political and religious matters to include culture.

It was not only the great rebel Tolstoy who was so enthusiastically read by the British public. The short stories of Chekhov were introduced to the British public, the tale, "In Exile",/

Exile", appearing in the Fortnightly Review in 1903. Chekhov's art was analysed by "Princess Muislenskaya" (perhaps a nom-de-plume assumed by Prelooker): "How sad and mild sound the echoes of his lyre as he tells of the sufferings and disturbances of our time." The essay captured the mood of tristesse on which Chekhov's art sailed across the bleak ocean of triviality and the muddy shallows of petit bourgeois vulgarity.<sup>43</sup>

But an even greater impact was made by the militant social-realism of Maxim Gorky, a writer whose "pitiless realism rivals that of Lucas Malet", and who was harried by the Russian state. In 1902 Jarrold's published "Tales from Gorky" (translated by R. Nisbet Bain) while in the Anglo-Russian, an article credited to Ethelwyn James compared Gorky to English literature's social-realists, Edwin Pugh and George Gissing. Like the former, Gorky cast the lot of his heroes in dark places; like Gissing he heard only the sad notes of the song of life but "in grim realism and bitter irony he far surpasses both." The reader became weighed down "with a deadly sense of shame at his aloofness from the sufferings of the outcast and forlorn", but Gorky "does not destroy vitality by his hopelessness; shame he generates, but not despair; he rather recuperates our energy for good, and concentrates our thoughts on misery until indifference, self-satisfaction and cowardice become impossibilities, and sympathy, compassion and strength of will become powers of the first magnitude."<sup>44</sup>

Gorky rapidly rivalled Tolstoy in popularity among British readers and in exile during the period of the Stolypinshchina he donned the cloak worn by Stepniak in an earlier bleak period of reaction: "In our country there exists no Society in the European sense/

sense of the word...To appeal to Russian Society (about Tsarist atrocities<sub>RG</sub>) would be to cry in the wilderness. It remains only to appeal to European opinion once more. What the European 'Intellectuals' should fully realise is this: as long as they live side-by-side with a country where not a day passes without tragic occurrences and scenes of bloodshed they run the risk of contamination from this atmosphere."<sup>45</sup>

That Gorky, writing of and identifying with the new revolutionary class in Russia, the proletariat, should receive an enthusiastic reception in the columns of the Anglo-Russian is indicative of Prelooker's increasing interest in Russian politics. In 1901 Prelooker wrote of the "Revival of Revolutionary Activity in Russia", charting the upsurge of demonstrations in St. Petersburg and Moscow and quoting the émigré journal Nakanounie (On the Eve) which appealed for "deeds" on the grounds that "the policy of peaceable agitation carried on by the Russian opposition during the last twenty years has proved a failure, oppression and tyranny having only increased in that time."<sup>46</sup>

The first lappings of the new wave of anti-autocratic activity were the student unrest in Russia and the Finnish separatist movement; both were publicised by Prelooker in his journal, while in 1900 he established "Ruscan" (The Russo-Scandinavian Press Agency" as "it was felt that a systematic and more frequent service of general news from Russia and the Scandinavian countries, including Finland, would be very timely and acceptable to the English Press.")<sup>47</sup> By 1902 the eddies of discontent had grown stronger. Ever-alert, Prelooker informed his readers that Russia was "decidedly on the move towards great political changes..."; he charted the impact of the political strikes of the workmen and the/

the direct political demonstrations among the middle-class, arguing that this was "a momentous historical period, which may truly be called, 'the Eve of Russian Revolution.'" <sup>48</sup>

Throughout the years leading up to the 1905 Revolution, the Anglo-Russian provided readers with a complete survey of developments within Russia, while its columns indicate on occasion the impact that these happenings made on the British public.

Thus, Prelooker gave prominence to the pogroms which culminated in the Kishinev massacre. Readers were given a full account of the "Scenes of Terror - As Seen By Many Eye Witnesses" in "The Human Butcheries in Kishinev." He cited Gorky's analysis of the root causes of the pogroms; they were deliberately created by "cultivated society" who goaded on the masses "blinded and enthralled by the artificial darkness created around them." <sup>49</sup>

But how much impact did the Kishinev horrors have on informed public opinion in Britain? Here again the Anglo-Russian is valuable as a source. Comparing the outcry over Kishinev in U.S.A. and France with the volume of protest in Britain, Prelooker stated: "a timid inquiry was made in the House of Commons as to the effect of the Russian persecutions upon alien immigration to this country. The Jews of the East End of London have organised a Hyde Park demonstration and some other meetings, and this is about all that has been done in this country to our knowledge." <sup>50</sup>

Prelooker was heartened by the military catastrophes suffered by The Tsar's forces during the war with Japan, crossing swords with the Daily News. This liberal organ had commented: "we do not understand the argument that because Russia oppresses her peasants, her Jews and her Finns, that therefore we should rejoice at her discomfiture. For the greatest sufferers from a Russian/

Russian defeat would be - not the bureaucrats at the head of affairs...but the poorer people..." Prelooker's riposte was that this was "quite true, but then the 'poor people' have absolutely nothing to gain from a victory by 'the bureaucrats at the head of affairs.'" The yoke of absolutism would only be tightened.<sup>51</sup>

In mid-summer 1904 Prelooker took stock of the impact made by the Anglo-Russian after seven years. He made his now familiar criticism of the political emigrants of the Stepniak tendency; they "had not, and still have not, that broader, tolerant and reverent attitude towards people of other religions and political creeds which is essential in appealing to the sympathies of such a complex, national organism as the Britons present." Prelooker claimed to have filled the gap left open by his other compatriots, and proceeded to gauge the nature of attitudes felt in Britain towards Russia: "Russophobia is no longer used in the same sense as Anglophobia, and newspapers notorious hitherto for their strong anti-Russian sentiments now begin to explain that for the Russian people they cherish but the kindest feelings and best wishes, and that their Russophobia is directed exclusively against the iniquitous system of Russian autocratic and bureaucratic Government for which the people are not responsible in the least."<sup>52</sup>

When the revolution of 1905 broke out, Prelooker gave the readers of the Anglo-Russian detailed coverage and analysis of the unfolding drama and gauged the response in Britain. In his initial response to the events of "Bloody Sunday" he used the apparently spontaneous nature of the popular movement to criticise the organized Russian revolutionary movement: "In fact, the outbreak led by Father Gapon came as a bewildering surprise to all revolutionists, who, with their usual narrow intolerance and defiance/

defiance of anything and anybody not in conformity with their own political dogma, have not taken the slightest notice of his noble work among the factory hands." Gapon became something of a hero for Prelooker, who was later to strongly criticize the Social Revolutionaries who rid the revolutionary movement of its turbulent priest.<sup>53</sup>

Prelooker's hostility to the revolutionary parties came to verge on the ludicrous when he exclaimed: "...the revolutionary party is more capable to do the work of destruction than that of construction...Wild as the idea will no doubt appear to the general reader, we seriously believe that the best thing for the revolutionary party to do is to invite certain foreigners brought up in and accustomed to constitutional government at home, to form themselves into a 'Provisional Government for Russia.'"<sup>54</sup>

Indisputably, Prelooker was hostile to Tsarism. He thus hailed the victory of the Japanese over "the monster of Czarism (which) must henceforth be dealt with by Russians and other nations as a mad dog who must be restrained or annihilated for the sake of general safety," and welcomed the "revolution by Strike" begun in Moscow early in the winter of 1905 as further proof of the rotten-ness of the body politic of Tsarism: "Russia is finally awake and conscious of her age-long degredation and of her own power to help herself against a foe whose strength lay only in the ignorance and subservience of the people." However, Prelooker's politics were equally antagonistic to socialism: "Socialism is no more a question of practical politics ripe to be solved in Russia today or tomorrow than it is in the countries of Western Europe." Prelooker proceeded to charge the Russian socialist parties with disrupting the anti-tsarist popular front of progressive opinion within/



within Russia.<sup>55</sup>

Of value in Prelooker's writings on the 1905 revolution and its aftermath is his assessment of the extent of sympathy and solidarity shown in Britain for the Russian revolutionists. In 1905 we still find evidence of the durability of what has in foregoing pages been termed "Christian internationalism". Thus Prelooker cited the letter of one F. Stroud to the Standard: "We can help the slaves of Russia now struggling for a little of the liberty which we fully enjoy."<sup>56</sup> And, at the beginning of 1907, as a response to the inevitable economic chaos which followed in the wake of the revolution, the Society of Friends had set up a famine relief fund. Among its organisers was E. W. Brooks, veteran of the famine relief work of the 1890s who asked: "Can we, fellow Christians of England, living in the plenty which this land affords, allow this to take place?"<sup>57</sup>

But times had changed, as Prelooker noted. Stating that he had approached several people to make contributions to the fund, he quoted the alleged reply: "Tell the Society of Friends that if in 1891-2 the £40,000 contributed by them to fill up a bottomless barrel had gone to help on the 'removal' of Russian tyrants, we might not have again witnessed now the repetition of the calamity...No, on my part, I am going to send my contribution to the revolutionists, who wish to uproot the evil at its very source."<sup>58</sup> Such views reflected the changing content of internationalist attitudes that have been seen in the history of the SFRF.

Nonetheless, Prelooker did not exaggerate the depth and extent of this internationalism. Indeed, he was critical of the paltry contribution made by the British labour movement to the Russian cause./

cause. The International Socialist Bureau, the permanent secretariat of the Second International, had established a fund for this purpose. Denmark contributed in excess of 32,000 francs, the U.S.A. 23,000, Belgium, 14,000, the Argentine, 2,763; from Great Britain had come 660 francs (£26: 8: 0). By way of further contrast, the Quakers' Famine Relief Fund had raised £21,236.<sup>59</sup>

After the collapse of the Revolution, popular politics were wrapped in the inky gloom of the Stolypin reaction, the British organizations which specifically supported the cause of Russian liberty were likewise in the doldrums. Thus Prelooker made an oblique reference to the difficulties encountered by the SFRF when he said that the Anglo-Russian was "now the only special organ in the English language devoted to the cause of Russian freedom at the present most crucial period of Russian history."<sup>60</sup>

The long-standing hostility to, and distrust of, Prelooker by Russian members of the SFRF continued. Exception was taken towards an article "An Escape From Siberia and A Series of Thrilling Revelations. The Story of M. Michael Bakai, Ex-Special Commissioner of the Russian Secret Police." Volkhovsky, in particular, objected to Prelooker publishing the reminiscences of an allegedly reformed character. Prelooker parried by pointing out that it was Bakai who first gave information to Bourtzev who had used it to unmask the agent-provocateur Azev.<sup>61</sup>

Such continuing friction between Prelooker and the émigrés active in the SFRF undoubtedly hindered another round of unity talks: "negotiations are proceeding, and so far satisfactorily, as to the possibility of some practical scheme for the unification of the Russian reform movement in this country." The discussions came to naught: "The representatives of Free Russia... wanted/

wanted to take too much and to give too little, indeed to give practically nothing. They wanted the full surrender of the Anglo-Russian... to have the full control of the editing, printing and publishing of the amalgamated papers, whilst we on our part were only to act as co-editor but to guarantee the expenses in case public subscriptions were not sufficient, and pay the money monthly 'in advance'!"<sup>62</sup>

Prelooker thus remained a "franc tireur" among the émigrés in Britain, a reformer of no party, almost wholly isolated from his suspicious fellow nationals, always aware of their brooding distrust of him. His contacts with émigrés were minimal, but one who did write for both Free Russia and the Anglo-Russian was Vassilii Zhuk. He first wrote for Prelooker's journal in 1898 and continued to contribute intermittently - criticising the Russian liberals, for instance, for their faint-heartedness in the aftermath of Bloody Sunday.<sup>63</sup>

Another who wrote for the Anglo-Russian was the Russian Jew, J. Finn, one of the founder members of the group publishing the Yiddish-language Arbeiter Frent. The aim of the group was to get the "sweated" Jewish workmen into line with the organised British workers. Finn's contribution to the Anglo-Russian was a column of gleanings - "Events and Comments."<sup>64</sup>

One commentator on émigré life, Walter Kendall, has sought to describe<sup>65</sup> the impact made by Russian exiles on British socialists in terms of an "alien offshoot" being grafted on to a hitherto flourishing native plant and giving rise to a deformed hybrid. Such a view ignores the effect that Britain had on many émigrés, modulating and moderating political perspectives developed on Russian soil. The case of Jaakoff Prelooker is a caution to/

to those who wish to swallow Kendall whole.

A key element in Prelooker's view of the world was that of feminism: "Having believed from my youth, and holding now, at the age of seventy, more strongly than ever, that the protection of the Mother of the Race and the improvement of her condition, should be the very starting point for all other race improvements; moreover that Woman, suffering more than Man, physically and mentally, is more capable than he to rise to an altruistic ideal and is thus more opposed to all forms of war and bloodshed."<sup>66</sup>

It had been the interdiction of his lectures on "Woman in the Five Great Religious Systems of the World" that had made Prelooker decide to leave Russia and from his arrival in England in 1891 he had become involved with the Women's Suffrage movement, advocating their cause on the same lecture platforms from which he attacked Tsarism. To those of his audience who complained, "Prelooker's reply is that he is advocating the cause of justice and freedom for the Russians, and that the Russians, like other nations, consist of both men and women. They who are piously indignant against the slavery of the Russians...but understand under 'Russians' men only, and not Russian women, are themselves slaves and in want of moral and spiritual emancipation."<sup>67</sup>

Hence, many pages in the Anglo-Russian were given over to the feminist cause; in particular, Rosa Frances Swiney penned a regular column "Women Among the Nations."<sup>68</sup> Responsive as ever to new developments and issues, Prelooker began to take an increasingly active part in the politics of women's suffrage.

"Saturday, March 28th; and April 4th, the quiet, peaceable inhabitants of Horsham, Ifield, and Crawley, in 'sleepy Sussex' were to a degree excited by the unprecedented event of a man, a mere/

mere man, and he an alien residing amongst them, being summoned at the Horsham Petty Sessions for refusing to pay rates and taxes as a moral protest against the political disqualifications of his wife and daughter, and Women generally." Prelooker's act reflected the upsurge in militancy among supporters of the Women's Suffrage movement and "two brave Englishwomen, members of the now redoubtable Women's Social and Political Union, London, came down to Horsham...to defend, even to glorify, the offence against law committed by the mere man and alien."<sup>69</sup>

Before this, on 16 December 1907 the Men's League for Women's Suffrage was inaugurated. Prelooker was at the hub of its activities; for example, he was Russian delegate to the grandiosely-titled "First Congress of the Men's International Alliance for Woman Suffrage," held in London in 1912.<sup>70</sup> Prelooker began to spend an increasing amount of time on the cause of Woman's Suffrage. In 1913, he began a new series of his journal: "Matters too seem to have settled down in Russia for the present, and progress must take its natural course...". Prelooker saw a "successful revolution" as being distant: "Under these circumstances, I hope, the many friends of this paper will agree that in the future it will suffice if it appears only quarterly."<sup>71</sup>

Prelooker proceeded to talk in fascinating manner of the relationship between the English suffragettes and the Russian revolutionary movement: "It is commonly acknowledged that in their militant methods, especially in the use of the bomb and of the hunger strike, English Suffragettes have been much influenced by the example of Russian revolutionary terrorists, for in no other country have the bomb and the hunger strike by political prisoners been of such a frequent occurrence as in the/

the unfortunate land of the Czar, and in no other country has the cause of Russian revolutionists won such wide and popular sympathy as in England...When some five years ago I published my book "Heroes and Heroines of Russia" the book at once found great favour in Suffragist circles, and it was not long before I learned of the effect of the struggles of Russian women upon their sisters in England. In fact, some enthusiastic Suffragists at the time told or wrote to me plainly that they would have to adopt Russian methods in order to obtain their emancipation in England and something to that effect was the spirit of the review of the book which appeared at the time in Votes for Women..."<sup>72</sup>

The conscious adoption of "Russian" tactics by the suffragette movement as it entered its "physical force" phase is difficult to establish. Nonetheless there are glimpses of suffragettes seeing parallels between themselves and Russian revolutionists. Thus Adela Pankhurst claimed that if the vote was granted there would be no need for a St. Petersburg in London, but the authorities "would not be able to dispense with Russian methods until women got the vote."<sup>73</sup>

Prelooker thus found consolation and a new outlet for his ever-ready pen at a time when the Russian popular movement was in a state of depression and when the consequences of the Anglo-Russian Entente greatly dismayed him. The agreement of 1907 was seen by Prelooker as "already propping up his tottering condition, giving him (the autocrat, Nicholas<sub>RG</sub>) a new lease of life". He foresaw a whitewashing of Russian autocracy as the other side of the extinction of Persian liberties."<sup>74</sup>

The following year Prelooker was critical of the limits of traditional forms of internationalism when he commented on the response/

response in Britain to the arrest and trial of N. W. Chaikovskii. He acknowledged the generous spirit of the "distinguished leaders" in British society who had signed a Memorial addressed to the Tsar but, he asked, where were these dignitaries when the entente had been signed: "when England entered into a new agreement with the Russian Government, which, whilst having doubtful practical results for England, had most disastrous results for the people of Russia, strengthening the Autocracy...It is quite evident that if England will with one hand politically support the Czar and pour her millions into his treasury to save him from bankruptcy, and with the other hand sign a petition on behalf of a single prisoner, and send a couple of thousand pounds for the relief of other exiles, the cause of Russian Freedom will not be advanced as far as England is concerned." Prelooker called for a sustained campaign "against the whole iniquitous Russian torture system", hearking back to the orchestration of public opinion against the Sultan during the Bulgarian and Armenian atrocities.<sup>75</sup>

Like Free Russia, the Anglo-Russian gave prominence to the activities of the groups and individuals who protested against the consequences of the Anglo-Russian "entente". Prelooker was sternly critical of Edward VII's visit to Reval in 1908 when "only two years ago England cancelled the visit of her Fleet to Russia as being against the wishes and the interests of the Russian people, who at that time enjoyed a brief period of freedom." The journal gave its readers full documentation of the Parliamentary protest and published a letter from R. B. Cunninghame-Graham protesting against what he termed the "so-called Liberal Government" and reminding readers of its record in Denshawr, Ireland and Zululand.<sup>76</sup> Later that year Prelooker lectured/

lectured to an audience at Hanwell; in the chair was Dr. V. H. Rutherford, M.P. for Brentford, a member of the Parliamentary Russian Committee.<sup>77</sup>

But years of hard work had taken their toll of a man who was by now a seasoned campaigner: "Last year after a nervous breakdown I was medically and strongly advised to give up the publication of this paper, the preparation of which involves far more work, preliminary study, and incessant strain and anxiety than the reader may think judging by the small size alone of the paper." Prelooker lacked the assistance of a co-editor while only about £50 p.a. was coming in to fund publication.<sup>78</sup>

Anglo-Russian internationalism had been forced on the defensive. The Siege of Sidney Street, January 1911, had raised an outcry against aliens; the Tory Press howled for the provisions of the Aliens Act to be strengthened.<sup>79</sup> Prelooker's view was that the criminals were "very probably incited to do so by the Czar's secret agents" and reprinted an article written by T. P. O'Connor for Reynold's Newspaper: "What produces these savage creatures and their crimes? The only answer, of course, is the despotism which, making war on a people, drives a people to war...The renewal of these outrages in the midst of London is again an indictment of despotism."<sup>80</sup>

By 1912 the publicists of Russian reform no longer had the field to themselves. In the New Year two pro-Tsarist journals were published, both owing their existence to the Anglo-Russian understanding of 1907; these were the Times Russian Supplement and the Russian Review. The former, Prelooker opined, "is certainly a sign of the times and is a remarkable production both for what it contains and for what it purposely omits...no reference/



reference is made to the darker sides of Russian life." The aim of the latter was "intended to make clear 'the strength of the feeling of goodwill towards England in Russia.'" Prelooker wished the review no success: "as the main development of amicable Anglo-Russian 'feelings' has resulted so far only in allowing... greater Russian atrocities in Persia and the destruction of the Constitution and independence of the latter, we fear that any further development of 'the strength' of Anglo-Cossack feelings on the present lines, will result in more oppressions and atrocities either in Persia or in some other militarily weak countries struggling for freedom."<sup>81</sup>

Prelooker's gloom deepened as he reported news of one of the fruits of the Russian alliance, the Lena Gold Fields Massacre, an episode in Tsarist history in direct line with Bloody Sunday and the Richelien Steps affray: "We do not remember any previous wholesale slaughter on such a scale of Russian working men on strike even when strikes were a political crime in Russia. It has fallen to the lot of English capitalists, with their repeated public professions of sympathy and friendship for the Russian people, and of their eagerness for an Anglo-Russian entente... unable to shoot strikers at home, to inaugurate a new epoch of shooting their Russian employees...thanks to their complete "entente" with the Russian authorities."<sup>82</sup>

This article shows Prelooker at his most politically radical; it was written in the midst of "the great unrest" in Britain at the time of mass strikes and significant developments within the trade union movement. But Prelooker's political arteries had hardened. He was a convinced anti-socialist: "men are born with unequal capacities...rank, privilege and aristocracy are not wicked/

wicked and artificial human inventions, but evolutionary stages decreed by Nature herself, which produces the strong lion and the helpless lamb."<sup>83</sup> The gap between the SFRF and himself remained wide as ever. Both Free Russia and the Anglo-Russian went into decline. In 1913 Prelooker put a brave face on the decision to publish his journal as a quarterly.<sup>84</sup> But as always he remained critical of the Russian contributors to the SFRF: "they have indeed largely succeeded in paralysing our public work by throwing cold water upon it...Their own revolutionary methods were so brilliant that the Russian liberation movement in this country is now almost non-existent as far as the general public is concerned, and the British and Russian Governments are on touching friendly terms..."<sup>85</sup>

But if the cause of Russian freedom in Britain was suffering from a serious wound in Spring 1914 after August the sore became gangrenous. Just as Free Russia and the activities of the SFRF were among the first casualties of the war so too the Anglo-Russian was published for the last time in July 1914. From August 1914 the white washers of Tsarist Russia held the stage. Internationalism of the species sustained by both the Russians of the SFRF and Prelooker withered. In its stead arose a new internationalism based on proletarian solidarity and propagated by G. V. Chicherin. To such developments Prelooker remained silent...and hostile. As evidence we have Prelooker's tale, "My Lady Bolshevik", set in 1918. The plot turns on the efforts of Nadezhda, an old friend of the author, who had become a Bolshevik and had arrived in England, "her mission being to investigate the chances of a vigorous Bolshevik propaganda in England and a successful proletarian revolution on Russian lines." The/

The author was not swayed by Nadezhda's polemics: "The bare facts remains that the Bolsheviks have ruined the nation, and to an appalling extent, unprecedented in the whole history of Russia or of any other country."<sup>86</sup>

In 1905 Prelooker had married an Englishwoman and became a naturalised British subject in 1909. After the war he continued to write but nothing has been uncovered to reveal any continuing involvement in émigré political life. Prelooker died in Hastings in October 1935.

How might the career of this man and his significance in émigré politics be assessed? Like Stepniak, he was a man who lived two lives - in Russia then in exile. Study of Prelooker's life in Russia and the origins of the New Israel Brotherhood adds a new dimension to the history of the sects in Russia. The history of New Israel in the 1880s is in itself interesting as an example of the esoteric solutions to which anti-autocratic elements were driven in that grim decade. Tolstoy, Stepniak, Prelooker...the later lives of each was indelibly influenced by their experience and interpretation of the 1880s.

Like Stepniak, Prelooker was imbued with a sense of mission and like Stepniak he regarded Britain as the best available base from which to fire at the target of the autocracy. But though both men chose Britain as the centre of their sustained labours they differed as to tactics. Study of Prelooker's work in this country shows that the émigrés in no way conformed to type in terms of methods of work and their projected audience.

Like Stepniak, he mastered the English language. Indeed in his wooing and conquest of it he became a minor Conrad. His books, stories and the files of the Anglo-Russian reveal him as  
a/

a fine stylist, in his care for words he "became more English than the English."

Again, his anglicisation took an explicitly political path. In his private life and in his private fortunes Prelooker became more anglicised than Stepniak, Volkhovsky and other émigrés. He threw himself with gusto into the milieu of suffragist politics.

His main achievement was the seventeen years' labour on the Anglo-Russian. Like Free Russia it proves a treasure trove for the student of internationalism in terms of personalities and the development of opinion and of attitudes across a continuous period of time. It both supplements and sets in relief the columns of Free Russia. In the history of attitudes held towards Russia, the role of the activist émigrés was crucial. Without their ceaseless work as publicists, British public opinion might have remained unenlightened and less critical of Tsarism. Along with Stepniak and Volkhovsky Prelooker and the Anglo-Russian played a significant part in transforming the negative features of Russophobia into a form of Russophilism. The informed British public developed a knowledge and understanding of Russian society, politics and culture.

Yet as we have seen, Prelooker remained isolated from the mainstream of émigré life in Britain. The murky dealings of New Israel with the tsarist authorities - Prelooker's anti-socialist beliefs - his championing of Gapon - his intermittent sniping at the strategy and tactics of Stepniak and Volkhovsky - all of this made him a man to avoid. Prelooker thus stayed a free-shooter in the anti-tsarist army. Yet he succeeded in scoring many hits on the barndoor target of the autocracy and played a unique part in the spread of knowledge of Russia and its political life among the informed British public.

Footnotes to Chapter Three

- 1 Hereafter SPORR.
- 2 A preliminary biographical article has been written by John Slatter "Jaakoff Prelooker and the Anglo-Russian" in Immigrants and Minorities 2(iii) Nov. 1983 pp. 67/80.
- 3 'A Short History of the USSR' (Moscow 1965), 1 p. 243.
- 4 L. Trotsky, 'The Young Lenin op. cit., p. 71.
- 5 Jaakoff Prelooker - 'Under the Czar and Queen Victoria...  
(London, 1895) pp. 1 - 3.
- 6 Ibid., pp. 6/24.
- 7 Ibid., p. 31.
- 8 Anglo-Russian, Mar. 1902, p. 595 reprinted the review of  
'Under the Czar and Queen Victoria' published by the London Jewish Express. Chapter 3 of Prelooker's autobiography contains a synopsis of the creed.
- 9 Prelooker, op. cit., p. 33.
- 10 Ibid., p. 39.
- 11 Ivan Maisky to the Executive Committee of the Cercle d'  
Etudes Ethnographiques; letter of 7 Sep. 1916 in the Prelooker Papers.
- 12 Prelooker, op. cit., p. 33.
- 13 Maisky, loc. cit.
- 14 Prelooker, op. cit., p. 135.
- 15 Helena Frank, "Jaakoff Prelooker: A Study" in Jaakoff Prelooker, Russian Flashlights (London, 1911), p. 17.  
On Helena Frank see J. Slatter loc. cit., p. 63.
- 16 Prelooker, 'Under the Czar..., p. 163.
- 17 Ibid., p. 114.
- 18/

- 18 Helena Frank loc. cit., p. 22, p. 18.
- 19 Ibid., p. 23.
- 20 Maisky loc. cit.
- 21 Ibid.
- 22 Anglo-Russian, 1(i), July 1897.
- 23 Free Russia 8(viii), Aug. 1897.
- 24 Anglo-Russian 1(iii), Sep. 1897.
- 25 Ibid., 3(iv)/(v), Oct./Nov. 1899.
- 26 Ibid., 3(ix), Mar. 1900.
- 27 Barclay Day to Prelooker, card of 4 July 1897. Prelooker Papers.
- 28 Anglo-Russian 4(ix) Mar. 1901; 14(vi), Dec. 1910.
- 29 Ibid., 15(ix), June 1912; Daily News 3 Feb. 1916, cutting found in the Prelooker Papers.
- 30 Anglo-Russian 2(vi), Dec. 1898.
- 31 Ibid., 1(ix), Mar. 1898.
- 32 Maisky loc. cit., In fact Stepniak had died in December 1895, but Maisky wrote many years later.
- 33 Helena Frank, loc. cit., pp. 31/2.
- 34 Much of the Prelooker Papers consist of cuttings sent to him by firms such as Woolgar and Roberts Press Cutting Agency.
- 35 Anglo-Russian 1(x), Apr. 1898.
- 36 Tom Bell Pioneering Days (London, 1941), p. 148.
- 37 Speech by Aneurin Bevan at the Fiftieth Annual Conference of the Labour Party - Conference Report (London 1951) p. 121.
- 38 Anglo-Russian 14(vii/viii), Jan./Feb. 1911.
- 39 Ibid., 12(ix), Mar. 1909.
- 40 Report of a drawing-room lecture delivered by Prelooker in Eastbourne/

Eastbourne in Eastbourne Daily Standard 19 Feb. 1897.

Cutting in the Prelooker Papers.

- 41 Helena Frank, loc. cit., p. 38.
- 42 Anglo-Russian 7(v), Nov. 1903.
- 43 Anglo-Russian 7(vi) Dec. 1903; 7(vii) Jan. 1904.
- 44 Ibid., 5(vii), Jan. 1902; 5(x) Apr. 1902; 5(xi), May, 1902.
- 45 Ibid., 15(xi), Nov. 1912.
- 46 Ibid., 4(x), Apr. 1901. Nakanounie was published from Forest Hill, London, by the Populist M. N. Serebriakov, formerly a lieutenant in the Russian navy.
- 47 Prelooker, Russian Flashlights, op. cit., p. 36.
- 48 Anglo-Russian 6(iii-iv), Sep./Oct. 1902.
- 49 Ibid., 6(xii) June 1903; 7(i) July/Aug. 1903.
- 50 Ibid., 7(i/ii), July/Aug. 1903.
- 51 Ibid., 7(ix), Mar. 1904.
- 52 Ibid., 7(xii) June/July 1904.
- 53 Ibid., 8(viii), Feb. 1905; Prelooker - Russian Flashlights, op. cit., refer to the chapter "Traitor or Martyr?"
- 54 Anglo-Russian 8(viii), Feb. 1905.
- 55 Ibid., 8(xii), June 1905; 9(v), Nov. 1905.
- 56 Ibid., 7(viii), Mar. 1905.
- 57 Ibid., 10(viii), Feb. 1907.
- 58 Ibid.
- 59 Ibid., 11(v), Nov. 1907.
- 60 Ibid., 10(vi), Dec. 1906.
- 61 Ibid., 12(v), Nov. 1908; 12(viii), Feb. 1909; Free Russia, n/v, Jan. 1909.
- 62 Anglo-Russian, 13(iv), Feb. 1910.
- 63 Ibid., 2(i), July 1898; 8(viii), Feb. 1905.
- 64/

- 64 Anglo-Russian 12(ix), Mar. 1909; 12(v), Nov. 1908, and passim.
- 65 Walter Kendall, op. cit.
- 66 Codicil to the Last Will and Testament of J. Prelooker found in the Prelooker Papers.
- 67 Helena Frank, loc. cit., p. 40.
- 68 Anglo-Russian 5(vii) Jan. 1902 and thereafter. Rosa Swiney was President of the Cheltenham branch of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies, the "moral force" wing of the suffragette movement (Slatter loc. cit., p. 64).
- 69 Anglo-Russian 11(x) Apr. 1908.
- 70 Ibid., 15(xi), Nov. 1912, which was a "Special Woman's Suffrage Number".
- 71 Anglo-Russian New Series (N/S), 1, Mar. 1913.
- 72 Ibid., (N/S) 2 July, 1913.
- 73 Ibid., 12(v), Nov. 1908.
- 74 Ibid., 12(i/v), Nov. 1907.
- 75 Ibid., 11(ix), Mar. 1908.
- 76 Ibid., 11(xii), June 1908.
- 77 Ibid., 12(v), Nov. 1908.
- 78 Ibid., 14(vi), Dec. 1910.
- 79 Colin Rogers, The Battle of Stepney (London, 1981), pp. 123/5; 146/151.
- 80 Anglo-Russian 14(vii/viii), Jan./Feb. 1911.
- 81 Ibid., 15(iv), Jan. 1912.
- 82 Ibid., 15(viii), May, 1912.
- 83 Ibid., 15(ix), June 1912.
- 84 Ibid., (N/S), 1, Mar. 1913.
- 85 Ibid., (N/S), 5, Apr. 1914.
- 86 J. Prelooker "My Lady Bolshevik" in The Fortnightly Review, Feb. 1924.



Chapter Four: "The Developing Russian Revolutionary Movement  
and Responses in Britain

- A Survey of Key Episodes, 1896 - 1907".

"Comrades - A series of movements during the last few years in the factories of Laferme, Thornton, and others culminated in the great strike of 30,000 weavers and spinners, the news of which has spread far and beyond the frontiers of Russia. From this time the Russian worker in his struggle has entered into the international family of workers. With enthusiastic applause the foreign workers at the International Congress in London greeted Plechanoff...when he referred to our strike."<sup>1</sup>

Along with the protests over the visit of the newly-crowned Tsar to Balmoral in the autumn, the St. Petersburg strike of 1896, and the appearance of Plekhanov at the London Congress of the Second International ensured that knowledge and understanding of Russia became well advanced in that year.

It had opened gloomily; Stepniak had died tragically, robbing the anti-tsarist cause of its most vocal critic. H. M. Hyndman spoke of the power of Russia over a divided Europe: "At this moment St. Petersburg is the political capital not only of Russia, but of Germany and France." He spoke of the death of nihilism, opining that only progress from the top was possible: "anything in the shape of an organised middle class Liberal advance is merely a figment of the imagination got up to please people of the Spence Watson and Allanson Picton type, who still pretend to think that Stepniak's career in Russia was that of a moderate reformer."<sup>2</sup>

But then the strike wave in St. Petersburg had begun, an event hailed by the veteran émigré and friend of Kropotkin, W. Cherkesov/

Cherkesov: "...We, a few old survivors and witnesses of the beginning of that struggle we salute with an inexpressible joy the appearance of that compact and determined mass of Russian workers on the Socialist battlefield." He continued to praise "English workmen, especially trade unionists (who) were the first to stretch forth a vigorous and fraternal hand."<sup>3</sup>

This response stemmed from the appeal circulated by Volkhovsky on behalf of the Russian Free Press Fund: "You are strong with your old organisations. Come then, to the aid of your brothers who are just stepping to the front in the great fight for the rights of labour."<sup>4</sup> Hence the London Trades Council took part in organizing the fund to help the textile operatives; the auditors were J. F. Green and J. Gregory of the Trades Council. A total of £179:15: 0 was sent to the Russian workmen.<sup>5</sup>

The London Congress of the Second International also noted novel developments within Russia. It was an "eminently remarkable fact, and one that had not before occurred. Russian working men were directly represented in the Congress, and in the name of the workers of the whole world, the Congress encouraged them in perseverance against political and economic tyranny in Russia, the last haven of reaction in Europe."<sup>6</sup>

This theme was further developed by Eleanor Marx Aveling. While Russia continued the mainstay of European reaction, ceaselessly meddling in the affairs of the West, nonetheless "it is to Russia we must turn now to be saved from Russia...it is the Russian people who alone can deliver us from the horrors of Czardom." Marx's daughter continued that the emergent Russian proletariat was "thus more than any other movement important for the international working class."<sup>7</sup>

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The spirited actions of the Petersburg workers had thus helped to inform British socialists of the emergence in Russia of a labour movement on Western lines, but the next major issue of Russian affairs to receive widespread attention in Britain owed its origins to Tsarist initiative. This was the Tsar's "Peace Manifesto" of 24th August 1898. It falls now to consider the impact this rescript made on British radicals and socialists.

In its origins the British pacifist movement had been essentially Christian in its aspirations but by the 1890s it embraced individuals and organizations who sought to place the cause on a secular basis. In particular they sought the creation of an international system of arbitration and for improvements in international law. One especially vigorous organization was the International Arbitration and Peace Association.<sup>8</sup> In its foundation Hodgson Pratt had taken the leading role, insisting in 1880 that the London Peace Society would remain handicapped so long as its standpoint was primarily spiritual and Christian.<sup>9</sup> In 1884 Pratt founded Concord, journal of the I.A.P.A. The Association soon had branches in nine countries and along with the French pacifist, Lemonnier, Pratt took the initiative in launching the 1889 Universal Peace Congress in London. "It is not too much to say that the existence at present of a flourishing peace movement in Europe is due more to the inspiration of Hodgson Pratt than to any other cause". Thus spake J. F. Green in his obituary of Pratt. Green and G. H. Perris, both leading members of the SFRF, were also prominent in the affairs of the I.A.P.A.<sup>10</sup>

The Tsar's "Peace Manifesto" of August 1898 spoke with anxiety regarding the peace of the world. Nicholas II thus proposed an international conference of statesmen to look into the possibility/

possibility of a possible reduction of arms. Writing against the background of the Fashoda Incident and the "condition of absolute anarchy" of international relations which arose "chiefly from the extravagant lust of territory belonging to weaker races", Pratt welcomed the Tsar's initiative, seeing it as a unique opportunity to secure the principle of arbitration.<sup>11</sup>

Concord's editor, Perris, hailed "the Tsar's flag of truce" as "Anno 1 of the New Era." - "We recognise how much it means for this imperial youth, who at worst has been regarded as a merciless persecutor, and at best as the feeble tool of an all-powerful bureaucracy, to have publicly proclaimed his adhesion to a set of principles hitherto scoffed at in all places of power and authority." Perris admitted to having had no faith in Tsarism in the past, the cause of international peace hinged on the extension of international democracy. To the doubters Perris declared, "the theory of hypocrisy explains nothing...the only approach to an explanation of this astonishing event is that the Emperor has at least momentarily shared with his illustrious subject, Count Tolstoy, something of that abnormal spiritual and humane fervour which is so characteristic of the Slavic nation." So overcome was Perris that his adherence to Pratt's rationalistic strategies disappeared under a wave of journalese and mysticism: "The day we have prayed and worked for breaks in a dawn of sudden splendour. Once more out of the mysterious East rings the eternal word of truth and love, the gospel of hope for millions of oppressed and degraded souls. Are we ready, are we worthy of the call?"<sup>12</sup>

At an emergency meeting of the Executive of the IAPA, its members had hailed "with unbounded gratitude" the Tsar's initiative. In the weeks that followed, its journal measured the/

the response in Britain to the Eirenikon. As early as 6 September, a conference at the Birmingham Temperance Institute drew up a resolution on IAPA lines; seven Aldermen, nineteen Magistrates, twenty Councillors, twenty-two Guardians of the Poor, eighty-four Nonconformist ministers and nineteen secretaries of Labour unions called on the Mayor to convene a Town's Meeting. The effect on "Lib-Lab" MPs was rapid. Henry Broadhurst referred to the Tsar's peace proposals "as the greatest event of the century. Classes who love peace should unite in favour of this great scheme for the redemption of the world from the accursed war fever" which could divert arms spending to social welfare policies. This view was echoed by Sam Woods, Secretary of the Parliamentary Committee of the T.U.C.<sup>13</sup>

By the autumn of 1898 the various peace societies were mobilising their forces in support of the Tsar's proposals, and in an effort to persuade the Marquis of Salisbury to answer the call of Nicholas for an international conference. But that the campaign became a crusade was almost entirely due to W. T. Stead. Described in Concord as "the infatuated partisan of the Russian autocracy and the journalistic leader of the Big Navy craze of fourteen years ago", this exuberant son of a Congregationalist minister was a mixture of contradictions. Friend of Rhodes, he opposed the Boer War. Intime of Admiral Fisher, he launched the Peace Crusade. What Stead brought to the Peace Movement in 1898 was journalistic genius. In particular, Stead was never afraid to employ sensationalism. He understood the impact of the 'stunt', how a dramatic move provoked moral excitement and a discontinuity of human interest. His launching of the Peace Crusade in December 1898 was consistent with his eloquent thunderbolts of 1876 hurled at/

at Disraeli and his sensational exposure of child prostitution in 1885.<sup>14</sup>

On 15 December 1898, Stead published in his own Review of Reviews the first outline plan of "A Great Pilgrimage of Peace...beginning at San Francisco and ending at St. Petersburg." There followed a "great meeting" in St. James's Hall on "Peace Sunday", 18 December and on 21 December the "International Crusade of Peace" was formally launched with Corrie Grant (Burtsev's counsel) as Vice-Chairman and Stead as Secretary of a committee representative of the established British peace organizations.

"The Crusade is probably the biggest effort in political propaganda that has ever been attempted in this or any other country," exulted Concord. The crusade took the form of a pledge, the organizers recruiting people "in the service of the Crusade of Peace." Signatories were to "undertake for three months from this date to do all that in me lies to promote the success of the effort now being made by the Tsar to seek, by means of international discussion, the most effectual means of ensuring to all peoples the benefits of a real and durable peace." Stead launched on 10 January 1899 the weekly broadsheet, War Against War, hoping for a circulation of a 100,000 copies.<sup>15</sup>

In his broadsheet, Stead preached the necessity of a mass base in support of the Tsar's rescript: "The Tsar of Russia, and all the crowned heads of the Continent, may wish for Peace...but they will be powerless to achieve this end...until the nations of Europe, beginning with our own, feel and express a sincere desire to be delivered from this incubus of the Armed Peace...The Sovereigns may propose, but it is their subjects who dispose. The Rescript of the Autocrat is mere waste-paper unless counter-signed by the Democracy."/

Democracy." Sentiments such as these won over the leadership of the IAPA: "There is a fine moral basis to Mr. Stead's strategy. He appeals to the labouring millions. Let us learn the lesson. Somnolence in Little Bethel is the most disgraceful kind of failure." The risk that "the permanent machinery of the Peace Movement may be weakened by this large and sensational appeal" was thus one worth taking.<sup>16</sup>

"Could kail het up" is the impression left on the reader by reports of the Crusade as it attempted to stir up the pottage of the 1876/9 period, of Bulgaria and Midlothian. Thus the December 1898 issue of Concord devoted six pages of information on support for the Tsar's project which "sufficiently prove the earnestness and practical unanimity of the responsible and representative bodies, at least of Nonconformity." Scorn was reserved for what it termed "an extraordinary outburst of Jingoism on the part of individual clerics." Preachers of "Christ's Gospel incarnate in a Lyddite shell and a bottle of rum" these imperialists wanted "the great Peace-maker's whip of small cords."<sup>17</sup>

But Stead and his acolytes found that the impact of the Crusade did not live up to initial expectations. Hence the early response of the London Trades Council to the rescript was that while they welcomed international amity they "view with suspicion the overtures made by those whose treatment of their own subjects is both cruel and inhuman." Editor Perris rejected such a view: "Of course, the Crusade is not designed directly to help the Dukhobortsi; but it is directed against the same evil against which the Dukhobortsi have made their brave protest; and it appeals not to sovereigns, or governments...but to the peoples."<sup>18</sup>

From the outset, H. M. Hyndman (a Turcophile in 1876) and the S.D.F./

S.D.F. had opposed the Peace Crusade and its originator who "is always, nowadays, grovelling before brutes and bigots...(and)... is quite in his place when belly-dancing before that Divine Figure in the North."<sup>19</sup> In part, the basis of such opposition was due to the percolation into popular consciousness of comprehension of the Russian reality, a process primed by the publicist work of the émigrés - "It is safe to say that nine common Englishmen out of ten hate and distrust the unscrupulous Muscovite despotism which crushes all freedom among Russians at home and tries its utmost to put down democracy abroad. The wrongs of Poland and Finland, the cruel persecution of the Jews, the Stundists, the non-militarists, the torture and murder of all men of intelligence who endeavour to enlighten their countrymen..."<sup>20</sup>

Hyndman based his opposition to what he termed "the Muscovite Peace Spider" on Tolstoy's maxim - "Disarm yourself; nobody threatens Russia." - and argued that "Russia, as the late Sergius Stepniak wrote, herself constitutes the war-cloud hanging over Eastern Europe...over the whole Eastern world." He asked why Nicholas II had launched the Peace Crusade and found the answer in Russian bankruptcy: "...Russia, having ceased, perforce to borrow, is feeling the effect of the drain Westwards of produce to pay the interest on former loans...Consequently, the slightest dearth means famine on a large scale."<sup>21</sup>

E. Belfort Bax, the leading theoretician of the SDF, similarly subjected the Peace Crusade to criticism: "the influential section of the capitalist classes of Europe have for some months past, if not for longer, come to the conclusion that the principle of cut-throat competition among the capitalist nations does not any longer pay." All modern disputes were about the/



the possession of markets and trade monopolies. These could be settled peacefully rather than by force. Russia had a particular interest in international arbitration, it was being bled white to keep pace with the military improvements of the other Powers. Peace guarantees and a cessation of the arms race would leave Russia free to develop the "untold wealth of her huge territories." Bax concluded that "the existence of war as a means of settling disputes between the nations representing modern civilisation has become not merely an anachronism but a positive obstacle in the path of further capitalist development."<sup>22</sup>

The SDF thus opposed the Peace Crusade on a class basis and as part of its campaign convened a meeting demonstrating for peace on 8 March 1899. Speakers included one of the founding fathers of the German S.D.P., Wilhelm Liebknecht who castigated the Peace Crusade as "a swindle and a snare." Hyndman claimed the meeting as a huge success - "the hall was crowded from floor to ceiling" and "the audience was far larger and more enthusiastic than any that met in response to the subsidised peace agitation of the Tsar." Harry Quelch, of the S.D.F. Executive, adjured "the industrious classes everywhere to drop all antagonism to their fellows of other nationalities and to combine in a vigorous attack upon their worst enemies, the landlords and capitalists at home." A notable absentee from the platform party at this meeting was J. F. Green, a member both of the Executive of the SDF... and of the IAPA!<sup>23</sup>

Opposition to the Tsar's Birenikon also came from the Anarchist publication, Freedom, in which Kropotkin was prominent. A leading article, "Despots as Humanitarians" reminded readers of the thanks accorded by the Tsar to his soldiers in 1896 "for having/

having fought against their Russian brother workers during a peaceful and inoffensive strike." Standing armies were indispensable to the ruling classes, Nicholas II had been moved not by humanity but by bankruptcy: "It is the ruin of his empire, it is the appalling misery of the Russian people, no longer capable of paying the taxes, it is the incessant famine in whole provinces which forces the Russian despot to give vent to a cry of distress...No appeal on the part of despotism to humanitarian sentiments will exempt it from responsibility before history and humanity."<sup>24</sup> Freedom urged that international peace could only be "engendered by such social conditions as would ensure to all a full, free and healthy life."<sup>25</sup>

Apart from Kropotkin, other émigrés attacked the Tsar's initiative and its British supporters. The Tolstoyan, V. G. Chertkov, lambasted the corrupt and oppressive Russian government, its ruler and the apologist Stead "who has apparently made the glorification of crowned heads his speciality". The result of the Peace Crusade had been that "in the person of its official head, one of the most demoralised and vicious governments in the world receives from without that moral, or rather immoral, support of which it has long been deprived amongst all enlightened Russians."<sup>26</sup>

In the columns of Free Russia, Volkhovsky reminded his readers that there was no patent on words and ideas: "above all else we must remember that if we want to see a humanitarian era inaugurated in international relations we have in some way or other to try to bring about the same change in internal politics. Two opposite policies, run simultaneously on parallel lines by the same State, are an impossibility." Volkhovsky refused to declare any truce, describing "The Latest Horrors" of political arrest and the/

the expatriation of the Doukhobortsy.<sup>27</sup>

Thus in March 1899 Justice confidently talked of "The Collapse of the Muscovite Peace Agitation: "Even in England where a certain number of weak and silly sentimentalists are always ready to run after any fraudulent scheme...the whole agitation has fallen very flat. Naturally. When the Czar makes use of the time he is gaining by Stead's work to arm as hard as he can, to take away the rights of the Finlanders, and to oppress the Poles more than ever, even the stupidest Englishman begins to have doubt." Stead was forced to abandon his much-advertised pilgrimage to France and to Germany.<sup>28</sup>

Though all the invited governments accepted the Tsar's invitation of August 1898 and a Conference began at the Hague in May 1899, Stead's expectations were not fulfilled. Certainly the rules of warfare were humanised and codified and a Court of International Arbitration was set up but there were serious limitations on its efficiency and scope due to the insistence of states on their complete independence and discretion.<sup>29</sup> Further, it did not prove possible for Stead to rekindle the flame of 1876 and exert the mass pressure on the participating delegates which he sought. In part this was due to the percolation into the popular consciousness of the issues publicised by the émigrés and their British collaborators. Attitudes to Tsarism had decisively altered since the time of the Bulgarian Atrocities. And, as preparations for the Hague Conference proceeded, there occurred events which greatly devalued Stead's work. As he himself wrote "It is astonishing what prejudice has been created against Russia by the Ukase about Finland. In Holland and Belgium the Finnish question seems to have blotted out with numbers of people all/

all sense of the wider question."<sup>30</sup>

In the spring of 1899 the Russian Government attracted widespread condemnation for its absorption of the Duchy of Finland in spite of its pledge to preserve its ancient constitutional rights. The Executive Committee of the SFRF learned "with indignation that at the moment when the Tzar is standing before the world as a missionary of peace among nations, the Finnish people are being deprived of their historic liberties by an unconstitutional measure of governmental and military centralization." As one of the members of Executive, J. Allanson Picton put it: "It is no reply to say that this murder of Finland is not a matter of foreign politics and has no relation to the Peace Conference. There can be no permanent peace with nations ruled by brute force alone."<sup>31</sup>

The issue of Finnish constitutional liberty rendered the Peace Crusade moribund. By mid-1899 Perris spoke in funereal tones: "he said he would speak for many who had worked in the Peace Crusade in declaring that the permanent securities of international peace must rest on something more solid than the will or whim of an autocrat. The two great enemies of peace were militarism and imperialism, and their chief citadel was the Russian Tzardom."<sup>32</sup> The outbreak of the Boer War and the pressures exerted thereby on the Peace Movement finally extinguished any vitality left in the Tsar's Eirenikon.

The SFRF was not alone in its denunciation of the attack on Finnish liberties in 1899. The London Committee for Finland, Secretary C. Harold Perrott, issued several pamphlets in 1899, and the SFRF accepted its offer to purchase and circulate Free Russia.<sup>33</sup> Further, there was published the Finland Bulletin in the/

the period 1900/1905.

The editorial of the first Bulletin set out its strategy with clarity and without equivocation: "It will not attempt to awaken sympathy or to instruct opinion so much as to inform those whose sympathy and interest have already been engaged as to the course of events in Finland."<sup>34</sup> Radical and socialist readers were thus able to find in it a readily-accessible source of information and comment. Its leading articles traced the accelerating process of Russification, viewing Finland as an "enlightened civilisation...overwhelmed by the corrupt mediaevalism of Russia."<sup>35</sup> The Bulletin bitterly criticised the ordinance of 1903 whereby the Tsar installed Bobrikoff as military ruler of Finland: "all pretence of maintaining the forms of the Constitution and the semblance of legality has been abandoned."<sup>36</sup>

The Bulletin informed its readers of the doings of the "Finnish Party of Active Resistance" and gave readers the London address of Konni Zilliacus, an exiled leader of the opposition to the policies of Nicholas II. In 1905 the cause of Finland merged with that of the Russian people. In the view of the journal: "...there can be no doubt as to the attitude of the people of Finland, in face of the cowardly and brutal crime ("Bloody Sunday"<sup>RG</sup>) which has awakened the horror of the civilised world. The Russian Government stands once more condemned at the bar of humanity...Nicholas the Perjurer is also Nicholas the Craven."<sup>37</sup>

Along with the other "potboiling issues" noted above in Chapter Two, the cause of Finland thus was of significance in keeping Russian affairs to the forefront of the consciousness of informed public opinion in the five years before the Revolution of 1905./

1905. It is to the impact made by the Revolution on British radicals and socialists - of the Marxist, anarchist, pacifist and positivist variety - that we now turn.

In contrast to the Revolutions of 1917, the upheavals of 1905 can hardly be said to have greatly exercised scholars concerned with the inter-relationship of Russian and British history.<sup>38</sup> And, an article written to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of "1905" suffers from vagueness, a tendency to generality, omissions and faulty perspective.<sup>39</sup>

It is the thesis of W. S. Adams that " '1905' was significant, not only as an external event exciting sympathy; it was in itself an influence through the solidarity it aroused and the impression it produced on the working class and on progressive opinion generally..." But nowhere does the author produce evidence to prove his assertion that "1905 was a serious shock to British capitalism...In Britain...it contributed to the impetus for the social reforms of the Liberal Government..."<sup>40</sup>

At no point does Adams impress on his reader the singular nature of the Revolution of 1905 that "...in its social content it was a bourgeois-democratic revolution but in its methods of struggle it was a proletarian revolution."<sup>41</sup> How did British radicals and socialists react to the "General Strike" weapon, to the peasant "jacqueries", to the mutinies and to the first "Soviets"? The article relies heavily on the files of Justice and the Labour Leader, ignoring sources such as Freedom and the Socialist. Unsurprisingly, therefore, the author has little to say on the peculiar features of Anglo-Marxism and the article lacks any developed perspective which explores the impact made by "1905" on the forces contending for leadership of the British working/

working class.

Among British radicals and socialists, interest in Russia's internal affairs had sharpened with the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese war. H. M. Hyndman called for the defeat of Tsarist Russia: "Let the Muscovite despotism once be shaken in earnest, either by defeat or by costly victory, and a new era opens up before that great country and its European neighbours." Relying on the evidence provided by the pages of Stepniak's "The Storm Cloud" he indicted the autocracy, cataloguing its misdeeds against people within and without the borders of Russia. In so doing, he returned to a refrain first sung by him in 1876, criticising "slavishness to the Muscovite" in the camp of British "Progressives."<sup>42</sup>

Belfort Bax, with Hyndman one of the old guard of the SDF, for once disagreed with the Party's leader who appeared "to defend the principle of settling international disputes by force of arms." This was in opposition to many resolutions passed by Congresses of the Second International. Bax criticised Hyndman for wrongly interpreting the notion of the progressive war: "there is no real analogy between an oppressed people fighting against the governing class oppressing it, be it native or foreign, and two governing classes taking up arms against one another, using their subjects as cannon fodder."<sup>43</sup>

Among British peace societies, the IAPA took a view of the war similar to that of Bax, accusing the British Government of 1902 of bearing "a secondary, but very grave, responsibility." The Anglo-Japanese treaty had cleared the way for Japan to take aggressive action. But for all that Tsarist Russia was "a citadel of despotism...an offence and stumbling block to all free men in every/

every crime" yet the war in the Far East demanded an attitude of "severe neutrality."<sup>44</sup>

By the autumn of 1904 the war continued unabated. In an open letter, G. H. Perris called on Britain, France, Germany and the U.S.A. to mediate. By the beginning of 1905, after the fall of Port Arthur, he claimed that the prospects of mediation had improved: "On the initiative of Mr. A. G. Gardiner, editor of the Daily News, a meeting of representatives of our own and other Peace organisations was held, at which an International Mediation Committee for this specific purpose, was constituted.." Plans were made for a public meeting to be held in London on 8th February but news of Bloody Sunday caused their abandonment. The situation had been altered qualitatively.<sup>45</sup>

Throughout the organizations of the British labour and progressive movement there was a mixture of horror and admiration at the unfolding events in Russia. Anger at news of Bloody Sunday gave way to the realisation that the common people were rising in revolt against the autocracy. A resolution of the Fabian Society is perhaps typical of the response: "...this meeting...expresses its detestation of the murderous methods of the Russian autocracy, and its sympathy with the Russian revolutionists in their righteous endeavour to overthrow the tyranny."<sup>46</sup>

As we have seen, the SFRF was in the van of the British response to the events of January. Gestures of solidarity went beyond declarations of sympathy to financial aid.<sup>47</sup> H. M. Hyndman had spoken at the joint SFRF - SDF meeting of 1st February and in a subsequent article developed his thoughts on the "Dawn of the Social/



Social Revolution" in Russia. He particularly stressed the significance for Europe of a free Russia, employing Engels' notion of the Tsar as "gendarme of Europe" when "The Muscovite empire... hung, to use Stepniak's expression, as a 'storm cloud' over Europe." Now, "...Social Democracy is leading the way..." and "...the reactionary influence of the Muscovite despotism has been lifted off Europe for ever."<sup>48</sup>

On the left wing of the SDF, the Anglo-Russian, Theodore Rothstein, had straightway learned theoretical lessons from the events of January 1905. In the previous year Rothstein had polemicised against the 'Hyndmanite' wing of the Party's leadership for their tendency to regard the Narodniki as the force of revolution in Russia.<sup>49</sup> He now exulted that the prognostications of the Russian Social Democrats had been vindicated so exactly: "this it is which makes us so sure of the final result."<sup>50</sup>

Outwith the SDF, other Marxists grappled with the necessity to come to terms with the significance of events in Russia. The infant Socialist Labour Party (S.L.P.) stated that what was occurring in Russia was a bourgeois revolution: "The violent struggle now in progress in Russia is essentially one between capitalism and autocracy". This was why the "capitalist Press" in Britain condemned Tsarism and supported the revolution. Such an attitude was different from the standpoint the Press had taken to the Paris Commune of 1871. But, the SLP warned, "should a constitution be secured, and should its first act be 'the establishment of order' (i.e. the bloody suppression of the working class demanding a share in the benefits, as happened in France in 1848), the Press will return to its standpoint at the time of the Commune."<sup>51</sup>

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The SLP turned for guidance to the theses of Karl Kautsky on the nature of the 1905 Revolution. The "Pope of international Marxism" had compared "1905" with the English Revolution of 1649 and with the French Revolution, referring to the superficialities and realities attendant on any comparison. In appearance the three revolutions were similar, each was a struggle to forcibly overthrow absolutism. In essence, however, the class forces were of different relative weight. In Russia, "for the first time in the history of the World, the industrial proletariat appears in the position of victor on account of its own directing and independent might." As yet, however, the proletariat did not "feel itself sufficiently vigorous to accomplish the expropriation of capital."<sup>52</sup> Hence, the SLP argued, the Russian revolution was impregnated with proletarian aspirations and required the fullest fraternal solidarity of British workmen.

The SLP regarded one of its main tasks to be the preservation of the purity of Marxist theory. Its leaders were thus especially scathing in their denunciation of the leadership of the SDF, arguing that that Party had been fatally corrupted by the entry into it of bourgeois elements and ideas. SDF Marxism had been so adulterated that it led to class collaboration and the failure to build a revolutionary party in the British working-class. In the language of the Socialist, SDF leaders such as Hyndman were "fakirs" and "spook-chasers." J. F. Green, leading member at one and the same time of the SFRF, SDF, IAPA and Positivist Society, did not escape criticism: "one day (Green) tries to solve the problem with his capitalist Peace Society and the next day with his 'revolutionary' SDF party. Between the two no doubt he will get along."<sup>53</sup> Green had chaired the joint SFRF - SDF meeting of 1st/

1st February 1905 which had expressed its sympathy with the Russian liberation movement. It was a meeting which had been bitterly criticised by the S.L.P. who spoke of the "treacherous" conduct of "those British socialists" who "showed their fine revolutionary sense, and class loyalty by sitting on the same platform with the supporters of capitalist Tsarism in Britain."<sup>54</sup>

The leadership of the SDF found themselves under fire from another camp, that of the Anarchists grouped around the journal Freedom. The group exulted over Bloody Sunday; its significance lay in that it was not the work of a party: "It was the people itself who spontaneously declared a General Strike...and what gives deep satisfaction to us Anarchists...is that the Russian Revolution started with a General Strike, always derided and hated by legal Marxian Social Democrats."<sup>55</sup>

The summer of 1905 showed "Russia in Revolutionary Throes".<sup>56</sup> Accordingly, the secretariat of the International, the International Socialist Bureau, issued "an appeal to the Social Democracy of all countries to assist our Russian comrades by every means in its power", aware as it was "of the importance which the revolution in Russia has for the proletariat all the world over." On one level this took the shape of a fund set up by the SDF to aid the Russian revolutionaries. It was the view of Theodore Rothstein that "by this action it has placed itself in a line with the best traditions of English history."<sup>57</sup>

He was reminded of the example of Chartist aid for Poland, but referred also to the times when England's "best sons fought and died for Greece, and the whole country rang with cheers for the heroes of Hungary and Italy." The continuance of such a tradition by the British bourgeoisie was - with a "few honourable exceptions"/

exceptions" - no longer possible. Britain had become an imperialist power: "if it can get a nation into its exclusive grasp it does so." It fell now to the proletariat to carry the banner of internationalism.<sup>58</sup>

But as the weeks passed the paucity of the fund contradicted Rothstein's predictions. By late September, SDF members had contributed only £20, as compared to the £5000 handed over by German Social Democrats. Rothstein's reason for this was bad organization - the branches had failed to issue subscription lists which would have enabled shop-floor collections to have been made.<sup>59</sup>

Nonetheless, the columns of Justice gave much space to analysis of events in Russia. By October Russia was engulfed by the strike wave, the peculiar features of which were explained by Rothstein: "...it became gradually clear to the men that no trade union method will be of any avail unless Russia gets political freedom and the workers can lay their hands on the political machine. The decision to proclaim a strike - a political 'mass strike', as the Germans call it, has been the outcome of these long deliberations, and now we see it being carried out with a remarkable swiftness and deadly effect."<sup>60</sup>

Debate now ensued within the Party over the import for the working class movement in Britain of the "General Strike weapon". There were those such as F. Colebrook who were undoubtedly alarmed that the apparent success of the mass strike might provide the SLP and its strategy of industrial unionism with political capital: "We shall be told that by the Czar's capitulation, such as it is, the General Strike is vindicated as the one thing needful." Colebrook urged caution, claiming that the General Strike owed its success/

success to the peculiar conditions of Russia having been at war. Colebrook was countered by E. Edwards, who showed his impatience with parliamentary roads to socialism, asking what twenty-five Labourites could do against six hundred Liberal and Tory MP's: "I think it is no use demonstrating without an alternative, but the General Strike can be a good alternative."<sup>61</sup>

One leading SDF member on whom the significance of the mass strike was not lost, was J. B. Askew who contributed regularly to "Notes from Abroad" in Justice and over many years attacked anti-semites and chauvinists in the "old guard" of the party.<sup>62</sup> In the wake of events he opined that "Russian experience has done much more since then, and has shown us to value the possibilities of the mass strike as a means of bringing pressure to bear on the governing classes, even in the absence of Parliamentarism." Askew showed awareness that the success of the mass strike had reopened for British Marxists the significance of work in the trade union movement vis-à-vis political work; it accentuated the distinctly proletarian character of the social democratic movement, teaching the working classes "that they must, and can, rely on themselves alone."<sup>63</sup>

But such views smacked too much of the heresy of De Leonism and were shunned by both the Hyndmanites and Rothstein. Indeed such were the peculiar features of Anglo-Marxism that no theoretical analysis appeared of the mass strike that in any way paralleled Rosa Luxemburg's "The Mass Strike - The Political Party and the Trade Unions."

Perhaps the most significant impact that the revolution of 1905 had on the thinking of any British socialist was on James Connolly. But it was to be almost a decade after the events of 1905/

1905 before the lessons sprang into life. In 1915, preparing himself for the coming insurrection he wrote on the tactics employed by the insurrectionists in Moscow. Pitifully armed, and forced into premature action by the provocation of the government troops "the defeat of the insurrection was inevitable but it succeeded in establishing the fact that even under modern conditions the professional soldier is, in a city, badly handicapped in a fight against really determined civilian revolutionaries."<sup>64</sup> There is every indication that his interpretation of H. W. Nevins's "The Dawn of Russia" helped Connolly prepare for the Easter Rising of 1916.<sup>65</sup>

Yet for all the "poverty of their theory", the events of 1905 did have considerable impact on British radicals and socialists. The Russian common people were no longer simply regarded as an object of sympathy to whom palliatives of financial relief were occasionally directed. For a brief spell in the October Days the dictatorship of the proletariat had briefly flourished throughout the Russian Empire: "...it was an amazing fact that a proletarian revolt had succeeded in paralysing the whole business and industry of the Russian Empire...what might they not do with political freedom?"<sup>66</sup> Indication of this reversal in attitudes is provided with the example of the Right to Work Manifesto which stated: "...WORKERS UNITE! We are seeing in Russia what united action can accomplish."<sup>67</sup>

The excitement of the times is well caught in the pages of Freedom: "The year that has just closed must be regarded... as the most important for the revolutionary cause since 1789. Tsardom has fallen...the Russian proletariat has placed itself in the vanguard of the revolutionary movement, and the workers of the/

the world are...let us hope preparing for this new arm (the General Strike<sub>RG</sub>) when their day shall come."<sup>68</sup> But like Bakunin before him, the writer mistook the sixth month of pregnancy for the ninth. By the summer of 1906 the Eighteenth Brumaire of Peter Stolypin was under way and the First Duma had been summarily dissolved.

The elation felt among Britain's Marxists and Anarchists at the turn of events in Russia in 1905 was also shared by radical internationalists. For Positivists, worshippers of "the religion of humanity", the purpose of knowledge was to provide a guide for action, humanity must be in a position to control the forces of nature for the sake of the commonweal. Positivists, as we have seen, were thus internationalists. In their hierarchical view of the world, Tsarism was a negative phenomenon, a baleful hindrance to the progress of humanity. Frederic Harrison, who played York to Beesly's Canterbury, thus opined on the nature of Tsarist Russia that it was "the glaring example of bloodthirsty passion bound up with Christian superstition."<sup>69</sup> France had been "contaminated" by its alliance with Russia, but at the end of 1905 Positivists had welcomed the prospect of a democratic Russia. "England can desire nothing better for Eastern Europe than a strong, progressive and stable government from the Baltic to the Black Sea..."<sup>70</sup>

But in their condemnation of the thermidorean reaction, Positivists were concerned that Britons might be seen as Satan rebuking sin. It was essential to avoid pharisaical outpourings on the "monstrous injustice of refusing an immediate grant of full representative government to the peasants" while the cause of Indian nationalism was resisted.<sup>71</sup> E. S. Beesly, a veteran "friend/

"friend of Indian freedom", viewed India as the key to understanding Britain's changing military needs: "we have made ourselves a Continental Power. We have got to fight whenever and wherever it suits Russia to attack us."<sup>72</sup> But, perceptive though he was, Beesly may not have foreseen that the Liberal administration's method of tackling this problem was to act on the adage that to sup with the devil one must sup with a long spoon. The factor of traditional hostility to Tsarism was to become overlaid by that of the understanding arrived at between Britain and Russia in 1907.

The "pacifists" (to use A. J. P. Taylor's phrase) of the IAPA had been greatly heartened by the events of 1905. G. H. Perris spoke of Tsarism as "on its last legs...every...democratic State will gain abundantly by the fall of the chief remaining stronghold of Tsarism" while his father, H. S. Perris, reflected the bouleversement of attitudes to Russia felt in Britain: "Russia has now become the educator of the peoples, as was formerly France."<sup>73</sup>

But soon Concord lamented "the failure of the premature, but wonderfully sustained, insurrection in Moscow...the outlook is as black as anything we know in human history." The journal deplored that "a Liberal Government is carrying out the stupid and wanton provisions of the Aliens Act" and called for its repeal.<sup>74</sup> There was, however, encouragement in "the collective vote by which the Duma has formally adhered to the idea of international peace... in this the Russian people and their embryo parliament have the deep sympathy of all humane men; and it is to be hoped that an opportunity will occur to make this feeling unmistakably clear."<sup>75</sup>

In fact, G. H. Perris was to be one of the initiators of the/



the "British Memorial to the Russian Duma." In August 1906 Perris was in St. Petersburg addressing meetings at one of which was formed the Anglo Russian Friendship Committee. He had gone to Russia as a secretary of the British Memorial Committee and on his return that Committee - mindful of the suppression of free speech in Russia - had constituted itself "a permanent Anglo-Russian Friendship Committee."<sup>76</sup>

The Memorial rapidly gathered support from 365 MP's, 10,000 signatories and the T.U.C. but by autumn the idea had been abandoned of a deputation going to Russia with the Memorial in a public display of solidarity. It had been "a feverish episode", to quote Perris, "which has given some of us a new appreciation of Foreign Office strategy, and renewed loathing of our Yellow Press." He blamed the Foreign Secretary; acting on Nicholson's despatches he had evoked fear of the risk of serious disturbances being created by the Black Hundreds should foreigners be seen interfering in Russia's affairs.<sup>77</sup>

The IAPA leadership had shed all illusions as to the chance of Tsarism playing a progressive role in the international peace movement: "the Tsar's momentary association with the ideas of the peace movement is a thing of the far past." The opening address to the 1907 Hague Conference made by the Tsar's minister, M. Nelidoff, and the dissolution of the second Duma was an "insulting coincidence". Worse was to come. Dismay with the minimal results of the second Hague Conference was to give way to "regret", "fears" and "apprehension" over the Anglo-Russian Agreement of August 1907.<sup>78</sup>

In 1906 British socialists became increasingly alarmed at the process of 'normalisation' and 'stabilisation' evidently under way in Russia. On the eve of May Day Rothstein asked what had/

had become of "the greatest social upheaval of modern times which has...kindled a fire within the breast of the international proletariat." He laid the blame on the Russian liberal bourgeoisie which had deserted the workers and peasants, "glad of the opportunity which the Manifesto of October 30th gave". With a certain prescience Rothstein opined: "Not only will not Autocracy be overthrown by the Duma, but the very Liberals who have filled it will deliver the Duma to the Autocracy..."<sup>79</sup>

Hyndman's interpretation of events was couched in terms of conspiracy theory: "the lull in the discussion of Russian affairs since the successful flotation of the £80 million loan in Western Europe is as strange as it is significant." He proceeded to accuse the British "capitalist press" of burying the progress of the revolution and "so far from the free and civilised countries of Western Europe entering any protest against these Imperial atrocities, they are actually in league with the Russian Government to persecute the oppressed." He cited the harrying of Russian refugees in Britain and the rest of Europe and called for simultaneous international parliamentary action denouncing Tsarist barbarism.<sup>80</sup>

But Hyndman did not escape censure from the Marxist-fundamentalists of the SLP who - in a side swipe at Hyndman's financier origins - heaped scorn on his "appeal to his Comrades, Rothschild, Hoggenger, Ooofstein<sub>(sic RG)</sub> to refrain from investing their money in Russian loans...Those whose revenues are derived from the slow murder of men, women and children in Britain are not likely to shrink from investing their money in the nagaika, Siberia, and the fortress of Peter and Paul."<sup>81</sup>

British socialists did, however, allow themselves two cheers in/

in <sup>the</sup> summer <sup>of</sup> 1906 over the abandonment of the proposal to send a Royal Navy detachment to Kronstadt. Grey told the House that the proposed visit had been abandoned because of the wishes of the Tsar's minister. Hyndman thought differently: "I think we are at liberty again to congratulate Justice, the Social-Democratic Federation, Will Thorne and Keir Hardie upon our joint efforts to prevent our Whig-Liberal Government from abasing this nation before the throne of the Czar by sending our fleet to Kronstadt."<sup>82</sup> Shortly after this came the suppression of the Duma and the riposte of Premier Campbell-Bannerman, "La Duma est morte...Vive la Duma". Justice argued that the Government owed a debt to the socialists; but for their agitation it would have been sorely embarrassed by sending the fleet to Kronstadt.<sup>83</sup>

The SDF leadership were firmly convinced that Western capitalism had helped suppress the revolution: "Western investors are actually providing fresh funds for the maintenance of the abominable despotism which they nominally denounce." There was, however, a socialist alternative; the people of Russia were appealing for aid "to enable them to carry on their propaganda and to arm against their oppressors." The SDF Executive therefore called on members to render all possible aid to their Russian comrades.<sup>84</sup>

Thus, several rank and file members of the SDF became involved in an elaborate system whereby arms and ammunition, originally purchased in Germany, were stored in a variety of British hiding places before being shipped to Baltic ports. When the affair came to light the SDF counterposed this example of revolutionary solidarity with the aid given by "the financiers of Western Europe - Jew and Gentile... - who are supplying the authorities/

authorities with the sinews of war...we have to see to it that our Government, which seizes arms and ammunition belonging to one party in the struggle, does not supplement the assistance given by the financiers to the other party, by any sort of official alliance."<sup>85</sup>

Investigation indicates there were several separate episodes and groups of "gun runners". Thus S. G. Hobson claims in his memoirs that at the prompting of N. W. Chaikovskii he became involved (late in 1904) in the smuggling of six thousand Brownings to Russia. Originally purchased in Boston, U.S.A., Hobson arranged for the shipment of these guns to Reval where he dealt with a fellow "of the priestly order of the Hebrew faith and a...member of the...Bund."<sup>86</sup>

Perhaps better known is "The John Grafton Affair" of autumn 1905. Aided by a Japanese military attaché, Konni Zilliacus, founder of the Finnish party of active resistance to Tsarism organized the smuggling of arms from a supply dump in London to Russia aboard a 300 ton tramp steamer, the "John Grafton". Here again, Chaikovskii acted as an intermediary. The broadcaster, Fred Douglas, has referred to the involvement of Tom Edgar, a Leith cycle agent, inventor of the "Edgar Patent Bicycle" and socialist.<sup>87</sup>

But Edgar was embroiled in yet another transaction involving guns and ammunition, police raids and prosecutions and a revolutionary "will o' the wisp". The official SDF history devotes a chapter to the activities of Edgar and his comrades while more recently the Tyneside link in the chain of events has been investigated.<sup>88</sup> The section that follows attempts to shed new light on what the Press of the day termed "The Cartridge Mystery".

One/

One of Edgar's Edinburgh comrades, John Leslie, claimed that aid was given by himself and "the whole-hearted assistance of about a dozen old SDF comrades." A large amount of Mauser and Browning carbines and pistols, along with over one million rounds of ammunition was run into Russia before the British police uncovered the arms-smuggling network.<sup>89</sup> The SDF historians, Lee and Archbold, state that while Leslie was not the most active or prominent member of the operation, he it was who introduced "Alf", agent of the Russian revolutionaries to certain SDF members.

"Alf" is spoken of by Lee and Archbold as a member of the Lettish Social Democratic Party able to speak good English. Beyond this more positive identification is possible. This is as a result of the memoirs of Genrikh Fisher who was himself one of the participants in the operation. Fisher was born the son of German immigrants in Iaroslavl' in 1871. Fleeing from the Tsarist authorities because of his revolutionary activities Fisher had come to Newcastle where he had continued his life as a revolutionary as a member both of the RSDLP and the SDF. On Tyneside Fisher had become "acquainted with members of the Latvian Social Democratic Party, and helped it organize the sending of illegal literature and above all arms (to Russia)." Fisher states that the British police got wind of the business when the father of one of the Englishmen informed on his son. The trail then led them to Fisher's home where they asked after the whereabouts of one "Alfred Nagel" a Latvian. Fisher claims that he was able to warn off Nagel. Thus "They didn't get Nagel either, but the stockpile was discovered. Remarkable: not a single foreigner turned out to be implicated in the whole of this flop, only Englishmen and Scotsmen."<sup>90</sup>

In fact, this last sentence is misleading, perhaps deliberately so. Fisher ignores the part played by a revolutionary variously described/

variously described in Press reports as a "Pole" and a "German", a character with a variety of names - "Thomas Dugger Keast", "Thomas Denvers" and "Adaphus Danvers."

Lee and Archbold make no reference to this person. Instead they refer to "Alf" being active in the autumn of 1905, in turn visiting Methil, Leith, Bo'ness, Grangemouth and the Clyde, to arrange the smuggling of cases and packages on board ships plying between these ports and Russia's Baltic coastline. Arms had already been stored in various locations on Tyneside. But, as scrutiny of the Press reveals, it was Keast who was active in these areas, though perhaps at a slightly later date, in early winter 1906.<sup>91</sup>

Thus the storage of the arms and ammunition intended for Russia was scattered over several dumps in various ports and the materials were in the care of a number of people not all of them, it would appear, radical socialists. It is perhaps unsurprising that the veil of secrecy was eventually lifted, and with the discovery of the first place of storage in the spring of 1907 it became a fairly straightforward matter for the police to uncover the location of other repositories.

On 9 April 1907 Daniel Currie appeared on remand before the Sunderland magistrates "charged with having in his unlawful custody 1944 lbs of gunpowder."<sup>92</sup> Currie had originally been charged with having stolen 35000 cartridges. But investigations had revealed the existence of another man, the owner of the cartridges, who had asked Currie to store the cartridges on his behalf. Currie was now liberated on bail and his trial for having unlawfully stored 194.4 pounds of gunpowder took place on 16 April 1907.<sup>93</sup> The prosecution case was that ten cases of safety cartridges,/  
  
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cartridges, as stated on the bill of lading, had been delivered from the S.S. "Oporto" to Monkwearmouth Goods Station and had then been uplifted by Currie. Currie had first stored the cases at a stationer's shop, then at a printer's before removing some of them to the home of Robert Hutchinson, 15 King Street. Hutchinson had been promised 1s 6d a week so long as they were there but his father had been suspicious of the boxes (now said to have contained "mechanical toys") and had opened one. He had gone to the police when the contents were revealed. Currie had been arrested and had then told the police that other cases were in the Villiers Street Congregational Institute (Currie was Caretaker there).

Currie's defence was that he had got the cases from "a German" who had asked him to find storage space "being informed by the German that they were mechanical toys and that he was going to open a shop."

Mr. Edward Clark appeared for the exporters "who were general manufacturers in Germany" and who "would see that Currie did not suffer for acting for them." In reply to the prosecution Mr. Clark stated that the cartridges had come to England for transshipment: "the object is not to let the people at the other end know where they were going."

The magistrates found Currie guilty, he was fined £20 and the gun powder was forfeited. He had failed to convince the magistrates that he had been led astray by the devious "German". The Villiers Street Institute where Currie had stored some of the cases was "connected with the Union Congregational Church" and had become "in a mild way a Socialistic centre under the régime of the Rev. G. H. R. Garcia". Currie had taken "a part in the affairs of the institute and spoke at debates."<sup>94</sup> Though Lee and Archbold talk/

talk of Currie as a socialist they appear to be wide of the mark when they state that it was the man's grandfather - "who grieved his grandson's connection with the socialists" - who discovered the cases under the font of the Baptist<sup>(sic)</sup> Chapel and hurried to the police.<sup>95</sup>

Equally wide of the target is Raymond Challinor. In his account of the Currie case, he relies on the evidence of the late Arthur Woodburn, M.P., who was friendly with John S. Clarke, a Marxian revolutionary. Clarke told Woodburn that he had met a Russian revolutionary, named by him as "Charles Rosenthal", first on the Hamburg to Newcastle boat then again on the steps of the Social Democratic Club in Newcastle. Clarke had become involved in the storage of the guns and ammunition which had been discovered by chance in a Methodist<sup>(sic)</sup> hall.<sup>96</sup> This account differs greatly from the press reports of the Currie case!

But even as the Currie case unfolded, police on Tyneside and in Scotland were uncovering further arms dumps. In Lee and Archbold's version of events, the police trail after the Villiers Street Institute discoveries led them to the home of Councillor Dunlop of South Shields, an active SDF member. A broken box with an Edinburgh address attached was found and the scope of police inquiries widened. Omitted from their narrative, however, is the arrest of Joseph Hogarth, a tailor of 42 Leazes Park Road, Newcastle. Arrested on Tuesday 9 April Hogarth was remanded, but was granted bail on his second appearance to face a charge of unlawful possession of 25,000 Mauser pistol cartridges and 6500 Mauser rifle cartridges. The bench accepted his agent's assertion that Hogarth had "no interest in this thing, bad or indifferent."<sup>97</sup>

On/



On Friday 12 April 1907 a young Glasgow mason, John Fyfe Reid, was arrested and charged with unlawful possession and unlicensed storage of ten cases of cartridges, the police having been informed, it was claimed, "through the agency of a Glasgow gentleman." Reid was committed to prison.<sup>98</sup> By this date the Tyneside police had seized 117,250 cartridges at Leazes Park Road and in a stable at Back Tindal Street.<sup>99</sup>

But it was in Edinburgh that the police made arrests that appeared, according to Press speculation, to reveal the full extent of the smuggling organisation. The Scotsman spoke of "Keast, the Pole who is 'wanted' on a charge of keeping explosives in premises not licensed for the purpose." When Newcastle police had searched Keast's lodgings they found Edinburgh addresses. Their Edinburgh colleagues had then watched the Leith cycle store of Thomas Edgar and observed the arrival there of cases of ammunition from Leith docks. All winter a traffic in arms had been conducted between Hamburg and Leith. Initially the Edinburgh police arrested only two men who were "associated with a Democratic Federation, and it is believed that it was this connection which brought them into contact with Keast in Newcastle." The ammunition had, it was surmised, then been sent to Tyneside "where...there are facilities for the shipment of arms to Russia."<sup>100</sup>

On 1st May 1907 further criminal proceedings ensued. The tailor, Hogarth, was remanded for a week and the case of Thomas Baston, auctioneer, was heard. Baston pleaded guilty to a charge of unlawful storage of cartridges in a rented stable. This man was almost certainly a Socialist - when renting the stable "he gave no name - and said the Socialist Institute would find/

find him." Baston's agent, Mr. E. Clark who by his own account "had travelled through Russia and knew a great deal about the place" explained why the cartridges had come to be stored on Tyneside. They had come from Germany and were to be transhipped immediately on arrival in the U.K. to Russia. Bad conditions in the Baltic had prevented this and necessitated the finding of caches. In his statement to the police Baston had said little, "I know nothing about it except that I received a telephone message from 42 Leazes Park Road to send my horse and cart in charge of a man." This was the address of Hogarth. The court fined Baston £10 and ordered confiscation of the cartridges.<sup>101</sup>

But on 9 May "the Cartridge Mystery", now took a fairly sensational twist. Hogarth appeared for trial but the charge against him was withdrawn and the case was heard...of Thomas Dugger Keast. His agent was Mr. E. Clark who had persuaded Keast to surrender. Keast had taken a room at Leazes Park Road in November 1906, giving his occupation as "insurance agent." But to the ground-floor tenant, Hogarth, he had stated he was "a dealer in German screws." Cases had then arrived and Keast had asked Hogarth if he might store some of these "screws" for him.

Hogarth had agreed. In his evidence he stated that a letter had come to the house addressed to "Adaphus Danvers". Keast had claimed that he was agent to Danvers. In response to a comment by the prosecutor that Danvers and Keast might be identical, Mr. Clark stated, "We are quite certain that Danvers does not exist." Keast did not speak at his trial but his lawyer "said his client was not posing as anything but an avowed Socialist... (who)...had surrendered himself to get an innocent man out of trouble."/

trouble." On behalf of his client, Mr. Clark stated that the unlawful storage had been done "with a view to preventing the police or other people further away from here from finding out anything." The verdict passed was a fine of £6 on Keast and confiscation of the cartridges.<sup>102</sup>

Keast had remained silent, but he did not yet disappear from view. Now, in the guise of "Thomas Denvers (The Cartridge Owners' Representative)" he wrote for The Keel "The Organ of Tyneside Socialism." His article is notably fluent and literate. "Denvers" began with a flourish quoting "The Merchant of Venice": "To do a great right, do a little wrong and curb this cruel devil of his will."<sup>103</sup> A catalogue of Tsarist brutalities followed, which, the author argued, justified the revolutionaries' resort to armed force. This required enlisting the aid of "contrabandists". The reason for not obtaining a licence for the storage of the cartridges was "not disrespect to the British people or its Government, but merely to prevent the Russian spies tracing the means whereby the goods were exported..."

"Denvers" was concerned to play down the "delirious dreams of dynamite" of the yellow press; instead, he appealed to the traditional internationalist solidarity of radicals and socialists in the home of Joseph Cowen who had "supplied both men and money to enable the Garibaldians to fight the battle of Italy's liberation... Why refuse to Russia help we gave to Italy?"<sup>104</sup>

The following month "Denvers" visited the Fife seaport of Methil in the company of W. C. Angus and addressed the local branch of the SDF.<sup>105</sup> Shortly after this, Angus appeared in court in Edinburgh with Thomas Edgar, John Leslie and W. McKie. "Edinburgh Gentlemen Arrested. Storing Cartridges for Russia. Threatened/

Threatened Penal Servitude. Appeal for Legal Defence."<sup>106</sup> In this dramatic manner one Socialist journal pinpointed the dangers facing the four men. But thanks to the High Tory Sheriff, Maconochie, who heaped scorn on the Liberal Lord Advocate's interpretation of the Explosive Substances Act 1883, the quartet were charged only with illegal storage of cartridges. And, in the end, only Edgar was prosecuted, being fined £1: 1: 6 and the cartridges were confiscated.<sup>107</sup>

One case remained outstanding, that of J. F. Reid. As in the case of the Edinburgh men the charge of "unlawful possession" fell but Reid, too, was found guilty of unlicensed storage. He had named "Denner,"<sup>108</sup> a foreigner" as the person causing the cartridges to be delivered to his premises but would say no more. Commenting on the case the Glasgow Herald described Reid as "a member of the Glasgow branch of the Social Democratic Federation" who "took in the cartridges and gave them storage at the request of some brother Socialists." Ten thousand had gone from Reid's store before the police raid; these cartridges had gone from Glasgow to Falkirk and thence to Bo'ness and Methil "ports from which possibly an odd case at a time might quite readily find its way to a Baltic port in a coal-laden vessel. All that we know is that a foreign gentleman left them with men whose names he found in Justice...later on, assisted by four foreign sailors, he carried them off in the direction of the docks."<sup>109</sup>

And so "The Cartridge Mystery" ends...or does it? Thanks to Fisher's memoirs the "Alf" of Lee and Archbold's account can be identified yet he is not referred to in any Press account of the affair. Fisher's own part in the smuggling has been related by him. Fisher, however, makes no mention of Keast/Denvers/Danvers...surprisingly/

surprisingly so in view of the prominent part played by "the Pole" in the business.

Pinning down "Keast" has proved tantalisingly difficult. His appearance is known: "a man of middle height, somewhat stoutly built, of florid complexion, and with a light moustache."<sup>110</sup> His literary talents and revolutionary internationalism are known, witness the writings and lectures made by him after the affair had come to light. But inquiries made by the writer seeking further identification of this "demmed elusive Pimpernel" have proved fruitless.<sup>111</sup> The file on Keast thus remains open. Several key questions remain unanswered.

Was Keast in fact a name chosen by Nagel to avoid detection? Was Keast Fisher by another name? Or, was Keast a provocateur? This last question is a legitimate one. It stems from Fisher's account in which he states that he was later informed that his arms-smuggling activities had been both instigated and betrayed by the notorious provocateur Azev.<sup>112</sup> The question of incitement and provocation was indeed raised in May 1907. Along with the Anglo-Russian agreement and police surveillance of the Fifth Congress of the R.S.D.L.P. in London, the prosecutions gave rise to the question among socialists, "Are Scotland Yard and the Foreign Office Controlled by St. Petersburg?"<sup>113</sup>

The foregoing pages have attempted to shed light on an obscure episode in the history of proletarian internationalism. For one of the participants at least the affair had taught many lessons. In "To Our Lettish Comrades" the Edinburgh socialist, W. C. Angus, hailed the emergence of the revolutionary movement in the Baltic, and compared their courage with the backwardness of/

of the British movement.

"Aye, we who have lagged behind you,

Nor true to the promise of youth,

But lost in the Cause's bye-ways,

Have missed its mighty truth."<sup>114</sup>

Footnotes to Chapter Four

- 1 Address of the League of Struggle for the Emancipation of  
the Working Class - 27 Sep. 1896, printed in Justice,  
24 Oct. 1896.
- 2 Ibid., 6 June, 1896.
- 3 Freedom, No. 108. Aug./Sept. 1896.
- 4 Justice, 11 July, 1896.
- 5 London Trades Council - Annual Report for Year Ending  
31 Dec. 1896 p. 2 and p. 21.
- 6 Justice, 31 July, 1896.
- 7 Ibid., 24 Oct. 1896.
- 8 Hereafter, the I.A.P.A.
- 9 Norman Angell "Peace Movements" in Encyclopaedia of the  
Social Sciences (New York 1933; 1962 edn.) Vol. 12, p. 43.  
G. B. Clark - "Origins of the I.A.P.A.", Concord Nov/Dec.  
1914.
- 10 Concord, 23, (iii) Mar. 1907; the same issue records that  
J. P. Hopps, another SFRF activist, conducted the service  
at Pratt's funeral.
- 11 Ibid., 13 (xii), Dec. 1898.
- 12 Ibid., 13 (ix), Sep. 1898.
- 13 Ibid., and 13 (x), Oct. 1898.
- 14 F. Whyte, - The Life of W. T. Stead op. cit., passim.
- 15 Concord, 14(i), Jan. 1899.
- 16 Ibid.; War Against War, quoted in F. Whyte, op. cit., p. 148.
- 17 Ibid., 13(xi), Dec. 1898.
- 18 Ibid., 14(i), Jan. 1899.
- 19 Justice, 3 Dec. 1898.

- 20 Ibid., 18 Mar. 1899.
- 21 Ibid., 4 Feb. 1899.
- 22 Ibid., 11 Feb. 1899.
- 23 Ibid., 11 Mar. 1899.
- 24 Freedom, No. 132, Oct. 1898. The writer? - Kropotkin (The article contains evidence in the shape of a reference to Spence Watson.)
- 25 Ibid., No. 139, June 1899.
- 26 Article in the Fortnightly Review, Apr. 1899, quoted in F. Whyte, op. cit., pp. 151/2.
- 27 Free Russia 9(vii-ix), July/Oct. 1898; 9(x), Nov. 1898.
- 28 Justice 18 Mar. 1899.
- 29 The history of the Hague Conference belongs to an area of historical study outwith the scope of this dissertation. Reference should be made to F. H. Hinsley, Power and The Pursuit of Peace (Cambridge, 1963), esp. pp. 139/142; 267/9.
- 30 W. T. Stead - 25 Jun. 1899 - Letter from The Hague quoted in F. Whyte op. cit., p. 160.
- 31 Free Russia 10(iv), Apr. 1899.
- 32 Ibid., 10(vii)/(x), Aug./Oct. 1899.
- 33 Ibid., 10(vi/vii), June/July, 1899.
- 34 Finland Bulletin No. 1, 27 June 1900.
- 35 Ibid., No. 10, 21 Jan, 1902.
- 36 Ibid., No. 15, 27 May, 1903.
- 37 Ibid., No. 21, 24 Jan, 1905.
- 38 As an example, Walter Kendall, op. cit., devotes only two pages to the impact of 1905.
- 39 W. S. Adams, "British Reactions to the 1905 Russian Revolution" in The Marxist Quarterly (1955).



- 40 Ibid., p. 174; p. 185.
- 41 V. I. Lenin - "Lecture on the 1905 Revolution" (Delivered in Zurich on 22 Jan. 1917) in "The Revolution of 1905" in the series: 'The Little Lenin Library (Bristol 1931).
- 42 Justice 13 Feb. 1904.
- 43 Ibid., 27 Feb. 1904.
- 44 Concord. n.s. 20(ii), Feb. 1904; 20(vii/viii), July/Aug. 1904; (20(v), May, 1904.
- 45 Ibid., n.s. 21(i), Jan. 1905.
- 46 Fabian Society Meeting of 27 Jan. 1905 held at Clifford's Inn, London forwarded to Justice; printed therein 4 Feb. 1905.
- 47 Above, Chapter 2.
- 48 Justice 11 Feb. 1905.
- 49 Ibid., 13/20/27 Feb. 1904, 5 Mar. 1904.
- 50 Ibid., 28 Jan. 1905.
- 51 Socialist Apr. 1905, Feb. 1905.
- 52 Ibid., Jan. 1906.
- 53 Ibid., Sept. 1905.
- 54 Ibid., Apr. 1905.
- 55 Freedom, 19 (No. 196), Feb. 1905.
- 56 The title of a weekly column penned by Theodore Rothstein in Justice.
- 57 Justice 22 July, 1905.
- 58 Ibid., 22 July, 1905.
- 59 Ibid., 23 Sept. 1905.
- 60 Ibid., 28 Oct. 1905.
- 61 Ibid., 4 Nov. 1905; 16 Dec. 1905.
- 62 Ibid., 9 Sept. 1899, 11 Feb. 1905, 5 Nov. 1914, 10 Dec. 1914.
- 63 Ibid., 5 May, 1906.
- 64/

- 64 James Connolly, "Moscow Insurrection of 1905", reprinted in  
James Connolly, Selected Writings ed. P. Berresford Ellis  
(Harmondsworth, 1973), p. 227.
- 65 P. Berresford Ellis, ibid., pp. 45/46.
- 66 Excerpt from a resolution passed by the SDF at a public  
demonstration of support for the Russian revolution,  
5 Nov. 1905, quoted in Justice 18 Nov. 1905.
- 67 The Manifesto was published by the All-Party Right to Work  
National Council, Justice 18 Nov. 1905.
- 68 Freedom, No. 203, Jan./Feb. 1906.
- 69 Positivist Review, 1 June 1905. (Harrison, like J. F. Green,  
had been a devout Anglican, when he had gone up to Oxford  
his Christian faith had been shaken).
- 70 Ibid., 1 Dec. 1905.
- 71 Ibid., 1 Mar. 1906 - article by C. H. Desch.
- 72 Ibid., 1 June, 1905.
- 73 Concord, 21(vi), June, 1905; 21(xi), Nov. 1905.
- 74 Ibid., 22(ii), Feb. 1906; 2(iii), Mar. 1906.
- 75 Ibid., 22(vii), July 1906.
- 76 Ibid., 22(viii), Aug. 1906. See also Barry Hollingsworth -  
"The British Memorial to the Russian Duma" in Slavonic and  
East European Review 53, 1975.
- 77 Concord 22(ix/x) Sep./Oct. 1906; Hollingsworth, loc. cit.,  
p. 552.
- 78 Concord 23(vi/vii) July 1907; 23 (ix/x) Sep. /Oct. 1907.
- 79 Justice, 28 Apr. 1906.
- 80 Ibid., 16 Jun. 1906.
- 81 Socialist, May, 1906.
- 82 Justice, 14 July, 1906.
- 83/

- 83 Ibid., 28 July, 1906.
- 84 Ibid., 1 Sep. 1906.
- 85 Ibid., 18 May, 1907.
- 86 S. G. Hobson, op. cit., pp. 126/128.
- 87 Michael Futrell - 'Northern Underground... (London 1963)  
devotes a chapter to this episode. See also "The John  
Grafton Affair" - Script Notes of a Radio Broadcast; material  
provided by Fred Douglas; broadcast on the Third Programme,  
30 June 1965, producer Archie P. Lee.
- 88 H. W. Lee and E. Archbold 'Social Democracy in Britain'  
(London 1935), Ch. 18; Raymond Challinor "Gun-Running from  
the North-East Coast, 1905-7" in Bulletin of the North East  
Group for the Study of Labour History 6, 1972 and Ron Grant  
"The Cartridge Mystery of 1907" ibid., 17, 1983.
- 89 John Leslie article in Justice 5 Sep. 1918. On Leslie see  
"Lenin and Scotland" written by Fred Douglas, produced by  
Archie P. Lee, script of a Radio 4 broadcast of 29 Jan. 1970.  
Douglas claims Leslie to have been the strongest influence  
on James Connolly.
- 90 A. Fisher, "V Rossii i v Anglii; na bliudeniia i vospominaniia  
petersburgskogo rabochego (1890 - 1921gg) Moscow, 1922,  
pp. 89/90. The writer records his gratitude to Dr. D. B.  
Saunders, University of Newcastle for the opportunity to  
read the draft of his article "Tyneside and the Making of the  
Russian Revolution". In the article Dr. Saunders draws on  
Fisher's memoirs. For further information on Fisher see  
Newcastle Evening Chronicle 10, 11 May, 1984.

- 91 Research into this affair is complicated by the fact that the events have now slipped over the brink of living memory. When writing of this affair Lee used as his evidence; "reliable particulars from some comrades still living who had a hand in the affair" - Lee and Archbold op. cit. p. 148.
- 92 Newcastle Evening Chronicle 9 Apr. 1907.
- 93 The prosecutor apologised for his wayward arithmetic, ibid., 16 Apr. 1907.
- 94 Daily Mail 5 Apr. 1907.
- 95 Lee and Archbold op. cit., p. 150. The original informant appears to have been one Robert Hutchinson who was approached by Currie to help with the storage of some of the cases, Newcastle Evening Chronicle 9 Apr. 1907.
- 96 Raymond Challinor, loc. cit., pp. 14/15.
- 97 Newcastle Evening Chronicle, 17 Apr. 1907.
- 98 The Scotsman (Edinburgh) 16 Apr. 1907.
- 99 Newcastle Evening Chronicle, 15 Apr. 1907.
- 100 The Scotsman 16 Apr. 1907.
- 101 Newcastle Evening Chronicle 1 May. 1907.
- 102 Ibid., 9 May, 1907.
- 103 Bassanio's speech (Act 4, Scene 1).
- 104 Justice 11 May, 1907 reprinted the article from The Keel.
- 105 Ibid., 22 June 1907.
- 106 Forward (Glasgow) 8 June 1907.
- 107 The Scotsman, 24 June, 1907, 9 July 1907.
- 108 "Denner", i.e. "Denvers"?
- 109 Glasgow Herald 9, 10 July 1907; Lee and Archbold op. cit., pp. 153/4 refer to the importance of Methil.

- 110 Daily Mail 5 Apr. 1907.
- 111 The writer has a bulky file of replies from the Home Office,  
Public Record Office, Newcastle Crown Court, Northumbria  
Police, Register House, Edinburgh, H.M. Customs and Excise.  
None has any record of Keast.
- 112 Fisher op. cit., pp. 90/2, found in Saunders loc. cit., p. 30.
- 113 Justice 20 July 1907; Free Russia, June 1907, spoke of the  
unsavoury coincidences in an article "The Pothouse Press  
and the Russian Social Democrats."
- 114 Justice 22 June 1907.

Appendix to Chapter Four

"Marxism in Britain - 1905/1914".

In 1905 the Social Democratic Federation was Britain's largest Marxist party. Leadership lay in the hands of men such as H. M. Hyndman, E. Belfort Bax, Herbert Burrows, J. F. Green, A. S. Headingley and Harry Quelch. With the exception of the last-named, these men were middle class in origin. Why had they turned to Marxism? The collapse of the mid-Victorian boom and the resultant relative economic decline had led some to reject the gospel of Free Trade. For others scientific progress and novel theories, especially Darwinism, had shattered their religious faith and they had found an alternative dogma in materialism.

What were the peculiar features of Anglo-Marxism? The Marxism preached by Hyndman was arid, mechanical and sectarian. His pamphlet "England for All" plagiarised Marx's "Capital" much to the annoyance of its author,<sup>1</sup> and was in essence a series of formulae predicting the impending collapse of capitalism. This did not prevent Hyndman continuing his career as a stockbroker and clinging to a highly personal interpretation of foreign affairs, a blimp waving a little red flag. His lieutenants, Bax and Green, were very much under the influence of positivism and ideas of mechanical evolution.

The SDF believed that the prostration of capitalism was an inevitable and automatic process, out of which they would take the power. While patiently awaiting Armageddon these Marxist pharisees had to remain pure and unsullied and doctrinally sound. Old Engels despaired: "...the SDF is purely a sect. It has ossified Marxism into a dogma and, by rejecting every labour movement which is not orthodox Marxism...it renders itself incapable/

incapable of becoming anything else but a sect..."<sup>2</sup> The SDF thus never became a mass party on the lines of the German SPD. Having participated in the founding conference of 1900, they remained in the Labour Representation Committee for only a year and then left. (One result was that the way was left clear for the ILP's ideas and policies to dominate the new party).

Nonetheless the SDF had, after a quarter century, created a nationwide organization, vigorous at local level (as the section on the gun-running of 1905/7 makes clear). Indeed the rank and file often created "popular fronts" with ILP members and other socialists such as the Clarion Scouts. But such activity was instinctive and intuitive. At no time did the leadership of the SDF apply Marxism as a method to the daily work of the party in its work among the proletariat.

In disgust at the hegemony of the old guard two hundred members had broken away in 1903 to form the Socialist Labour Party. Its newspaper the Socialist was uncompromising in its doctrinal purity which in practice led it to reject all forms of tactical alliance with reformist organizations within the Labour movement be they the old 'craft' unions, the 'New Unions' of the unskilled, or the new mass party of the working class, the Labour Party.

The SLP was strongly influenced by the theories of the American Marxist Daniel De Leon; he argued that the revolutionary party should construct an organization capable of conducting its ideas to the very heart of the working-class, thereby by-passing parliamentary roads to socialism.<sup>3</sup> Revolutionary purity would be preserved thereby. In America this saw the emergence of the I.W.W., the Industrial Workers of the World, the "Wobblies". In Britain it/

it took the form of industrial unionism advocated by SLP'ers such as James Connolly, the Party's first national organizer: "...In the light of this principle of Industrial Unionism every fresh shop or factory organized under its banner is a fort wrenched from the capitalist class and manned with the soldiers of the revolution to be held by them for the workers..."<sup>4</sup>

Ironically, such Marxism was as mechanistic as that of the SDF which it sought to supplant. Connolly's theoretical stance owed more to the concept of automatic reflex than to dialectical materialism. He clearly understood the key notion of the class struggle and grasped that in Britain and in America capitalism had developed novel features - trusts and monopolies. But in response to this process the working class would spontaneously see the need for the construction of industrial unions, making sectional unions redundant. When the working class was fully organized in industrial unions, when they possessed sufficient forts and keeps, the transition to Socialism might occur. Again, like Hyndman and his friends, the SLP did not conceive of the role and intervention of the party in the class struggle in the manner postulated by European Marxists such as Luxemburg and Lenin. For the SLP the role of the revolutionary party was essentially propagandist. This was a task undertaken with great success by the Socialist and the Socialist Labour Press - their publications were widely read by young trade-union militants, especially on Clydeside.<sup>5</sup>

In 1904 a group of London Marxists broke off from the SDF to form the Socialist Party of Great Britain, which published The Socialist Standard. The "Impossibilists", as they became known, shunned the political fray, holding a purely propagandistic view/



view of socialism - when the working class knows enough about socialism a socialist society will be achievable.<sup>6</sup>

Within the SDF opposition to the "old guard" grew as the years passed. This came from members such as E. C. Fairchild and Theodore Rothstein who did not wish to split the Party. This tendency sought to orientate the Party towards the mass Labour movement, via the L.R.C., which could be converted to Socialism. Its members totally rejected the perspectives of the SLP. Hence, "the two aspects of mass work, in the Labour Party and trade unions, were not to be united in an overall revolutionary perspective until the formation of the Communist Party of Great Britain" in 1921.<sup>7</sup>

In 1911, in response to pressure for unity from the rank and file of the Party, there was convened a Unity Conference at which the Social Democrats joined with several "leftist" groups in the ILP to form the British Socialist Party, estimated to number 35,000 in membership.<sup>8</sup> Two issues dominated the new Party, internationalist perspectives and "agit-prop" in the working class.

Hyndman had by this date emerged as a kind of socialist "Jackie" Fisher, such was his enthusiasm for dreadnoughts and his antipathy for German imperialism. Within the Executive of the B.S.P. internationalists counter attacked the old man's ten pounders by attempting to force the Party to adhere to policies of the Second International such as the "Stuttgart Resolution" of 1907 when the Congress of the International called on socialists to prevent war breaking out by mass action and "to use the crisis evoked by a war to hasten the overthrow of the bourgeoisie".<sup>9</sup>

Work in the trade union movement was a novel departure for the/

the Marxian socialists. It was undertaken very much in response to the remarkable upsurge around 1910 of syndicalism, rank-and-file militancy in the proletariat. The upsurge of combative shop-floor movements arose not just among unskilled and poorly organized workers but stemmed as much from the best organized and strongest sections of the trade union movement - the miners, engineers and railwaymen.<sup>10</sup> As a philosophy of action syndicalism was a response to the embourgeoisement of the leadership of the trade union bureaucracies. Class-conscious young militants rebelled against the trade unions becoming part of the ruling machinery of the state.

Syndicalist leaders such as Tom Mann rejected all forms of political struggle as debilitating, corrupting and futile. Scornful of the gradualist, reformist strategies of the Labour Party they sought to correct what they thus termed as "betrayals" by an assertion of the strength of militant trade unionism. In practice this meant a worship of spontaneity and a devaluation of the role of revolutionary politics: "In areas like South Wales, where religious traditions were strong among the rank-and-file, the ultimate aims of syndicalism could be presented in what were virtually millennial terms, and in general the exact forms of the syndicalist revolution were not considered important."<sup>11</sup>

The ideological roots of syndicalism (as much as such an intuitive and spontaneous movement can be said to have consciously drawn from the well of theory) stemmed from French anarcho-syndicalism and from the SLP's pamphlets and its organ, The Socialist.

At its founding conference, the BSP - in Marxian terms - "tail ended" this development among class-conscious layers of the proletariat./

proletariat. The Hyndmanites were appalled by the efforts of Leonard Hall to reduce "'the organization of an independent political party of the working class' to being only 'one of the main functions of the socialist party'...'Their business...was to link up the new Party with the new industrial movement...It was up to the British Socialist Party to declare identity with the industrial revolt, and turn it to socialist aims, not only on the political field but equally on the industrial field.'"12

By the autumn of 1912 Hyndman and his supporters were tarring the "trade union wing" of the Party Executive with the brush of anarchism. In 1913 it became clear that the BSP had failed to marry its activities to the leftward movement of the working classes: "Militants were left with no alternative between the syndicalists and the orthodox trade union and Labour leaders."13

Hence it was not the BSP which acted as the main point of origin for Marxist "agit-prop" among class-conscious workers. Rather, this stemmed from the Central Labour College and the Plebs League. The C.L.C. was formed in opposition to Ruskin College and the Workers' Educational Association which were seen by Marxists such as Noah Ablett and W. Craik as bourgeois agencies emasculating young militants. Histories of the movement have established that through publications such as Plebs magazine and CLC lecture classes the League and College was successful in politicising many thousands of trade unionists.14

The League and College were umbrella organizations in that members were drawn from the BSP, SLP and ILP. What they shared was a hatred of revisionism and a commitment to undiluted Marxism. As will be seen, the "Plebs - CLC" tendency was to play an extremely important part in the struggle for internationalism in the labour movement./

movement.

Thus in August 1914 Anglo-Marxism remained sectarian as ever. The BSP had failed to become a mass party and had failed to become the dominant ideological voice in either the mass party of the class - the Labour Party - or in the trade union movement. While the diverse Marxist groupings claimed to differ from each other qualitatively they yet shared one thing in common. This was an adherence to a positivistic, propagandist conception of Marxism peculiarly Victorian and, to foreign observers such as Lenin, singularly obsolescent.

Footnotes to Appendix to Chapter Four

- 1 V. I. Lenin, "Hyndman on Marx" - Zvezda 26 Nov. 1911 - reprinted in Lenin on Britain (2nd edn., Moscow, n.d.) pp. 129/135.
- 2 Marx and Engels on Britain (Moscow, 1953) p. 574.
- 3 To De Leon reforms were "banana peelings under the feet of the proletariat" - quotation found in C. Desmond Greaves, 'The Life and Times of James Connolly (London, 1972 edn.) p. 156.
- 4 James Connolly, 'Socialism Made Easy (Chicago, 1908), reprinted in 'James Connolly, Selected Writings ed. P. Berresford Ellis (Harmondsworth, 1973), p. 153.
- 5 W. Kendall, op. cit., Ch. 4. - "The British SLP"; Raymond Challinor 'The Origins of British Bolshevism (London 1977) passim.
- 6 On 'the Impossibilists' see Robert Barltrop, 'The Monument: the story of the Socialist Party of Great Britain London, 1976.
- 7 M. Woodhouse, "Marxism and Stalinism in Britain", part 2, Fourth International Vol. 5(i) Feb. 1968 p. 16.
- 8 W. Kendall, op. cit., p. 55.
- 9 "The International Socialist Congress in Stuttgart" (1907), found in 'Lenin on Britain op. cit., p. 74.
- 10 The best-known syndicalist document is 'The Miners' Next Step (1910), published by the Unofficial Reform Committee of the South Wales Miners.
- 11 M. Woodhouse, "Syndicalism, Communism and the Trade Unions in Britain, 1910 - 1926 in Marxist Vol. 4(111), (Leeds, 1966).
- 12 Quotation found in Kendall, op. cit., p. 42.
- 13 W. Kendall, op. cit., p. 45.
- 14 Brian Simon, 'Education and the Labour Movement, 1870-1920 (London, 1965) passim.

Chapter 5: "The Anglo-Russian Entente and Its Aftermath."

Given the strength of revulsion against Tsarism that we have seen existed in radical and socialist circles, there was widespread public criticism of the Anglo-Russian convention signed in the summer of 1907. But, despite the outraged critics, the agreement in outward appearance contained few of the component parts of any "Diplomatic Revolution". It confined itself to the peaceful solution of historic differences between Britain and Russia in Asia. The integrity of Tibet was recognised by both sides, while Russia agreed that Afghanistan was of special interest to Britain. The main trouble, however, was Persia. Here was a prize indeed for Russia - warm water ports and an outlet to the world. But Persia lay on Britain's line of communications to the East; continuance of Persian sovereignty was thus a necessity for Britain.

Foreign Secretary Grey was aware that in the aftermath of defeat in the Far East and in the period of retrenchment after the domestic upheavals of 1905/6 Russian foreign policy would flow into new channels. He was mindful of expert military opinion's fears of Germany coming to an accommodation with Russia in the Middle East. Aware of the recent furore over Morocco, Grey worried that Persia might become an Asian flashpoint; he thus pressed ahead in 1907 to come to an agreement with Russia over Persia.<sup>1</sup>

The Persian clauses of the Convention were regarded by Grey as a triumph. Russia was to recognise Britain's predominant position in the south, while Britain gave up any claim to the north, which was to form a Russian sphere of influence. In the centre, there was to be a neutral zone. Grey considered that the/

the Convention secured for Britain what Urquhart had bellowed for half a century before: "The cardinal British object in these negotiations was to secure ourselves for ever, as far as a treaty could secure us, from further Russian advances in the direction of the Indian frontier." This had been achieved with no loss of "amour propre" for the Russians - on paper it was an equal bargain and no attempt was made to include the whole Persian Gulf in the British sphere.<sup>2</sup>

To his critics Grey could point out that the Convention was negative in character, containing no special assurances of friendship or co-operation. A settling of accounts had been made by a Foreign Secretary who preferred to put the defence of British national interests and security (as construed by him) before that "peculiarity of the English" to assess political arrangements in moral terms. But Grey's "dry" approach to the conduct of foreign policy was to provoke a constant deluge of criticism, culminating in a "Grey Must Go!" campaign late in 1911.

Initial reaction to the news that the British and Russian Governments were conducting negotiations had been co-ordinated by the SFRF. Under its auspices, supported by the SDF, by several Labour and ILP MP's and by leading Radicals and Trade Unionists, a demonstration was held in Trafalgar Square on 14 July 1907. Familiar strands in internationalist thought were voiced to the 3000 people present. A letter was read out from leading SFRF member, J. Allanson Picton, ending with Isaiah's prophecy, "Your covenant with death shall be disavowed, and your agreement with hell shall not stand." The radical journalist, H. W. Nevins, "gave a vivid description of his experiences during his recent visit to Russia" - Moscow schoolgirls, suspected of revolutionary activities/

activities, were stripped and flogged. H. M. Hyndman denounced the part played by Jewish financiers - in lending to Tsarism they betrayed their own race. The resolution passed by the meeting with its condemnation of secret diplomacy and moral condemnation of autocracy harked back to the heyday of Cobden and Cowen.<sup>3</sup>

Foreign Secretary of a Government with a large majority, Grey could ignore such protests, a fact clearly recognised by the SDF: "The Whigs, who dominate this Government and kick the Radicals about as they please, have...carried out a Treaty with Russia, not a single detail of which was submitted to Parliament..." Yet even such a complaint was overlaid with the observation that the Liberals were victims of their own past; such grovelling before Russia was not new, in 1876/8 the Liberals had been on their knees before the autocracy.<sup>4</sup>

While much in the nature of protests and criticism of the 1907 entente was thus not new, one historian has argued that the agreement "began the new process of Radical Dissent."<sup>5</sup> The Parliament of 1906 now contained a new political force, the Labour Party. Along with the Irish Nationalists they were to supplement and strengthen the opposition to Grey's foreign policy which already existed on the Liberal back benches. Yet how much was novel in the Labour Party's perspectives on foreign policy? Adherence to the resolutions passed by the Congresses of the Second International and of its Secretariat, the International Socialist Bureau, was certainly an innovation. The Second International was resolutely anti-Tsarist.<sup>6</sup> But how much of a debt was owed by socialists such as Hardie and MacDonald to radical intellectuals for the source of their views on foreign policy? In particular, how much was owed by them to E. G. Browne, the/



the defender of Persian liberties?

In fact, the assertion that in the opposition to the Anglo-Russian agreement, "the Labour party took the lead"<sup>7</sup> is oversanguine. The parliamentary Labour Party has been described in the pre-War period as a "pressure group under pressure", Chairman MacDonald's "followers in the House of Commons could scarcely be considered a party in the normal sense. They did not aspire to govern the country, but to win concessions from those who did..."<sup>8</sup> Labour's leader has been described as an "instinctive internationalist"<sup>9</sup>. He had no coherent foreign policy of his own: "his writings and speeches on foreign affairs consisted mainly of reactions to events, and contained only the sketchiest and most tentative of alternatives to the policy actually followed by the Government."<sup>10</sup>

Articulate, sustained opposition to Grey's policy in fact stemmed from a "front populaire" of "franc tireurs" such as Browne, W. S. Blunt and E. D. Morel, the Marxists of the SDF and Liberal back benchers such as Arthur Ponsonby.

An opportunity for Grey's critics came in the summer of 1908 when the Foreign Secretary told the House that Edward VII would meet the Tsar at Reval. Keir Hardie brought a motion of censure and there followed a strange sequel; the names of Hardie and Ponsonby were removed from the guest list to a royal garden party at Windsor. Hardie and the Labour Party demanded reinstatement, an action which the Marxist Theodore Rothstein regarded as an indictment of parliamentary reformism: "He (Hardie) evidently thinks that he and his colleagues are there to represent the interests of a certain section of the population; just as railway directors or mine owners are there to represent the interests/

interests of their constituents."<sup>11</sup>

Alarmed by the evidently closer relations between the British and Russian Governments and angered at the deeds of reaction of the Stolypinshchina within Russia, the Parliamentary Russian Committee was formed "under the chairmanship of Mr. Charles Trevelyan 'for the purpose of obtaining and disseminating information about the present internal condition of Russia.'"<sup>12</sup>

Under the aegis of the P.R.C., Kropotkin's pamphlet "The Terror in Russia" was published in the summer of 1909. Its issue proved timeous, providing parliamentary critics of Government foreign policy with statistical information in their opposition to the visit of Nicholas II to Britain in 1909.

President of the enlarged P.R.C. from April 1909 was the veteran radical Lord Courtney - "a high priest of the school who never weary of exhorting the unregenerate to put not their trust in armies and fleets but in international law and arbitration tribunals".<sup>13</sup> But Courtney was alarmed at the hell-fire sermonising of fellow - members of the P.R.C.: "they are much more prompt in judgment and in condemnation and much more eager in assisting the overthrow rather than the development of existing institutions than the members of the Committee."<sup>14</sup>

Rifts within the P.R.C. widened over the contents of a pamphlet on Finland. Arthur Ponsonby quarrelled with the Chairman: "I regret in some of your corrections that we cannot speak rather more emphatically. The cause of Finland is not a revolutionary but a constitutional cause." Courtney replied, "You will not save Finland by denouncing what is not intended or by invoking allusion to the Baltic Provinces and Poland. Finland stands in a different position from both..."<sup>15</sup>

Such/

Such tensions ensured the collapse of the P.R.C., "and after a year of considerable activity the members ceased to meet."<sup>16</sup> The high point of the P.R.C.'s activities came in summer 1909 when it spearheaded opposition to the Tsar's visit. In Parliament, Labour's Arthur Henderson "recited and quoted from Kropotkin's book a terrible catalogue of crimes committed by the Autocracy in Russia and claimed that the Czar and his Government could not be dissociated officially from such incidents." Grey's stance was that of "tit for tat"; not only did he question the accuracy of Kropotkin's statistics, he also listed the casualties claimed by revolutionary terrorist methods in the same period. Keir Hardie in turn challenged Grey's accuracy, compared Grey unfavourably with Gladstone and charged the Government with being motivated by the desires of the financiers. The Irish nationalist, John Dillon, argued that "Grey's nation of non-interference meant that there was no such thing as Liberalism in international politics." When the House divided, 187 supported the Government and 79 opposed. This latter figure was composed of 19 Labour, Victor Grayson (independent socialist), 35 Irish Nationalists and 24 Liberals. Thomas Burt, SERF founder-member supported Grey, but Arthur Ponsonby "upheld the best traditions of the old Liberalism."<sup>17</sup>

Out-of-doors agitation was sufficiently alarming to ensure that in August 1909 the Tsar was unable to retrace his steps to Balmoral. There was the further fear that Russian revolutionaries might assassinate the Tsar - in Parliament, Grey had referred to the "Tottenham Outrages" of January 1909. Therefore the monarchs of Britain and Russia met at Cowes which could be sealed off almost completely.<sup>18</sup>

Throughout/

Throughout the movement of organized labour angry voices protested against the Government giving official recognition to the visit, culminating in a mass demonstration attended by a crowd estimated at 10,000 held in Trafalgar Square on Sunday, 25 July. The police confiscated copies of Justice which had printed a cartoon of Nicholas II rooted to the spot before a bomb about to explode, while at the rally speakers vied with each other in the ferocity of their comments. The dockers' leader, Ben Tillett, regretted his inability to hang the Tsar while Hyndman raged "Let the King kiss him...let Sir Edward Grey lick his boots. As for us, we spurn him, we spit in his face..."<sup>19</sup>

Throughout these proceedings there is no conclusive evidence that in A.J.P. Taylor's phrase, "the Labour party took the lead." Indeed it could be argued that by its endorsement of Lloyd George's "People's Budget" the party was compromising itself. Sustained and effective opposition to the Anglo-Russian Convention came instead from one man, E. G. Browne.<sup>20</sup> Concentrating on the fate of Persia, Browne in a five year campaign denounced "the lamentable foreign policy of Sir E. Grey" as "illiberal...immoral...contemptible...perilous."<sup>21</sup> As Grey was later to admit, "Persia tried my patience more than any other subject."<sup>22</sup>

In 1905 Persia was a backward, rural society ruled by a despotic, irresponsible Shah and a greedy bureaucracy. It was this ruling group who were exploited by the British and Russian governments in the late 1880s, 1890s and after, when rivalry between the two great powers began in earnest after Pendjeh. By 1905 Persia was coming to resemble Morocco. While it was not a formal colony of either of Britain or Russia both of these powers had/

had a readily identifiable interest in Persia's internal affairs.<sup>23</sup>

Desperate at the punitive taxes imposed on them by the spendthrift Shah, a group of merchants had risen up in revolt. In July and August 1906, ten thousand rebels sought sanctuary ("baast") in the gardens of the British Legation and the ruler, finding that the British were supporting the demonstration, agreed to grant a Constitution and a Parliament ("Majlis"). The Persian Revolution had got under way but it had begun "when the country was in effect under a dual foreign protectorate".<sup>24</sup> It was the fate of the Revolution of 1907 that it coincided with the Anglo-Russian agreement which divided Persia into "spheres of interest."

In June 1908 the new Shah "well known as a puppet of the Russians"<sup>25</sup> ordered the Persian Cossack Brigade to bombard the Majlis buildings but the "Constitutionalists" resisted and in the following year their forces were able to enter Tehran and force the Shah to flee to Russia. Internal contradictions and tensions among the Persian reformers ensured domestic instability continued and in 1911 the Shah attempted a counter-coup. This was defeated but the Russians took the opportunity to reinforce their troops in the north in the Tabriz area while in the south the British landed troops in Bushire.

In a bold move the Majlis now appointed the U.S. Treasury official, Morgan Shuster, to reorganize Persian finance. Complementing his activities were Major C. B. Stokes, employed to reform the gendarmerie and Adolphe Perni whose task was to produce a penal code able to accommodate European conceptions of civil rights and traditional Islamic values. Shuster's "new deal" alarmed the Russians who then demanded his removal. In this they were/

were supported by the British and Shuster was dismissed in November 1911. The Majlis was then forcibly disbanded, the constitution was suspended and in July 1914 the son of the Shah deposed in 1911 attained his majority: "practically the end of constitutionalism in Iran" until 1945.<sup>26</sup>

Such events had appalled E. G. Browne. Britain had been party to the suppression of Persian constitutional liberties by a foreign oppressor, Russia. From 1908 this remarkable man embarked on a jihad against the forces curbing Persian liberties. In so doing, he achieved a status among radical critics of British imperialism akin to that of W. S. Blunt and E. D. Morel.

Browne was the son of a leading figure in the Tyneside shipbuilding and engineering industry. Intellectually and politically precocious, he had taken the Turkish side in 1877 and had begun to learn Turkish. His interest in Oriental matters was born. Apart from degrees in the natural sciences and in medicine, young Browne showed linguistic genius, he was "among the very few Europeans who could write a correct letter with equal facility in Arabic, Persian or Turkish."<sup>27</sup> Browne made only one visit to Persia, his traveller's tale of 1893 "A Year Among the Persians" is regarded as a classic and gives some account of the very unfavourable view he took of Russia when travelling back from Persia.

From 1902, Browne was Sir Thomas Adams Professor of Arabic at Cambridge but politics engrossed much of his time and thought. In 1903 he met W. S. Blunt who recorded, "He is most intelligent about Eastern things, not merely as an Orientalist, but also politically" and in 1908 "Professor Browne has asked my advice about Persia, he being in despair at the counter-revolution there."<sup>28</sup>  
From/

From 1908 until 1913 Browne took on the might of the British and Russian Foreign Offices, explaining that "he had been dragged from the peaceful world of books into the turbulent arena of politics much against his personal inclinations. He disliked the rôle of an agitator, but he felt it was a peremptory duty he owed a country he respected and loved to come to her aid in any humble way he could...The misery of the people in present circumstances and the overthrow of the Constitution pressed on him almost like a personal bereavement. He hoped all present would aid in disseminating the facts of the situation amongst their friends..."<sup>29</sup>

In the brief, rose-tinted days of optimism of July 1909, Blunt had opined that this was "a victory stolen out of the fire and Browne may justly claim as his the whole success. But for him Persia would most certainly have been annexed by Russia, or rather put under Russian tutelage after the precedent of Egypt."<sup>30</sup> In his methods Browne had used the well-tried Dissenter's method of close reading of the Foreign Office Blue Books. But there is evidence that he also used contacts in Persia itself to help him construct his critique of his opponents. Thus in a pamphlet of 1909 he used correspondents whose names he would not divulge to expose the Russian foreign minister as a liar in the affair of the bombardment of the Majlis by Liakhov and the Persian Cossacks.<sup>31</sup> And in the course of 1911 when the ex-Shah attempted his comeback assisted by the Russians, several correspondents kept Browne fully informed on the rapidly deteriorating situation within Persia.<sup>32</sup>

But throughout his years of campaigning in defence of Persian sovereignty, Browne was not hostile to the idea of an Anglo-Russian agreement. The aim of the Convention had been "admirable" in that it removed Anglo-Russian friction in Asia. Unlike Blunt (and Hyndman and Beesly) who were supporters of Indian nationalism, Browne/

Browne never made the leap to anti-Imperialism from his Iranophile stance, "but as a matter of fact any co-operation between Great Britain and the Russian Autocracy...could only be obtained by a gradual surrender of the original British interpretation (of the Agreement<sub>R.G.</sub>) in favour of the Russians."<sup>33</sup>

Browne consistently attacked Russian culpability in the destruction of Persian constitutionalism but named Grey and British diplomats as accessories. This amateur unwillingly turned agitator had little but scorn for the amateur at the Foreign Office "'Grey... is so ignorant that he hardly knows the Persian Gulf from the Red Sea'".<sup>34</sup> Even worse was "Sir Edward Grey's complaisance to Russia, and complete reversal of the principles firmly held by all British statesmen as to the absolute necessity of maintaining buffer States between the British and Russian Empires..." Changes in the diplomatic and consular services had not helped, the new Ambassador to Russia, Arthur Nicolson had been warmly welcomed "by the organs of the Russian Government."<sup>35</sup>

Late in 1911 the Persian constitutionalist movement had faced renewed crisis. Although their forces rebuffed the attempted comeback by the former Shah the Russians had taken the opportunity to increase their presence in the northern sphere and had then, on 24 November, delivered a 48-hour ultimatum to the Majlis demanding the dismissal of Shuster.

Criticism of Grey's handling of the Persian issue now came to a head, both in the Commons and "out of doors." Grey defended his record in the Commons on 27 November 1911 and at the same time "journalists like Brailsford, Massingham, Wolf and Gardiner thundered out their protests."<sup>36</sup> With the exception of Massingham these writers were all members of the Persia Committee whose Vice-Chairman was Browne. The Committee's 57 members included



44 MP's. whose names appear as a 1911 roll-call of Liberal, Irish and Labour parliamentary critics of Grey's foreign policy. The objects of the Committee were listed as focussing and stimulating public interest in the regeneration of Persia, and "the importance from the point of view of our Imperial position of maintaining the integrity and independence of Persia" and "to take such steps as may seem desirable with a view to strengthening the hands of our Government" in maintaining a free Persia.<sup>37</sup>

Grey remained unmoved, not "greatly impressed by the claims of his critics to have an exclusive understanding of that protean entity, 'public opinion.'" <sup>38</sup> In Persia worse followed the dismissal of the Government's Western advisers, when at Tabriz in the northern sphere there were mass executions of Constitutionalists carried out by the Russian-officered troops.<sup>39</sup> Thus the Persia Committee dinner of 29 January 1912 held in honour of Shuster had more the atmosphere of a wake than a celebration. In his speech of welcome to Shuster, H. F. B. Lynch, Chairman of the Persia Committee had said "...we are not here to deliver an attack upon our Foreign Secretary. Many of us have a warm personal regard for him". He stressed that the Persia Committee was not out to destroy the Anglo Russian agreement: "we are out for its loyal fulfilment (Cheers)."<sup>40</sup>

To such sentiments the Marxists of the British Socialist Party took great exception. Only war with Russia might save Persia from her fate, an eventuality which the Persia Committee could not tolerate. The B.S.P. compared its foreign policy perspectives with those of the Committee claiming that "whereas we opposed and did our best to prevent the inception of the policy of which the partition of Persia is the natural outcome, they were among its warmest/

warmest supporters." The Persia Committee was critical of Grey but "the whole Liberal Cabinet, and indeed the whole Liberal Party, must be held responsible." The writer referred to the Reval and Cowes visits, and the socialists' protests: "Those visits were not made for fun. They were the preliminaries to an alliance which has been fruitful of nothing but mischief; which has not lessened but increased the danger from Germany...but for the support Russia has drawn from England and France there need have been no fighting over Persia...we, as a nation, have been dragged into the thieves' compact."<sup>41</sup>

"Poor Browne is in terrible despair at it all." Thus wrote Blunt on 30 January 1912; he himself was equally gloomy for 1911 had been "a sad year...the worst politically I can remember since the '80s...all accepted here in England with cynical approval, our Foreign Office being accomplice with the evil doers, and Grey their apologist."<sup>42</sup> There is no evidence to sustain A. J. P. Taylor's argument that radical and social dissent over foreign policy faded away at this time because "the Dissenters had won. Grey adopted their policy." Mr. Taylor has argued that, for example, Grey had checked Russia in Persia thanks to E. G. Browne's vigilance.<sup>43</sup> For friends of Russian freedom, in particular, the years 1907-1911 were a recitation of woes: "a second Duma destroyed...Finland, from an independent duchy reduced to a Russian province...Persia - the crowning wrong."<sup>44</sup>

And so Browne retired to the study, bested by Grey, but re-emerging at the end of the Great War to call for "generous financial help" and for "the complete abolition of the... 'Zones of Influence'..." if the regeneration of Persia was to begin in the post-war world.<sup>45</sup>

Grey's/

Grey's significance in history hinges on the sharp break he effected in the direction of British foreign policy "shifting from a dread of a Boer conspiracy to a terror of the Kaiser's navy".<sup>46</sup> Before him, Lord Salisbury's concern had been with the Empire. But fear of Germany and the European balance of power became the under-pinning concerns with Grey in command. The perceived problem of the German threat led Grey to furtively strengthen ties with France but the Anglo-Russian agreement of 1907 also sought to reduce Germany's power of manoeuvre. Grey's intention might well have been to restrict the "rapprochement" of 1907 but he had reckoned without the force of Persian nationalism...and its British defenders. Grey, however, refused to allow his foreign policy to become hemmed in by moral lumber. When faced with the choice between Persian democracy and Britain's strategic needs he unerringly opted for the latter, which led the Socialist journalist, Brailsford to declaim, "It was a manlier party which followed Palmerston."<sup>47</sup>

But part of the reason for this sharp break with the "moral foreign policy" of the times of "Pam", Gladstone, Mazzini and Kossuth lay in the disarray of the opposition to Grey. Radicals, reformist socialists and revolutionary Marxists were each hamstrung and compromised. Thus the fierce critic Brailsford, who had among his many enthusiasms that of "Votes for Women", had to grudgingly admit of the suffragist Grey that, compared with the prospect of Harcourt and Runciman at the F.O., it was a case of "faute de mieux".<sup>48</sup> In Parliament, the Labour Party dangled submissively at the end of Lloyd George's line, hooked by the bait of social reform with only the occasional thrashings of its radical tail on foreign policy questions.

What/

What, then, of the revolutionary socialists of the British Socialist Party, formed in September 1911 by the amalgamation of the Social Democratic Party with a few militant I.L.P. branches? Since the late 1890s the dominant theme in Anglo-German relations had been that of the "naval race" and the Party's leader, Hyndman, had joined the jingo press baying against "the German menace" insisting that Britain must have a powerful navy. Against him were ranged internationalists such as Theodore Rothstein who argued that, "It is easy to cry out, Germany wants to attack us, to invade us, to subjugate us...if all that is to be avoided, the way to do it is not to fan the prejudices of the people by painting Germany as black as Satan. The way to do it is to...insist that England should withdraw from the provocative position she has taken up against Germany, both in the diplomatic and economic fields."<sup>49</sup>

But such arguments proved ineffective. Matters came to a head at the last conference of the Social Democratic Party in Easter 1911 - the party was split apart on the armaments issue. Hyndman and his supporters won a narrow victory over the internationalist wing of the party. In protest, party treasurer J. F. Green resigned from the Executive along with Herbert Burrows, opining "I cannot for the life of me see what interest the proletariat can have in supplying the capitalist class with the means of defending its property. It certainly seems extraordinary doctrine for professed Marxists to hold, and can only, it seems to me, divert attention from the class struggle."<sup>50</sup>

Fear of Germany outweighed traditional hatred of Tsarism and, although the internationalists continued to campaign against Hyndman and his friends, the largest revolutionary socialist party/

party in Britain in its foreign policy perspectives had abandoned the tool of dialectical materialism for that of the formula of the lesser evil. The resulting confusion was mercilessly exposed by the internationalist J. B. Askew who scathingly spoke of "the delusion, namely that you can support the policy of an English Navy supreme at sea and oppose the Imperialist policy which is based on that supremacy...the same applies to those who blame the Russian alliance of the British Government while laying stress on the German menace. There is certainly no need to advocate a German alliance on the other hand; but for the Government which is to carry on an anti German policy a Russian alliance is well-nigh a necessity. In truth, the Russian Alliance characterises the nature of British Imperial policy sufficiently, and deprives it of the last vestige of a democratic character."<sup>51</sup>

It has been suggested that the political impact in Britain of a rising nationalism was the "cramping of a 'truly Liberal' external policy."<sup>52</sup> This febrile atmosphere pushed already nervous British decision-makers into anti-German policies, one consequence of which was the strengthening between 1907 and 1912 of the Anglo-Russian "entente". Indeed by 1912 a pro-Russian lobby existed in Britain, though the concern of this group was to point out the potential of Russia to investors rather than to emphasise the strategic benefits of an Anglo-Russian understanding. Publicists such as Mackenzie Wallace, Maurice Baring and Bernard Pares emerged as apologists for Tsarism, while from 15 December 1911 there was published the Times Russian Supplement. It was to counteract such developments that Lucien Wolf campaigned. In the period January 1912 to August 1914 he became the most consistent and most prolific critic of the Anglo-Russian agreement.

Of/

Of all the opponents of the Tsarist regime revealed in this study Wolf fits least well into the "radical and socialist" mould. He had no sympathy for pacifists, disarmers and "radical panaceas"; he was for many years editor of the Tory Daily Graphic supporting the call for an increased naval budget.<sup>53</sup>

A native of London, Wolf was regarded by one admirer "as a symbol of the perfect symbiosis of Jewish life in England". Throughout a long working life he consistently fought to secure for Jews their citizen rights and protection against persecution. His greatest triumph came in 1919 at Versailles. As representative of the Anglo-Jewish community he secured the adoption of the Minorities Treaties with several of the successor states. Wolf was a consistent opponent of Zionism, yet actively campaigned on behalf of the persecuted Jews of Russia.<sup>54</sup>

Wolf viewed himself "as an old Liberal, born with the echoes of 'forty-eight ringing in his ears, and piously reared on the traditions of England's unswerving and unfaltering championship of oppressed peoples."<sup>55</sup> On another occasion he stated, "I am not an enthusiast for universal suffrage...I think Russia is as ripe for a popular constitution as was Great Britain in 1832."<sup>56</sup>

It was from this standpoint that Wolf criticised the foreign policy of Sir E. Grey for having "weakly eluded a great Liberal tradition". Political and financial interests had been allowed to take precedence over moral principles; these had led to the British Governments becoming "participants in the terrible responsibility" for the latest pogroms and massacres. Wolf thus determined to speak out against the "politico financial conspiracy of silence".<sup>57</sup>

Thus in 1905/6 Wolf launched "The Russian Correspondence", a broadsheet/

broadsheet which waived copyright. The little journal contained reports from its correspondents within Russia on the manoeuvrings of the Tsar's advisers to stabilise Russia politically and financially. This was combined with publicity for the work of the Jewish Social Democratic Party, the Bund.

But it was in the aftermath of the 1907 Anglo Russian agreement that Wolf made his most sustained effort to expose what he considered to be its immoral basis. Between 1912 and 1914 the weekly Darkest Russia was revived with Wolf as its publisher. (Between 1891 and 1892, Darkest Russia A Journal of Persecution, had been published as a monthly supplement to the Jewish Chronicle. The aim had been to bring the facts of Tsarist anti-semitism before non-Jewish opinion in Britain).<sup>58</sup>

The fulcrum of Wolf's criticism of the British government was that it had throughout considered the 1907 agreement as an expedient: "No attempt has been made to use it as a means of advancing the cause of civilisation, or to join the English and the Russian people together in any bond of friendship."<sup>59</sup> And so, "the Foreign Office, haunted by the German bogey, has made too much of Russia, and has led her to believe that she can misconduct herself, whether at home or abroad, with a complete immunity from censure or interference."<sup>60</sup>

One form of business agreement had in turn led to another. Wolf was bitterly critical of those who had sought to profit from investment in the Tsarist economy. These British capitalists had allowed Tsarism to recover and even increase the strength of its apparatus of repression: "...it is bad enough that political alliances should provide a powerful motive for discountenancing criticism of Russia's conduct, both internal and external; that monetary/

monetary considerations should spread similar ideas in other channels...is very much worse."<sup>61</sup>

Three flash points - "The Fruits of Our Russian Alliance"<sup>62</sup> - crowded the pages of Darkest Russia in 1912. These were the news of the Lena Goldfields Massacre, the case of Miss Malecka and the trial of Mendel Beilis.

News of the shooting of striking workers in the Lena goldfields broke in Britain in April 1912. The miners were employed by a company with over eighty per cent of its shares owned by Britons. Wolf's response was to publish several articles written in the style of the American "muck-raking" school; he castigated the British shareholders as "carpet baggers".<sup>63</sup>

Katie Malecka, daughter of a Polish revolutionary of 1848, but herself a British subject had been arrested by the Russian police on suspicion of involvement in revolutionary activities.<sup>64</sup> Her case was taken up by Wolf early in 1912; this saw the beginning of a campaign in Britain pressuring Grey to demand her release.<sup>65</sup> 'Out of doors' pressure added to the lobbying of the Foreign Secretary by Noel Buxton and Philip Morrell led to Grey requesting St. Petersburg to release Miss Malecka.<sup>66</sup> When this happy event took place, Wolf praised the British Government, but as he put it, "the System" remained.

Unsurprisingly, Wolf was outraged by the threat posed to his co-religionists in the Pale by the accusations levelled against Mendel Beilis. He warned that if Beilis was found guilty of the ritual murder of a Christian child, extreme nationalist forces would unleash a pogrom. The "Black Hundreds", he opined, "are using the foulest means at their disposal to procure a verdict, not so much against Beilis himself, but against the Jewish religion."<sup>67</sup>/



religion."<sup>67</sup> He answered the challenge of the Russian Consul-General, Heyking, that the British petition of protest was an attempt to prejudice public opinion in England against Russia. "On the contrary", argued Wolf, "the protest is specifically limited to the popular agitation which has identified itself with the Kieff murder case."<sup>68</sup>

Evidence of Wolf's vigilance is also to be seen in his editing of the pamphlet "The Legal Sufferings of the Jews in Russia."<sup>69</sup> Chapters such as "Limitations of the Right to Own Property" undoubtedly occasioned sympathy among readers but more intriguing is the genuflection towards the strength of anti-Jewish feeling in Britain at this time. "The persecution of Russian Jews is not a matter which affects Russia alone. It means the compulsory emigration to other lands of thousands of impoverished and uneducated men and women...the imposition upon the most highly civilised countries of a burden of ignorance and poverty which ought not to be imposed upon them."<sup>70</sup>

Darkest Russia continued publication throughout 1913 and 1914 with Wolf peppering British apologists of Tsarist Russia with eloquent denunciations, but in August 1914 the journal ceased publication, one of the first casualties of war: "for the moment Darkest Russia can serve no useful purpose except perhaps by the contribution of its silence to the hushing up of dissensions in the field in which the first duty of every Englishman lies."<sup>71</sup>

As we have observed, the oldest of the anti-Tsarist organisations, the SFRF, had entered a period of decline from 1905. The reasons for this decline were varied, yet it had come at the time when it might be imagined that the opportunity for it be most effective was at its height. Grey's position as Foreign Secretary and the continuance/

continuance of his foreign policy remained secure despite the campaigns of E. G. Browne and his Parliamentary allies. Significantly, that other critic of the Government's foreign policy, Lucien Wolf, did not - by 1912 - call for an end to the agreement of 1907: "Let us see to it that the bond into which Russia has entered is kept by her both in the letter and in the Spirit; let us bring our influence to bear upon her...for the improvement of her suffering population."<sup>72</sup>

Thus in his survey of five years of Anglo-Russian diplomatic accord, H. N. Brailsford gloomily recognised that Grey and Mammon together had contrived to rescue Tsarism: "our diplomacy with our finance as its tool has made once more a Great Power out of a staggering chaos." But, in anticipation of Mandelstam, Brailsford opined that silence was the great crime: "so long as no protest is made, Russia sets no limits to her ferocity and cruelty...It lies within us as electors and citizens to warn our Government that this partnership must cease."<sup>73</sup>

Before 1914, however, the Labour Party achieved the status only of a pressure group. Internationalism was a rhetorical commodity for most Labour M.P.'s to be used on occasions necessitating the mouthing of dogma and ritual. To the left of the Labour Party lay the British Socialist Party (as the S.D.F. had renamed itself). To these Marxists, internationalism was central to their epistemology. Yet in 1913 rival factions of internationalists and defencists were at open war with each other and the B.S.P. remained outside the mainstream of Labour politics.

Hence, in several quarters opposition to the Anglo-Russian entente remained ineffective. In appearance the internationalist perspectives of British radicals and socialists seemed solidly cemented/

cemented by factors such as dislike for Grey's secret diplomacy, disgust at the Anglo-Russian agreement and its consequences and opposition to the arms race. In essence, however, fissures existed and the events of August 1914 were to cleave through the superficial unanimity of this "popular front" of internationalists. In particular, attitudes to Russia were to qualitatively alter.

Footnotes to Chapter Five

- 1 Refer G. W. Monger, The End of Isolation, British Foreign Policy 1900/7 (London 1963) Chapter XI; Keith Robbins, 'Sir Edward Grey..., (London 1971) pp. 159/164.
- 2 Viscount Grey of Fallodon 'Twenty Five Years', (London, 1925), Vol. I, p. 160.
- 3 Justice 20 July 1907; 23 Dec. 1911 (for a reprint of the resolution).
- 4 Ibid., 7 Sept. 1907.
- 5 A. J. P. Taylor, The Troublemakers , op. cit., p. 103.
- 6 Julius Braunthal, 'History of the International Volume I 1864/1914 (London 1966), Chapter 19.
- 7 A. J. P. Taylor, The Troublemakers , op. cit., p. 103.
- 8 David Marquand, Ramsay MacDonald (London, 1977), p. 136.  
Marquand's epithet is borrowed from Henry Pelling - see H. Pelling, A Short History of the Labour Party (London 1961, 1978 edn).
- 9 Ironically the sort of nebulous phrase which MacDonald himself might have coined!
- 10 David Marquand, 'Ramsay MacDonald' op. cit., p. 165.
- 11 Justice, 4 July 1908.
- 12 Ibid., 25 July 1908. See also, above, Chapter Two on the genesis and activities of this body.
- 13 The verdict of The Times quoted by G. P. Gooch, 'Life of Lord Courtney (1920), p. 555.
- 14 Lord Courtney to G. H. Perris 10 Apr. 1909 - Courtney Papers, Volume 10, file 33.
- 15 Arthur Ponsonby to Lord Courtney 13 Nov. 1909; Courtney to Ponsonby 14 Nov. 1909, ibid., Volume 10, files 39, 40.

- 16 G. P. Gooch, op. cit., p. 559.
- 17 Justice, 31 July, 1909, reporting Commons proceedings.
- 18 Robert K. Massie, - Nicholas and Alexandra, (1967; London, 1969 edn.) p. 174, On The Tottenham Outrage, see Colin Rogers, The Battle of Stepney, pp. 212-5 (London, 1981).
- 19 Justice, 25 July, 1909; Free Russia, n/s July, 1909, devoted four pages to the swell of protest.
- 20 E. G. Browne's chief work was The Persian Revolution of 1905-1909, (Cambridge, 1910). This massive (470 pages) compilation which documented the origins and history of the Persian constitutional movement became essential reading for all critics of the foreign policy of the Liberal Government.
- 21 E. G. Browne, letter to the British Press, 9 August, 1912 - Free Russia, n/s October, 1912.
- 22 Sir Edward Grey, Twenty Five Years, op. cit., p. 169.
- 23 David Gillard, The Struggle for Asia 1828-1914, London, 1977, pp. 14/15; p. 46.
- 24 Richard N. Frye, Persia, London, 1968, p. 86.
- 25 John Abbott, The Iranians - How They Live and Work, Newton Abbott, 1977, p. 46.
- 26 Elie Kedourie, 'The Middle East (1900-1945)', in New Cambridge Modern History, Vol. 12, (Cambridge, 1968).
- 27 Sir E. D. Ross, 'E. G. Browne', in Dictionary of National Biography 1922/30, (London, 1937), idem 'A Memoir', in E. G. Browne, A Year Among the Persians, (London, 1893, 1926 edn.) Sir Ronald Storrs, Orientations, London, 1937, pp. 12/14 has an affectionate portrait of "Johnnie" Browne.
- 28 Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, My Diaries (1888-1914), London, 1932, p. 452, p. 624.

- 29 E. G. Browne, "The Persian Constitutionalists" - Lecture of 11 Nov. 1908 to the Central Asian Society, p. 16.
- 30 W. S. Blunt, "My Diaries", op. cit., p. 671.
- 31 E. G. Browne, "The Responsibility of the Russian Government for the 'Chaos' Now Existing in Persia" - "For Private Circulation Only" (Newcastle, 1909).
- 32 C. B. Stokes to Browne, 7 Jan 1911; W. M. Shuster to Browne, 20 Nov. 1911, 29 Nov. 1911, 6 Dec. 1911. The writer thanks Dr. Hassan Javadi (sometime of Cambridge University) for the opportunity to read these letters.
- 33 E. G. Browne, F. B. A., "The Persian Constitutional Movement", Lecture of 6 Feb 1918 to the British Academy, ext. Proceedings British Academy, 8, 1918.
- 34 Remark attributed to Browne by W. S. Blunt - 19 Mar. 1909 - "My Diaries..." op. cit. p. 654.
- 35 E. G. Browne, "The Persian Crisis of December 1911" - Compiled for the Use of the Persian Committee (London 1911) p. 15; p. 7.
- 36 Keith Robbins, "Sir Edward Grey..." op. cit., p. 253.
- 37 "The Persia Crisis, 1912" - The Persia Committee, Pamphlet No. 1. (London 1912), p. 1.
- 38 Keith Robbins, "Sir Edward Grey..." op. cit., p. 254.
- 39 E. G. Browne, "The Reign of Terror at Tabriz. England's Responsibility" (London 1912). The pamphlet included 15 photographs of the victims with explicit grisliness.
- 40 "The Persia Crisis, 1912" - The Persia Committee, Pamphlet No. 1. op. cit., p. 5; p. 11.
- 41 Justice, 13 Jan. 1912 - leading article - "The Thieves' Share-Out".

- 42 W. S. Blunt 'My Diaries... op. cit. p. 792; p. 788.
- 43 A. J. P. Taylor The Troublemakers op. cit., p. 114, p. 15.
- 44 Letter from the SPRF reprinted in Justice 23 Dec. 1911.
- 45 E. G. Browne 'The Persian Constitutional Movement',  
Lecture of 6 Dec. 1918, op. cit., pp. 19/20.
- 46 H. N. Brailsford , "Liberalism and the Russian Government"  
in The Socialist Review, Jul. 1908.
- 47 Ibid.
- 48 Keith Robbins, 'Sir Edward Grey.. op. cit., p. 250.
- 49 Justice 29 May, 1909;
- 50 Ibid., 22, 29 Apr. 1911.
- 51 Ibid., 18 Jan. 1913.
- 52 Paul Kennedy, 'The Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism,  
1860-1914 (London 1980) p. 385.
- 53 Max Beloff, "Lucien Wolf and the Anglo-Russian Entente,  
1907-1914" - The Lucien Wolf Memorial Lecture, 1951 (Jewish  
Historical Society of England, London 1951), p. 9.
- 54 Lucien Wolf - Obituary, Jewish Chronicle 29 Aug. 1930.
- 55 Lucien Wolf, "Introduction" to The Russian Government and  
the Massacres (London 1907), p. (xxvii).
- 56 Lucien Wolf, article in The Russian Correspondence, No. 1,  
7 Oct. 1905.
- 57 Lucien Wolf, "Introduction..." op. cit., pp. (xxviii), (xxv),  
(x).
- 58 Darkest Russia, 17 Aug. 1891/1 July 1892, (London); see  
also The Jewish Chronicle, 1841/1941, A Century of Newspaper  
History' - n/a, (London, 1949), pp. 103/4.
- 59 Darkest Russia n/s, 25 Sep. 1912.
- 60 Ibid., 24 Jan. 1912.

- 61 Ibid., 31 Jan. 1912.
- 62 In the parlance of H. N. Brailsford who thus titled his pamphlet of 1912.
- 63 Darkest Russia, 24 Apr. 1 May, 8 May, 1912.
- 64 Miss Malecka recounted her experiences in Saved From Siberia (London 1914).
- 65 Darkest Russia 21 Feb. 1912; Justice of 2 Mar. 1912 enthusiastically quoted Darkest Russia.
- 66 Darkest Russia 15 May; 5, 12 June 1912; Justice 18, 25 May; 1, 8, 15 June, 1912.
- 67 Darkest Russia, 13 Mar. 1912.
- 68 Ibid., 15 May, 1912. The petition and its prestigious list of signatories may be found in Free Russia n/v Jul. 1912.
- 69 (ed.) Lucien Wolf, with an Introduction by Prof. A. V. Dicey - The Legal Sufferings of the Jews in Russia - A Survey of their Present Situation, and an Appendix of Laws. (London, 1912).
- 70 Ibid., p(x) (i.e. A. V. Dicey's 'Introduction'). The background to this anti-Jewish feeling is depicted by Colin Holmes, Anti-Semitism in British Society 1876/1939, (London, 1979), esp. Ch. 3: "The Health and Morals of the Nation."
- 71 Darkest Russia 5 Aug. 1914.
- 72 Ibid., 17 Jan. 1912.
- 73 H. N. Brailsford The Fruits... op. cit.



Chapter Six: "The Crisis of August 1914"

"A micht publish ma great book o' traivels,  
'Through Russia with a Whitewash Brush.'"<sup>1</sup>

As has been observed in foregoing chapters, the organizational and journalistic channels carrying the cause of Russian freedom were pulverised by the sudden onset of the war. Successive waves of patriotism, chauvinism and rabid anti-Germanism engulfed the British people. One consequence of this was the re-definition of attitudes towards Russia held by many of the activists in the cause of anti-tsarism. A further outcome of "the deluge" was the onset of a process of amoebic disintegration and reintegration of radical and socialist organizations.<sup>2</sup>

In these decisively altered circumstances there began a determined effort to whitewash Tsarist Russia. Several of the most energetic members of this task group had before 1914 been actively engaged in the opposite process - the tarring of Tsarism and its policies. Yet there were contradictions within the contradiction. Despite the enormous difficulties of a hostile Government and national Press and the increasing constraints placed upon freedom of speech, there were those who remained faithful to their principles. They missed no opportunity to undermine the efforts of the clumsy daubers to iconise the image of Nicholas II and his Government.

Emigré renegades from internationalism - Kropotkin, Burtsev, Chaikovskii, Plekhanov - were significant contributors to the preparation of the tub of saltpetre which was now used to conceal the blemishes of tsarism.

On the outbreak of the war, Kropotkin had taken a stance based more/

more on the system of Comte and Positivism than on the ideas of anarchist socialism. An encapsulation of his views may be found in his "Letter on the Present War". He opined "that if French influence disappeared from Europe, Europe would be thrown back in her development for half a century". He saw "Bismarckian Imperialism" as the main enemy and predicted that "autocracy will never more be re-established in the forms it had before 1905, and that a Russian Constitution could never take the Imperialist forms and spirit which Parliamentary rule has taken in Germany."<sup>3</sup>

Plekhanov, likewise, had become a superannuated revolutionary. Already "well known to old SDF members as the author of 'Anarchism and Socialism'", Justice gave prominence to his defencist views on the war.<sup>4</sup>

J. F. Green drew much sustenance from the defencists in his new found enthusiasm for the destruction of "Prussian militarism": "...nearly all the Russian Socialists and Progressives I have met rejoice that Russia is fighting on the side of England and France...I may refer to the letters of Professor Vinogradoff and V. Bourtzeff in the Times. These men are under no illusions as to the nature of the government of their country, but they all believe that the regeneration of Russia, as well as of Germany, will follow the war,"<sup>5</sup> and "I have read with much pleasure our friend Plechanoff's letter. It confirms my experience that the real(sic RG) Russians - i.e. those of Slav-race - are glad...that Russia is fighting...side by side with Britain and France. It is only some of the Jews who...are pro German."<sup>6</sup>

Green's descent from principled internationalism to anti-semitism - "I...deplore the pro-German attitude of several Russo-Jewish/

Russo-Jewish refugees in this country" - was an early intimation of what lay ahead for the refugees. But he was quickly taken to task by the veteran émigré, A. I. Zundelevisch, "a man of the seventies", and friend of Stepniak.<sup>7</sup> He accused Green of blundering into the prejudices of the "Black Hundreds", a point later taken up by another émigré, "Le Vin": "(Real Russians! Good heavens, without knowing it, J. F. Green had actually borrowed the notorious watchword of the Black Hundreds)...against the 'real Russian' Plechanoff...and his followers is ranged the 'real Russian' Lenin, with a larger following still..."<sup>8</sup>

For many socialists the crucial factors in August 1914 had been the invasion of neutral Belgium and the failure of the mass party of German Social Democracy to resist. The SPD "with all its pretensions and its prestige...made no protest against the Belgian crime", it had been "guilty of an act of colossal apostacy."<sup>9</sup> Thus spake John Leslie, one of the men involved in the "Cartridge Mystery of 1907".

From criticism of German Social Democracy to support for the British war effort and that of its allies were but short steps. In spite of initial hesitations, H. M. Hyndman made them: "...though everybody must eagerly desire the final defeat of Germany, in view of the crime committed in Belgium, nevertheless the success of Russia, which must inevitably follow, will be a misfortune to the civilised world."<sup>10</sup> Hyndman confessed that he had felt such misgivings at the funeral of Volkhovsky the day after the war had begun. But as the memory of Volkhovsky receded, Hyndman felt less doubts: "as matters stand today, it is a choice of evil in all the affairs of human life." He continued to hold this attitude/

attitude claiming that, "in the interests of democracy and socialism, it was far more important to resist and crush German militarism than it was to refuse the help of Russia in the war."<sup>11</sup>

Hyndman had been provoked into such utterances by the remarkable campaign waged against the whitewashers by one man, C. H. Norman. Norman was employed as a shorthand writer in the Law Courts in London and was an ILP member, but Lord Brockway has described him as an "anarchist" who "would have liked us (the No Conscription Fellowship<sub>RG</sub>) to take more extreme direct action against the war," while Paul Selver has spoken of him as "a malcontent of malcontents" who "with astounding ingenuity...used to nose out remissness in high places."<sup>12</sup>

From the outset of the war, Norman's polemical darts were aimed at the defencists and whitewashers. The bombardment continued until in 1916 he refused to serve and was cast into prison as a conscientious objector.<sup>13</sup> After the war Norman supported the left wing of the ILP who wished the Party to affiliate to the Comintern.<sup>14</sup>

Norman's views on the war were strongly influenced by a pamphlet of March 1914 written by the Russian journalist Stepankowsky, "The Russian Plot to Seize Galicia." The pamphlet contained details of Russia's inflated military budgets and "test mobilisations." Norman saw the war as a "Russian conspiracy against the liberties of Europe" and added, with a nod in the direction of Cobdenism, "It is a policy which is an infamous crime, and I will be no party to it. Britain should mind her own business."<sup>15</sup>

Norman's arrows were fired at individuals such as Hyndman and Leslie but in February 1915 he criticised, point by point,  
a/

a manifesto on the war published by twenty-nine leading members of the B.S.P. Norman argued that "the real Socialist point of view was presented in the Duma by the leader of the Russian Social Democrats...no Socialist who really demands the overthrow of the ruling classes who make these abominable crimes possible, should support any government participating in the war."<sup>16</sup>

C. H. Norman may thus be regarded as an exemplar of the type of socialist to whom G. V. Chicherin sought to appeal in his revolutionary activities of 1915-1917.

As tenacious an opponent of the whitewashers and defencists was the Glasgow class warrior, John Maclean. Early in the war, in a polemic against Hyndman's lieutenant, Belfort Bax, he made his position abundantly clear: "Bax exhorts us to 'hate the present Prussian military and bureaucratic State system.'" On the contrary, argued Maclean, "Our first business is to hate the British capitalist system...After that I...will transfer the larger portion of my hate to Russian soil against the devilish autocracy that prevents the peaceful development of the workers' organizations..." Maclean viewed the war as "merely 'the struggle for an existence' on a capitalist national scale..."<sup>17</sup>

Criticism of the war and an indictment of Russian culpability also came from the Marxian S.L.P. A leading article in the Socialist asked, "Since when did the vital interests of Russia coincide with those of Great Britain? Time was when they were supposed to be diametrically opposed." The writer pointed to Russia's military provocation of Germany in the Balkans in the summer of 1914 and conjured up the old bogeyman of a Europe dominated by Russia: "British capitalists are fighting...not for Russian ends but for strictly British ends, and when civilization has/

has been rescued from death at Germany's hands, it will in all probability be necessary to rescue it from worse than death at Russia's hands.<sup>18</sup>

Centrist circles in the British Labour movement eschewed a rigid adherence to Marxist dialectics. One consequence of this was to allow them a flexibility of attitude and power of manoeuvre. J. R. MacDonald was such a beneficiary - his most recent biographer refers to his "tortuous ambiguity" on the question of support for the war.<sup>19</sup> Yet condemnation of defencism and criticism of the alliance with Russia was nonetheless fierce among many on the left of the Labour Party, especially in the ILP. Especially forthright was the editor of Forward, Tom Johnston.<sup>20</sup> In the week that war was declared, Forward appeared with the banner headline,

"Civilisation Submerged.

Sir E. Grey Compels us to Support the Russian Tyrant."

Johnston argued that "at the command of Holy Russia we go to war, in a cause in which we have no interest, in which we were never consulted." Citing as his reference work, Jaakoff Prelooker's "Heroes and Heroines of Russia," the editorial listed the features of Tsarist Society which made it "the vilest enemy of civilisation in Europe." Johnston employed the tactic of revelatory journalism to explain the reversal in attitudes towards Russia made by the British governing classes many of whom now had invested heavily in Russia.<sup>21</sup>

Johnston was to consistently argue that British and French capitalism had a declared interest in the continuance of Tsarism and berated journalistic whitewashers such as Robert Blatchford and A. M. Thompson of the Clarion for the way in which they ignored this/

this vital fact.<sup>22</sup> His views on the crisis of August 1914 were encapsulated in a pamphlet of 1915 in which he claimed inspiration from a speech made by John Bright in Glasgow in 1858. Bright had warmed to the theme of the Foreign Office work being concealed from the public: "...We are told that the matter is too deep for common understandings like ours...(but) in the innermost recesses of it...we find some miserable intrigue." Johnston demanded "open Democratic control of Foreign and Home affairs, and that complete Democratic control means Socialism."<sup>23</sup>

With a circulation estimated at 30,000, Forward was thus of significance as an organ of international socialist propaganda. Early in 1916 it achieved the status of martyrdom when the Government suppressed the issue of 1st January 1916 which had supported militant Clydeside shop stewards against Lloyd George. Yet despite this, the contents of the newspaper were eclectic and often contradictory. Cheek by jowl with Johnston's articles were printed the reflections of "Rob Roy" (Dr. Stirling Robertson).<sup>24</sup> Initially hesitant about the alliance with Russia, "Rob Roy" came to develop his own interpretation of "the lesser evil", opining that, "of the many paradoxes of the war one is that Kaiserism is defeating itself by its 'victorious' attack on Russia." He claimed that "From the moment of the Russian reverses in Galicia... we may witness an assertion of the Russian people as against Tsarism."<sup>25</sup> In this manner Stirling Robertson was able to nimbly sidestep any accusation of association with Romanovs steeped in blood and gore!

Just as wide differences had appeared among socialists over attitudes to the war and to Britain allying itself with Tsarist Russia, so too there were major differences among members of the peace/

peace movement. G. H. Perris described the crisis provoked in August 1914 with clarity: "Our poor little international organization is shattered. A generation's work has to be done over again...never in history has war so appealed to the conscience, so entered into the consciousness and will, of the masses of men." The conviction that the peace movement was growing in strength was an illusion: "The typical Peace society was a small body of genteel eclectics - numbering perhaps fifty, in a community of 500,000."<sup>26</sup>

The war drove a wedge between pacifists and pacificists. Again, it was Perris who made a compact distinction between the two: "On the one side stands the sincere and consistent non-resister; on the other, the...(person<sub>RG</sub>)...who, while doing all he can to substitute agreement for force in international relations, recognises the right and even the duty of using force... for the defence of things which he regards as more sacred than life itself."<sup>27</sup>

Along with that other luminary of the I.A.P.A., J. F. Green, Perris joined the ranks of supporters for the war. Before 1914 he had been a fierce critic of British foreign policy, conducted in a "maze of secret intrigue", and thundering, "It is enough that Sir Edward Grey has chosen, before any high adventure for mankind, the friendship of a ruler, (Nicholas II<sub>RG</sub>) who of all men, has best won the contempt and loathing of the world."<sup>28</sup>

Now in an editorial, "England's Duty in the War", Perris expressed his approval of the war: "to palliate the guilt of Austria and Germany is to burke the duty of today and to poison judgment." Perris made no mention of Britain fighting on the same side as Tsarist Russia. Instead he chose to reject Tolstoyanism, /



Tolstoyanism, claiming to be moved not by dogmatic, but by rationalistic and humanistic considerations: "I see again old Tolstoy in the family circle at Yasnaya Polyana. It is the supreme unescapable tragedy of minds seized by the vision of the Ideal. To conquer the beast in oneself is hard, but it is nothing beside the task of reconciling the Ideal to our social order."<sup>29</sup>

And thus the majority of I.A.P.A. members and Concord readers opted for pacificism. But among the minority who resisted was one notable voice. The pacifist case was put by Mrs. Elizabeth Spence Watson, widow of Robert Spence Watson. In an open letter to her late husband's old friends, Green and Perris, she expressed "equal sorrow and surprise" at their conduct. She exclaimed, "Alas, how far we are now from believing in the brotherhood of man!" and reminded these "backsliders" from Christian internationalism of the message of the Sermon on the Mount.<sup>30</sup>

Mrs. Spence Watson found herself living through strange times - that jingoism and mafficking which had so depressed her husband during the Boer War years had been but a dress rehearsal for the war fever which now gripped all classes and all parts of the land. That mixture of Christian morality and sense of mission which had done so much to sustain the SFRF was now swamped by a belief in the sacredness of Britain's task to purge and purify the world of the Prussian horde. A lusty patriotic chorus drowned out contrapuntal voices of doubt and opposition.

A new generation of "atrocitarians" had arisen to sustain the crusade against the satanic Kaiser and the Hun titillating the nation with tales of murder, rapine and sadistic mutilation. In all of this there were echoes of the Bulgarian atrocities and of "the/

"the unspeakable Turk." From this one might easily construct a series of parallels between 1876 and the Great War. The Kaiser might be made to don the bogeyman's clothing once worn by the Sultan; Horatio Bottomley can be compared to Stead in the role of populist agitator, while Lloyd George might be seen, like Gladstone, as the chief political beneficiary of the huge outpouring of public morality.

But such parallels are, perhaps, unhelpful. In 1914, History did not repeat itself. In the first place, Britain was now involved in a mighty war whereas in 1876 war had only threatened. And, employing Shannon's imagery, no "national fault lines" appeared in 1914. In August 1914 the nation was possessed by "a mighty sense of righteous exaltation"<sup>31</sup> and was sustained by this until 1916. In 1876 there was no Kitchener enticing the young men into a dance of death with hypnotic stare and pointing finger.

Not until 1917 did war weariness render disillusion, disenchantment, despair. And then in 1917 came news of revolution in Russia - excitement pulsed through the veins of the labour movement. But till then the ceaseless scything of young lives went unchecked, the trenches of the Western Front were choked and thrombotic with new blood. And there was no mass voice of protest.

In 1914 Internationalism, in all its varied forms, had been shattered. The upheaval had destroyed its structures both large and small, from the Second International to the tiny organs of fraternity such as the SFRF. Bleak prospects appeared ahead for those Russian émigrés and their friends in the host country who sought to continue the struggle against Tsarist brutality. In Britain in 1914 there was no émigré with the talents or energy of/  
of/

of Stepniak, or of Volkhovsky to mobilise and direct informed opinion into a sympathy with the revolutionary cause. Spence Watson was dead, while of the younger Friends of Russian Freedom, Green and Perris had become chauvinists.

The Great War was to be the cause of profound upheavals both in the outlook and "world views" of individual radicals and socialists, and in institutional and organizational forms. In a dialectical sense, the process of change was contradictory, greater unity and disunity came simultaneously into being. These changing circumstances have been well described by one historian: "The unity stemmed from an unparalleled persecution which tended to make real left-wingers forget doctrinal differences and become brothers in misfortune. Comradeship grew and mutual help was given, regardless of political affiliation...The greater disunity arose because, by action and utterance, Labour politicians revealed that they did not share this common goal (of opposition to the war and the need for industrial militancy<sub>RG</sub>)!"<sup>32</sup>

In 1915 however, an émigré was to appear who possessed the qualities and tenacity of Stepniak and of Volkhovsky. He was to throw himself with energy into the proselytization of the "New Left" in Britain. This man was G. V. Chicherin, who with his comrade, M. Bridges Adams was to revive solidarity with the Russian revolutionary cause among those British individuals, groups, cadres and parties who resisted the war.

Footnotes to Chapter Six

- 1 A squib from the Doric wit of "Sanny McNee" in Forward,  
9 Dec. 1916.
- 2 Refer Appendix: "The British Labour Movement, 1914-1918".
- 3 Freedom, No. 306 Oct. 1914.
- 4 Justice, 15 Oct. 1914.
- 5 Ibid., 24 Sept. 1914.
- 6 Ibid., 22 Oct. 1914; Green was also mightily influenced  
by "Members of the Oxford Faculty of Modern History" whose  
pamphlet Why We Are At War was reviewed by him in Concord,  
Oct. 1914. (Oxford 1914).
- 7 Ibid., 5 Nov. 1914. There is an affectionate portrait of  
"Old Zund" in Ivan Maisky: Journey into the Past (London  
1962) pp. 123/130.
- 8 Justice, 19 Nov. 1914. Green was also challenged by the  
international Marxist, J. B. Askew (Justice, 5 Nov. 1914).
- 9 Forward, 13 Feb. 1915.
- 10 Justice, 13 Aug. 1914.
- 11 Ibid., 17 Sep. 1914, 3 June 1915.
- 12 Lord Brockway, letter to R. Grant, 17 Feb. 1983; Paul Selver -  
Orage and The New Age Circle (1959) p. 22. See also John  
W. Graham - Conscription and Conscience - A History,  
1916- 1919 (London, 1922) pp. 173; 318.
- 13 Forward, 24 Jun. 1916; James Clunie, Literature of Labour  
(Dunfermline 1954) p. 132.
- 14 Forward, 10 Apr. 1920; 9 Apr. 1921.
- 15 Forward, 7 Aug. 1915; Justice 10 Sep. 1914.
- 16 Forward, 6 Feb. 1915.
- 17/

- 17 Ibid., 26 Sept. 1914.
- 18 Socialist, Sept. 1914.
- 19 David Marquand, op. cit., p. 175.
- 20 On Johnston see William Knox's entry in the dictionary he has himself edited: 'Scottish Labour Leaders 1918-1939. A Biographical Dictionary' (Edinburgh 1984).
- 21 Forward, 8 Aug. 1914; In the 19 Dec. 1914 issue Johnston called Prelooker's books "standard works of reference".
- 22 Ibid., 6 Mar. 1915.
- 23 Tom Johnston, 'Secret Diplomacy, Capitalism and War' (Glasgow 1915).
- 24 Terry Brotherstone "The Suppression of the Forward," Journal Scottish Labour History Society, 1, May 1969 has useful background information on Forward. On "Rob Roy" see Tom Johnston 'Memories' (London 1952) pp. 32/33.
- 25 Forward, 11 Sep. 1915.
- 26 Concord, Sept./Oct. 1915.
- 27 Ibid., Jan./Feb. 1915.
- 28 G. H. Perris 'Our Foreign Policy and Sir Edward Grey's Failure' (London 1912), found in the review by J. F. Green in Concord, 26 Mar. 1912.
- 29 Concord, Nov./Dec. 1914.
- 30 Ibid., Jan./Feb. 1915.
- 31 Arthur Marwick 'The Deluge' (Harmondsworth, 1967) p. 50.
- 32 Raymond Challinor, op. cit., p. 150.

Chapter 7: G. V. Chicherin, M. Bridges Adams  
and the Russian Revolutionary Cause in Great Britain

Introduction: The political activity of Georgii Vasilyevich Chicherin during his years in Great Britain from 1914 to 1918 was a significant episode in the revolutionary career of Soviet Russia's second Commissar of Foreign Affairs. It forms an important chapter in the history of Russian émigré politics as well as a little noticed but revealing part of the history of the British Left and the First World War.<sup>1</sup> Several Soviet scholars have written of this period of Chicherin's career, but though a centenary study of Chicherin recites some of his dealings with British socialists,<sup>2</sup> his involvement with the British Left remains the least documented aspect of his years in Britain. But the discovery of several files of papers accumulated by Chicherin and his closest British comrade means that this decisive period of Chicherin's political maturation can now be reconstructed in greater detail, while new light is shed on the history of the British revolutionary movement.<sup>3</sup> These papers reveal G. V. Chicherin as the most openly active of the Russian political exiles in Britain during the Great War. He flung himself with characteristic energy into political work when most other exiles had abandoned such activity.

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A variety of sources, not all of them friendly to the subject, enable the composition of a "revolutionary silhouette" of Chicherin. According to his cousin, Chicherin struggled throughout his life to repress his homosexuality.<sup>4</sup> This may have led him to an eccentric life-style, making him "oiseau de nuit";<sup>5</sup> and his comrades/

comrades" often wondered whether he ever slept."<sup>6</sup> Abandoning his career in the Tsarist diplomatic service Chicherin had become a revolutionary in 1904; he was enabled to survive as a professional revolutionary by means of an inheritance. In his activities he showed "astounding concentration" and a "phenomenal capacity for work"<sup>7</sup> - indeed one enemy labelled him a "graphomaniac."<sup>8</sup>

Chicherin led a varied existence as a revolutionary. He quickly renounced Social Revolutionary ideas for Marxism. In 1907 he took an active part as Secretary of the Foreign Central Bureau of the R.S.D.L.P. in the organization of the Party's Fifth Congress in London. He felt keen pain at the split between Menshevism and Bolshevism, gravitating towards Plekhanov, Martov and Dan in the aftermath of the Congress. In exile Georgii Vasilyevich lived first in Germany but was then compelled to seek asylum in France. Here in 1910, along with the Polish émigré S. Yu Bagotsky, Chicherin had formed the Cracow Society to aid Russian political prisoners. He actively worked in both the German and French socialist parties, being impressed by the strongly proletarian character of the French Socialist Party in Lille where he lived in 1914. It is not known exactly when Chicherin quit the Continent as the German armies swept through Belgium, but he arrived in London a convinced Marxist and international socialist, with a firm conviction in the strength of the proletariat. If the years of Continental exile were the seed-time, the years spent by Chicherin in Britain were to prove the harvest.<sup>9</sup>

We have no record of when first they met, but it is apparent that by Spring 1915 Chicherin had formed a political friendship with Mrs. Bridges Adams and in <sup>the</sup> summer there appeared the first appeals/

appeals for the Russian Political Prisoners and Exiles Relief Committee (hereafter RPPERC<sub>RG</sub>). Chicherin had quickly plunged into the life of the British Left - almost certainly this was due to the contacts made for him by his new comrade.

Maisky gives a somewhat unflattering picture of Mrs. Bridges Adams as "one of those English people who somehow fail to come to terms with life and so devote all their passion and determination to some 'cause' which fires their imagination or touches their heart." In this version she had been "a fervent suffragette" but meeting Chicherin transformed her into an ardent sympathiser with the Russian revolutionary cause.<sup>10</sup> But such a picture of Chicherin's principal British comrade is to say the least unhelpful. We have only Maisky's word for it that Mrs. Bridges Adams was a suffragette, while he totally ignores her long years of involvement with the movement of British organized labour.

In any history of the British adult education movement, Mary Bridges Adams is an important figure. Born in 1855 she became a prominent member of the Independent Labour Party, was a member of the London School Board from 1897, a founder of the National Labour Education League and in 1908 Secretary of the Plebs League. She was one of the founding members of the Central Labour College and was an unyielding advocate of workers' control of their own educational programmes and institutions. Throughout her long career Mrs. Bridges Adams was an indefatigable publicist, rivalling the "graphomaniac" Chicherin in her ability to unleash a polemic for the good of the cause. In this respect Chicherin had found a kindred spirit. But, equally important he had become involved with the Plebs circle of international Marxists, a group opposed to the war.<sup>11</sup> Among these Plebeians was John Maclean who in/



in turn enjoyed the comradeship of a Russian émigré, Peter Petroff. Maclean had long campaigned against the chauvinism of the B.S.P. leadership. Under his guidance the Glasgow District Council of the Party had in September 1915 launched the Vanguard, the "first organ of an anti-war, anti-Hyndmanite opposition within the party."<sup>12</sup> It becomes clear, however, that this group stayed separate from the East London cadre opposed to Hyndman.<sup>13</sup>

Chicherin's initial outlook on the war was subsequently described by him as an "intellectual house of cards." He had sought to reconcile support for the "democratic" and "peace loving" capitalism of Britain and France against "Junker monarchism" while seeking the overthrow of the Russian autocracy. But his belief in the progressive nature of "bourgeois democracy" in Great Britain and France was rapidly eroded, and his renunciation of his earlier views and of "defencism" in general brought him into the internationalist camp. It is unclear, however, precisely what factors were responsible for this change of view. One Soviet writer has suggested the influence of Lenin's articles and the impact of the Bolshevik group in London headed by M. M. Litvinov. No evidence has been uncovered of any contact between Chicherin and the Bolsheviks in the early period of his London exile, while it was not until March 1917 that he quoted Lenin's "extreme anti-war position" in an article for the Labour Leader!<sup>14</sup> Another Soviet source has argued that the transition was occasioned by his observation of the "peculiarities of the English" and of how the bourgeoisie made use of proletarian organizations to influence the working class through "defencist" and patriotic slogans. So disgusted was he that Chicherin now waged a most energetic war against "oboronchestvo" ("defencism").<sup>15</sup>

One thing is certain, however. In the summer of 1915 - his intellectual confusion at an end - Chicherin launched the RPPERC. Here/

Here was an organization which simultaneously drew strength from a generation-old tradition in British political life but yet broke new political ground. As delineated in earlier chapters the SFRF had campaigned for quarter of a century, while in the post 1905 period there was a proliferation of organizations throughout Europe designed to win support for the revolutionary cause and to aid political prisoners and exiles. Vera Figner, the well-known veteran revolutionary who had spent twenty years in penal servitude, began in 1908 a campaign in Western Europe designed to expose the horrors of tsarist prisons. It was in this latter tradition that G. V. Chicherin sought to work from 1915: "In Western Europe the funds for helping the Russian political prisoners were in times past raised mostly by wealthy humanitarians, by private sympathisers, by philanthropists. In recent years the Russian relief committees that existed in different countries became more and more concerned with the organized parties of Russian Labour...At last the International Socialist Bureau decided to put the question of the Russian political prisoners before the International Congress, and it was put on the agenda of the Congress of Vienna which was to have been held in August 1914..."<sup>16</sup>

Chicherin had begun this new form of revolutionary work in the most difficult circumstances. The onset of the Great War had pulverised the structure of the British committees and journals aiding the victims of tsarism. The SFRF no longer existed, while Free Russia, The Anglo Russian and Darkest Russia had all ceased publication. Moreover, there was in Britain a new deference to the susceptibilities of the Tsarist Government which had become a "gallant Ally" in the war.

It was at this juncture that the RPPERC launched an appeal in/

in the British labour press: "All those who sympathise with the sufferings of the political victims in Russia are invited to join the Committee as member-contributors of monthly payments, or to send their donations to this Committee...our suffering comrades in Russia and Siberia are looking to the organized workers of Great Britain for help."<sup>17</sup> Chicherin's aims are revealed in a letter that he wrote to a potential sympathiser: "It has begun its work amongst Russians, Jews, Poles, Letts, Lithuanians and other emigrants from Russia, has organized a network of collectors and issued an appeal in different languages, but far more important is the work in British Society..."<sup>18</sup>

In this respect, Mrs. Bridges Adams was of prime importance. Maisky's mischievous character sketch of her - "she was all fire and flame for this new 'cause'"<sup>19</sup> - is less than just and even misleading. Her interest in the Russian revolutionary movement was not new, she had had "earlier points of contact with the Russian Labour Movement".<sup>20</sup> It was Bridges Adams who provided RPPERC with its headquarters; it was she who, as its assistant secretary, by her advice, contacts, suggestions and energy as organizer, publicist and speaker, did more than anyone else to ensure that the voice of that committee was heard among the organized workers of Great Britain.

Mrs. Bridges Adams had for many years been involved with the work of the Royal Arsenal Co-operative Society and Woolwich and District Trades Council.<sup>21</sup> Thus RPPERC made contact with this latter body: "We discussed whether the Woolwich Trades and Labour Council could assist. He (Mr. Barefoot<sub>RG</sub>) is quite willing to do what he can and suggests you make formal application for assistance of the Trades Council...I suggest special mention should be made in your/

your application of getting the books into the Arsenal..."<sup>22</sup>

In these early days, Mrs. Bridges Adams bombarded the labour movement press with information on RPPERC and engaged in a long-running polemic against the anonymous "whitewasher" of tsarist Russia, "N.D." in the Cotton Factory Times and Yorkshire Factory Times.<sup>23</sup>

Chairman of RPPERC was the ILP Member for Blackburn, Philip Snowden, then in the centrist phrase of his political career. But Snowden was always wary of "the more extreme statements about Russian tyranny" issued by RPPERC stating that "I would not like you to give our police authorities any excuse for prohibiting the Fund, as that would be against the interests of the poor prisoners."<sup>24</sup>

By the autumn of 1915, RPPERC had an extensive network of collectors throughout the country, particularly among branches of the ILP, the BSP and unions such as the NUR and the Engineers' union, the A.S.E. The financial reports of the Committee show modest contributions from scores of ILP branches by the end of November 1915 and growing support from local union branches.<sup>25</sup>

The collection of funds, however, was but a part of RPPERC's activities. More important for Chicherin was the political impact and its propaganda work. Articles by Chicherin and Bridges Adams appeared in the Cotton Factory Times, the Yorkshire Factory Times, Forward, the Railway Review and elsewhere. Announcements of the activities of RPPERC and of police action against it were published in the Labour Leader and in Justice. In Maisky's account, "the official purpose of this committee was to make collections and send money to revolutionaries lying in tsarist prisons, but under Chicherin's skilful guidance it soon extended this/

this somewhat narrow aim and gradually became a political organization engaged in systematic agitation against tsarism."<sup>26</sup>

Such work was inseparably linked with Chicherin's "internationalist" position on the war and this factor was of the greatest significance in determining those sections of British society and those political groupings from which support for RPPERC was forthcoming. The Committee shunned the Labour Party which had abandoned the rather vague anti-war policy of its pre-war years and - with members such as Clynes and Henderson occupying ministerial posts - had become part of the ruling class. Equally it had no truck with the Hyndmanites and Chicherin earned Lenin's approval for his call for the internationalists to split immediately from the chauvinists.<sup>27</sup> Instead Chicherin and Bridges Adams concentrated on the centrist ILP, which clung to the ideal of the international solidarity of the working class and denounced the war as a crime forced on the nations by the rulers, the diplomats and the militarists. Links were also forged with the Union of Democratic Control and with the No Conscription Fellowship.<sup>28</sup>

There is no evidence, however, in the Chicherin Papers to suggest contact between Chicherin and the "London Left" of the BSP led by E. C. Fairchild and Theodore Rothstein. Instead, Chicherin built up close contacts with John Maclean and Peter Petroff. It is significant that both Maclean and Bridges Adams were active in the Central Labour College, while both Chicherin and Petroff wrote for Nashe Slovo the internationalist journal published in Paris. Perhaps the most fascinating letter in the Chicherin Papers is one written by Petroff to Chicherin early in 1916. Petroff began by accusing the Central Committee of the BSP/

BSP of being unrepresentative and accusing Fairchild of opportunism. By comparison the Scottish movement was depicted as "clearly Marxist in character" and in close contact with the working class in its educational work and factory meetings: "the public not only hears, but actively supports the internationalists." Petroff was bitterly critical of "Fairchild, Fairchild's yesman Fineberg and their patron ("metsenat") Rothstein. By the way, Rothstein was never connected with the movement. He was only connected with the dirty clique...Rothstein always supported the Hyndman clique against the Marxist trend in Great Britain."<sup>29</sup> By "the movement" Petroff meant the internationalist and truly revolutionary elements in the BSP as personified by Maclean. Petroff's branding of Rothstein as a Hyndmanite was grossly inaccurate, yet the letter provides material evidence of significant divisions among the leading cadres in the BSP.

Thus in the autumn and winter of 1915 the work proceeded of a patient build-up of contacts in the rank and file of the British labour movement. Large scale public meetings were avoided.<sup>30</sup> Instead RPPERC concentrated on branch meetings of the ILP and on gaining the support of trade union branches and active, class conscious workers, such as W. M. Barlow of Birmingham: "...I am sending a hearty handgrip...Yesterday my friend Miss Smith received a booklet of 1d tickets to sell...I took it to work with me to sell to my fellow trade unionists. After selling a few in my department I sent it into another department. There are fourteen Russian inspectors in it (I am working at an ammunition work)..."<sup>31</sup>

Evidence of the care taken by Chicherin and Bridges Adams to cultivate support among the rank and file is provided by a series of/

of letters penned by H. Wynn Cuthbert to Chicherin. Cuthbert described himself as "an organizer and lecturer for Central Labour College" and was Chairman of his local branch of the ILP, "while I am known to Comrade Petroff." At this time he lived in Worthing and worked as a freelance journalist.<sup>32</sup>

Wynn Cuthbert offered to help RPPERC in any way possible and Chicherin undoubtedly asked Bridges Adams how he might be gainfully employed. She answered that "I will propose other work for him."<sup>33</sup> Part of that work included public speaking and Wynn Cuthbert lectured in Worthing and Southampton on Russian liberties.<sup>34</sup> In his determination to understand Russia all the better he asked for, and was given, assistance in learning to read Russian.<sup>34</sup> By April 1917 Wynn Cuthbert's political outlook had become more revolutionary and he was in contact with the SLP, hoping now to write an article for the Socialist, and saying to Chicherin "Now comrade, if there is anything that I can do will you give me my marching orders?"<sup>35</sup> Wynn Cuthbert marched towards revolutionary socialism and the SLP. If this was not at Chicherin's command it was certainly in part due to his inspiration. But it appears that disenchantment set in and by 1925 the life of "this lapsed Jesuit" had turned full circle. Although still reading Plebs and working for the adult education movement, he now lived comfortably in Holywell, Oxford and was churchwarden of St. Cross.<sup>36</sup>

The successful impact made by RPPERC constituted just cause for satisfaction on the part of Chicherin. As early as October 1915 under his regular pseudonym "Ornatsky", he had written to Nashe Slovo with evident pleasure at the Committee's links with the Woolwich workers and of his hopes for "international solidarity."/

solidarity". "For the English working class", he declared, "this struggle (i.e. in Russia<sub>RG</sub>) is its own struggle" and the links forged in Woolwich were "an enormously important step" which would soon be followed by others, on the road to "a mass movement on the basis of international proletarian solidarity." At the open-air meeting held at Bristol a resolution "emphasising the great principle of international working class solidarity" had been passed.<sup>37</sup> It was this attitude towards the war which led to a number of clashes between RPPERC's organizers and sympathisers and the authorities.

The first signs of trouble appeared in Liverpool where a committee in sympathy with the aims of RPPERC had been formed by the Lettish Social Democrat, Bachmann, and several of his compatriots. In October 1915 the Liverpool police raided Bachmann's home and seized all the papers of the committee. Then the committee members were - it was alleged - warned by the police that their propaganda work was exercising a harmful influence on British workers. This must cease, on pain of expulsion from Liverpool.<sup>38</sup> Much in this affair remains to be clarified. Snowden asked questions of the Home Secretary, who only replied that the Liverpool police had dealt with the matter independently of the Home Office. At any rate the Liverpool committee was re-established with Snowden advising Chicherin, "the best thing for the Liverpool people to do would be to form a committee of the Central Society, and certainly not to start another independent or semi-independent body. I see no reason at all why they should not act as a Collecting Society for the Central Fund. Anything other would lead to confusion and waste e."<sup>39</sup>

Shortly after this, the police raided Chicherin's home and the office and lodgings of D. Anitchkine, Secretary of the Russian/



Russian Seamen's Union. Before 1914 Chicherin had assisted the Union.<sup>40</sup> Then the home of Mrs. Bridges Adams was visited by the police, who confiscated copies of Anitchkine's "Open Letter to Trade Unionists" which she had planned to distribute.<sup>41</sup>

There then followed the harassment of Ivan Maisky who had been due to speak to the Southampton branch of the ILP on RPPERC and its cause. Some months before the émigré social-patriot Aladin had lectured there and had not impressed the audience in the Morris Hall: "he was obsessed by the militarist idea and nothing pleased him more than to attack the pacivist (sic<sub>RG</sub>) attitude of the ILP". Chicherin had made careful arrangements with the branch that Maisky would obey regulations when he came from London to Southampton but in the event only a telegram sent by the branch secretary prevented him coming to Southampton, where detectives waited to arrest him.<sup>42</sup> Interestingly, Maisky makes no mention of the episode in his memoirs which underplay his connection with RPPERC.

To add to Chicherin's anxieties, his comrade Petroff was simultaneously attacked in the pages of Justice and arrested by the police in Fife for violation of the residence clauses of the Aliens Restriction Order. Chicherin leaped to Petroff's defence defending his integrity and stating that, "the editor of Justice must be fully aware of the exceedingly difficult position of Russian political refugees and of the dangers to which they are exposed by the present unbounded domination of reaction in all countries including Great Britain."<sup>43</sup> Petroff received a two months sentence, after which he was interned in "The Institute", London; his common-law wife, Irma, was interned at Aylesbury Camp. Until Chicherin's arrest in August 1917, he and Bridges Adams were vigilant/

vigilant in the interests of the Petroffs, on many occasions linking a demand for their release with their other public pronouncements. Also enraged was John Maclean: "We have reached Russian conditions, but the prisons here are ten times worse than the Russian prisons in every respect....The only consolation is that he has shown up the alliance between the Russian and British police....the fairytale of 'British liberty' is quickly losing its believers."<sup>44</sup> Joseph King, M.P. warned Chicherin: "I am afraid that the Police are persecuting you...I do not mind doing anything possible to show you my sympathy and support, if I can so aid you."<sup>45</sup>

How, then, may this period of Chicherin's career be summarised? By early 1916, after nine months of activity and because of the labours of two remarkable publicists, RPPERC had forged links with working-class organizations to a degree not witnessed since the days of the Chartist internationalists, the so-called Fraternal Democrats, who were sympathetic to Polish national aspirations.<sup>46</sup> And, compared to the Polonophiles, RPPERC worked in immeasurably more trying circumstances. But now, Chicherin and Bridges Adams were forced by objective circumstances into a new form of activity, into a campaign to defend the right of asylum for Russians resident in Britain.

It is the linchpin of an earlier historian's analysis of Chicherin's activities in Great Britain that, "By the summer of 1916 he must have realised the futility of his hopes (for the creation of a large-scale internationalist party in the U.K.)<sup>RG</sup> for he then turned his interest away from internal British politics back to the Russian émigré movement."<sup>47</sup> In fact there was no disillusionment on the part of Chicherin. Georgii Vasilyevich and M./

M. Bridges Adams zealously continued their work in the rank and file of the British labour movement. Dr. Debo's argument ignores the changes that took place in Chicherin's freedom of manoeuvre driving into his political work a shift in emphasis, away from the propagandist work of RPPERC to a vigorous defence of the right of asylum. Objective necessity not any sense of "futility" had forced this change of direction on Chicherin. A most complicated episode in his life now began, in the most difficult of circumstances, with the threat of arrest ever-present.

In May 1916 a new universal conscription Bill was introduced to replace the Derby scheme of "attestation" which had failed to produce adequate numbers of men for service on the Western Front. A latter-day Domesday Book, albeit of the card index variety, was then produced to enable operation of the Military Service Act. It has been said that "the most important aspect of conscription was not that it made service compulsory, but that it made exemption legal."<sup>48</sup> But in the prevailing climate of super-patriotism, those pleading exemption from armed service were subjected to violent hostility by the national and local press. The term "conchy" speedily became one of execration. Soon, therefore, attention began to focus on the existence of enclaves of men of military age who stood outwith the provisions of the Military Service Act. These were aliens from Allied countries but in particular the Russian-Jewish immigrant community: "it was estimated in 1916 that twenty-five to thirty-thousand individuals"<sup>49</sup> were Russian Jews who had not taken out British citizenship.

Ivan Maisky has forwarded a conspiracy theory to explain the moves made in 1916 to conscript the Russian Jews. The British Government had acted in concert with "the quick wits in St. Petersburg/

Petersburg...The idea behind this scheme was that if it materialized the majority of the able-bodied émigrés would get sent to the front and this would hamper the anti-tsarist agitation both in London and Paris."<sup>50</sup>

In fact, initially the Government's approach was low-key. The Home Secretary, Herbert Samuel, himself a Jew, attempted to launch a voluntary scheme of enlistment. One participant in the affair of the conscription of Russian Jews has argued that Samuel deliberately took the initiative in the belief that the British people would be impressed by a statesman of Jewish birth being keen for all Jews, Russian as well as British, to fight.<sup>51</sup>

Samuel was undoubtedly influenced by the war-time recrudescence of anti-semitism. At the beginning of the century anti-semitism had sprung up around Whitechapel in the soil of Tariff Reform politics. And, with climatic conditions once more favourable by 1916, hatred of immigrant Jews took its place among the exotic flora of "super-nationalist" emotions. The earlier outbreak of anti-semitism was, in essence, petty-bourgeois: "Displaced or embattled English shopkeepers were Major Evans Gordon's most zealous constituents in his anti-alien battles."<sup>52</sup> In 1916 the same voices were again heard. East London shopkeepers and traders accused alien Jews of taking over the trade and employment of Britons gone to serve "King and Country." These worthies found a Parliamentary spokesman in Sir Henry Dalziel.<sup>53</sup>

Against this background Chicherin's political activities in Britain took new directions as with his loyal aide, Bridges Adams, he launched himself into the work of the Committee of Delegates of Russian Socialist Groups in London (hereafter CODORSGIL<sub>RG</sub>). In 1916 he was forced by events to act on the defensive, /

defensive, all the while working in a climate of extreme hostility, in which his Marxist-internationalist perspectives were to sustain him not only against the British Government but against rival groups in the immigrant community.

When rumours concerning plans to conscript Russian aliens began to circulate, the socialist émigrés who found the scheme objectionable called a protest meeting on 13 March and formed CODORSGIL. Chicherin took the post of secretary.<sup>54</sup> Dr. Debo notes the formation of the Committee and writes of Chicherin having won a delay by the autumn of 1916 on the question of conscription of aliens. He suggests that this was "due to a broader base of support in both the Russian community and the British public."<sup>55</sup>

It is misleading, however, to think that CODORSGIL fought alone. A closer, prismatic view of the conscription question throws more light on Chicherin's life between 1916 and 1918. When the intention to conscript Russian aliens was made public there was an explosion of anger both among British radicals and socialists and the nation-wide community of Russian-born immigrants. In this community (most of whom were Jewish) opposition expressed itself not only in CODORSGIL but also in the Foreign Jews' Protection Committee (hereafter FJPC<sub>RG</sub>) and in the Russian Anti-Conscription League. The issue is further complicated by the emergence of what might be termed "a Zionist alternative" to the Government's original plans masterminded by the Russo-Jewish journalist, Vladimir Jabotinsky. To ignore the activities of these organizations is to emerge with a blurred, imperfect image of the work of Chicherin and his British comrades in the years 1916 and 1917.

In/

In the summer of 1916 Chicherin launched CODORSGIL's attack against Samuel's veiled threat of possible deportation awaiting Jews who did not voluntarily enlist: "It is a breach of trust. The political refugees, the Jewish emigrants and emigrants of other oppressed nationalities have come to this country because of the implicit faith and fullest trust they reposed in the sacredness and unassailability of the right of asylum in Great Britain."<sup>56</sup>

In thus challenging the British Government, Chicherin must have been aware of the dangers involved, for in July 1916 the printers and publishers of the Yiddish newspaper Arbeter Frait (Workers' Friend) were given jail sentences or fines "for printing and publishing 1900 copies of the paper and making statements therein likely to prejudice recruiting."<sup>57</sup> Yet Chicherin did not shrink from stating the internationalist principles on which the tactics of CODORSGIL was based. It had introduced, "a consequent line of principle, based upon the system of views of the international socialist working class faithful to its banner.

The Committee has not asked for the reception of deputations from it by a Cabinet Minister and would have refused to take part in such deputations, but it has opposed to the Government the only force that cannot be crushed, the force of the consequent action based upon principle of the conscious working class."<sup>58</sup>

Here Chicherin was at pains to compare the strategy and tactics of CODORSGIL with the FJPC which was its competitor for the support of Russo-Jewish workers in Britain. The FJPC had been founded in July 1916 to combat the conscription threat. It grew out of bodies such as the Workers' League for Jewish Emancipation, /

Emancipation, which claimed to defend Jewish workers from Jewish capitalism.<sup>59</sup> It rapidly found many supporters in the Jewish labour organizations.<sup>60</sup>

Any account of this complex episode in the history of conscription would be meaningless, however, without analysis of the part played by Jabotinsky, Chaim Weizmann and the Zionists. Jabotinsky has claimed that it was he who rescued the British Government from the ruin of its plans to conscript Russian aliens by putting forward the idea for a Jewish Legion. The inspiration for this idea had been the success of the Zion Mule Corps in the Gallipoli Campaign. By July 1916 Jabotinsky had begun his campaign for a Jewish Legion to serve in the British Army.<sup>61</sup>

Such a strategy of a separate unit of Jewish soldiers fighting both for Allied victory and for Zionist goals drove a wedge into the right-wing and left-wing of Jewish community politics. Many wealthy Jews, mainly of Sephardic origin, had swollen the ranks of the "super patriots",<sup>62</sup> and were hostile to Zionism. Chicherin and CODORSGIL, "the proletarian internationalists", were bitterly hostile to Zionism, as was the FJPC. The latter opposed Jabotinsky's recruiting campaign, which took the form of recruiting meetings in the ghettos along with the distribution of the Yiddish language Our Tribune. As the FJPC Secretary A. Bezalel put it, "our attitude towards the whole question of military service for foreign Jews remains unequivocally that of no compromise."<sup>63</sup>

Yet, when Jabotinsky wrote his memoirs he did not mention the FJPC when he referred to the initial failure of his campaign. Instead, in an attempt to play down the abhorrence felt for conscription by the broad mass of Russian Jews, he vent his spleen on Chicherin with his "yellowish, almost emaciated, rather bilious/

bilious face. A barin's daughter with a historical-philological education would have said of him, 'He is reminiscent of Torquemada; almost mephistopholean.'" It was, claimed Jabotinsky the non-Jew, Chicherin and some thirty "Chicherin boys" who disrupted Zionist meetings.<sup>64</sup>

It is significant, however, that Zionism's Garibaldi and Cavour, Jabotinsky and Weizmann, had the ear of the British Government.<sup>65</sup> Faced with widespread and effective opposition from Russian aliens of military age and their British supporters, the British Government were to gladly seek a solution in the compromise offered by the Zionists.

Affiliated to CODORSGIL were the London Section (sic<sub>RG</sub>) and the London Group (sic<sub>RG</sub>) of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party, as were the London groups of the Social Revolutionaries, the Bund, the Social Democracy of Lettland and the Lithuanian Socialist Federation in the U.K. The Polish Social Democratic Club had joined, while in May 1916 the Jewish Social Democratic Organization in Great Britain had affiliated.<sup>66</sup>

A June meeting had agreed on "the line of struggle without compromise against the violation of the Right of Asylum" with the right extending to all who had fled from the political regime in Russia. The Committee had countered every Government move. When on 24 July the Home Secretary proposed to set up a tribunal system to consider individual claims to "political refugee" status, "The Committee sent to the Press and to public men a strong protest against this attempt of disuniting(sic<sub>RG</sub>) the emigrants. After that it issued a statement proving the impossibility of separating the political emigrants in the narrow sense of the word from the other/



other emigrants..."<sup>67</sup>

The effect of this agitation was claimed by Mrs. Bridges Adams to be considerable: "in spite of the fact that...the high Labour bureaucracy have given no assistance, the movement has nevertheless received considerable support among the rank and file of the trade unionist and Socialist movement." She claimed that soon "a strong committee of Britishers will probably be formed". In fact, the Committee Against the Abrogation of the Right of Asylum that was elected by an English conference seems to have had a shadowy, brief existence.<sup>68</sup>

On 22 August Samuel had announced the postponement of the application of his July plan and the substitution of it by a voluntary recruitment scheme. CODORSGIL did not even permit itself two cheers. Instead on 4 September it published 5000 copies of a pamphlet which urged unceasing vigilance.<sup>69</sup>

At the Trades Union Congress in September Bridges Adams had engaged in the work of distributing the "Right of Asylum" leaflet but two thousand copies had been seized by the Birmingham police. Equally as serious in her view had been the decision of the Standing Orders Committee not to grant CODORSGIL a hearing.<sup>70</sup>

In the meantime an offshoot of CODORSGIL appeared in Glasgow in which John Maclean and a Russo-Jewish shoemaker, Leo Shammes, strove to defend the right of asylum. On 11 October Shammes addressed Glasgow Trades Council, which represented a hundred thousand trade unionists. He stressed that they were political refugees with no civil rights in Britain, pointing out their parlous position: "we have no right to be a conscientious objector, it is join or go back to Russia."<sup>71</sup> Council agreed on

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a resolution of protest to be forwarded to local MPs, the Scottish Secretary of State and the Secretary of the Labour Party. It was decided to sponsor a demonstration on 7 December 1916 on the right of asylum. At a time of increasing war weariness Chicherin and his comrades patiently and effectively built up support among British trade unionists.

By the end of November 1916 it was apparent that the Government's voluntary campaign and a further proposal for a scheme of "work of national importance" had failed, owing to the opposition both of CODORSGIL and the FJPC. On 20 August the Committees of all the Jewish trade unions in London had met and defended the right of asylum in its entirety.<sup>72</sup> The following month CODORSGIL denied the accuracy of a Daily News article which alleged that Jewish Friendly Societies and trade unions were ready to undertake work of national importance.<sup>73</sup> Similarly the FJPC rejected these alternative Government schemes.<sup>74</sup>

But despite such solidarity the anti-conscription organizations were faced with an inauspicious beginning to 1917. In December 1916 Lloyd George became Prime Minister and Samuel was replaced as Home Secretary by Sir George Cave. Cave soon gave notice of his intention to conscript or return Russian aliens.<sup>75</sup> In addition anti-semitism again flared up, with the old cries of "job stealers" again being mouthed in spite of the exclusiveness of the trades followed by the Jewish workmen.<sup>76</sup>

Did it now appear to Chicherin that he was fighting a losing battle? Dr. Debo has argued that Chicherin did not celebrate the New Year: "Imperialism was victorious in Chicherin's eyes because it had succeeded in splitting the forces of the proletariat, in winning the 'labour bureaucracies' to its side and in using them to/

to fight its battles among the lower classes."<sup>77</sup> Yet a CODORSGIL leaflet of January 1917 which set the work of the Committee in its historical perspective appeared to yield not an inch. The work of the Zimmerwald and Kienthal socialists had, "laid the foundations of a new international...one of the principal expressions of the same internationalist movement in Britain we see in those among the objectors to military service who in the name of proletarian ideals...are beginning a life and death fight against militarism and thereby against capitalism itself."<sup>78</sup>

At the end of February 1917, the British and Russian governments came to an agreement on the future of the Russian aliens resident in Britain on the basis of "the principle that the same treatment should be given to the subjects of both nations, namely, that men of military age should be given the choice either of joining the military forces of the country in which they are resident or returning to their own country for military service."<sup>79</sup> Political refugees were not to be given different treatment.

The atmosphere of crisis in which the anti-conscriptionist forces now operated was encapsulated in a pamphlet distributed by the Russian Anti-Conscription League: "A great, fatal historical turning point has now been reached, meaning inauguration of a period of gloomy crushing tyranny, as in the darkest ages of the past...in this sinister hour we are to be the object of the same blow that falls upon the working class of the land." The League called for class unity of political refugees with the advanced class-conscious workers of Britain, "even if they were for the moment a minority amidst the great number of the unconscious."<sup>80</sup>

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The FJPC had responded to the news of the February agreement in a more compromising spirit. Thus its Liverpool branch unanimously supported the view of Joseph King, MP., that it was the duty of all men resident in Britain, aliens-included, to bear a part in National Service even if the proposal to deport Russian refugees back to Russia was wasteful and needless.<sup>81</sup>

But what of the response of Chicherin to this dire news? "The Russian Refugee question in Britain is entering its final and most perilous phase. It is clear that in the nearest future the last Act is to be played of the Drama representing the bitter struggle...The day of the decisive battle is near."<sup>82</sup> In this manner began a summary by Chicherin of "the doings of the last year". He then proceeded to compare the histories of CODORSGIL and the FJPC, raking the latter with a withering fire. Compared with the internationalism of the socialists of CODORSGIL, the Russian Anti-Conscription League and the Jewish Social Democratic Organization, the FJPC had followed a "chauvinist 'All Israel' policy" which transformed the whole question into one of purely Jewish dimensions, defending "the interests of the Jewish refugees alone" as opposed to the Socialists' goal of uniting together all refugees from Russia.

"The Socialists understood that reaction can be beaten only by great social forces and addressed themselves in consequence in the first place to the British workers and democratic elements and endeavoured....to promote in the country an organized movement against the Government proposals," whereas with regard to the FJPC, "as a red thread through its whole activity there goes distrust to the forces and to the goodwill of the British workers."/

workers." The FJPC's actions had been directed "not against but to the Government" and its main activity had been "back door diplomacy".<sup>83</sup>

In the year of CODORSGIL's existence, Chicherin had immersed himself in the organization, his personality submerged in its activities. In appearance we lose sight of Georgii Vasilyevich in this period, in essence his Marxism, his energy and polemical talents permeate the work of the Committee of Delegates. As ever, he was loyally supported by Mrs. Bridges Adams who channelled CODORSGIL's pronouncements into the movement of organized labour in Great Britain. But in the spring of 1917, objective conditions once more dramatically altered and the activities of the two comrades entered a new phase occasioned by news of the outbreak of revolution in Russia.

As early as 26 March 1917 Chicherin wrote to the British contacts established by him in his thirty months of political work enclosing a draft resolution of perspectives on the Revolution. Chicherin's letter was also concerned that in the clamour with which Russian aliens now sought to return to their native land the principle of "Right of Asylum" should not be forgotten. The response must have been encouraging.<sup>84</sup> Chicherin maintained the momentum with a pamphlet stressing the international significance of the February Revolution: "Russian Labour has realised the fundamental unity of the international proletariat and boldly took the first step towards the settlement of the War on the basis of a peace of peoples..."<sup>85</sup> In this fresh dawn of his hopes, Chicherin also engaged in the practical work of the Committee of Delegates to Assist Repatriation/

Repatriation (hereafter CODTAR<sub>RG</sub>), acting as its secretary.

The pressure was now on the British Government. On one flank the anti-semitic chorus was again in full throat<sup>86</sup>, on the other CODTAR and the FJPC demanded repatriation of adult males and their families to the Russian republic.<sup>87</sup> But soon the British authorities regained the initiative. In large measure this was due to the activities of Jabotinsky who successfully persuaded them to form a "Jewish Legion". In April 1917 his plan received the blessing of Lord Derby at the War Office. This offered the Government a way out of the embarrassment caused by the repatriation demands of CODTAR and the FJPC. In the event of any agreement being signed by the British and Russian governments over military service, a Jewish Legion could act as an alternative to a formula of "be conscripted or be deported." And, it highlighted nationalistic appeal as opposed to the internationalism of the socialists.<sup>88</sup>

By the end of April it became apparent that the government's solution was to proceed along these lines<sup>89</sup> and by midsummer a Bill to conscript Russian aliens was being read in Parliament. Joseph King protested: "why he chiefly objected to the Bill was that it was based upon a very discreditable and... a growing feeling of anti-Semitic intolerance in this land."<sup>90</sup> On 20 July 1917 the British Press published details of the Convention made under the Military Service (Convention with Allied States) Act of 1917. Russian citizens in Britain were to be given the choice of either returning to Russia to take part in the fighting there or to be mobilised into the British army.<sup>91</sup> The corollary soon followed when the first details of the Jewish corps were released.<sup>92</sup>

Jabotinsky/

Jabotinsky had effected a coup, outflanking both the Anglo-Jewish community leaders and the anti-conscriptionist forces generalled by Chicherin and Bezalel. The former group could only gain minor concessions from the War Office such as the dropping of the title of "Jewish Legion" for the new corps. Chicherin's Marxist allies of the Anti-Conscription League recorded their hostility to the Convention in a striking image: "It is a further step towards the militarisation of the world. It gives power to Government, not only to conscript its own subjects, but the subjects of other countries too. It reduces men to the level of medieval serfs, who could be loaned as mercenaries from one feudal lord to another."<sup>93</sup>

CODORSGIL determined on no surrender: "Many of them (i.e. international socialists<sub>RG</sub>) have gone and will go to Russia in order to take part in the struggle against world-wide reaction... Those amongst them who will remain in Britain...have decided to refuse military service here and they call upon others to join in the same refusal...They know the consequences of their refusal."<sup>94</sup>

In making such a stand Chicherin surely knew that the consequences for him must be arrest and probably deportation. The reasons for the arrest of Chicherin in the following month are complex and not altogether clear. Dr. Debo suggests that the British Government acted on the advice of Constantin Nabokov, Chargé d' Affaires at the Russian Embassy.<sup>95</sup> It seems probable that a specific factor in the Government's growing concern was its hopes for the success of the Jewish corps as a way out of the conscription impasse. Jabotinsky has described the counter-agitation which met his renewed recruiting campaign. He relates a conversation on this subject with a British recruiting officer who/

who allegedly stated, "...We don't like this Mr. Chicherin, who is so keen on looking after the Jewish people." It is intriguing that Jabotinsky also refers to his "staunch friend...Constantine Nabokov."<sup>96</sup> It is legitimate to speculate that Jabotinsky, with his seething hatred for Chicherin, may have put pressure on Nabokov to deal with the menace of their mutual antagonist.

In fact it was Bezalel who was first arrested. On 22 July the sixty-seven organizations affiliated to the FJPC had met in conference. From it emerged that, "their hostility to the idea of the conscription of Russians in England was of such a nature as to foreshadow long and determined opposition to any attempt on the part of the English Government to put the Convention into practice. Their main desire is to return to Russia with their families."<sup>97</sup> There was nothing of the proletarian internationalism of Chicherin and his comrades in such a stance, but the Times condemned the FJPC as "a body which does not excite any enthusiasm among Jewish people other than the shirkers."<sup>98</sup> On 27 July Bezalel and another FJPC official were arrested and charged with "'conspiring to defeat the Military Services Act as applied to aliens' under Paragraphs 51 and 55 of the Defence of the Realm Act."<sup>99</sup>

It was not long before Chicherin was arrested. He insisted that the real reason for his arrest was his activity in spotting Tsarist spies in England and tracing their connection with Scotland Yard. On 10 August the police warned him of his impending arrest and told him to finish his work with CODTAR. A few days later Chicherin was in Brixton Jail, Prisoner 6027.<sup>100</sup>

But in fact the defensive actions of the anti-conscriptionist forces were largely successful. Recruiting for the Jewish corps proceeded slowly; it took some four months to raise a battalion by/



by which time Russia was almost out of the war, "most of the Russian Jews, for whom the scheme had been primarily designed, succeeded, after all in escaping military service."<sup>101</sup> The October Revolution robbed the Convention of its meaning, and on 13 February 1918 the Government announced that it had been decided in present circumstances, to cease recruiting Russian subjects.<sup>102</sup> As one writer has said of the Convention, "Only one area of the country and one section of the Russian immigrant population was seriously affected by it." The "Lanarkshire Lithuanians" - Catholic immigrants working in the industrial forge of Central Scotland - proved much more vulnerable than the Russian Jews.<sup>103</sup>

The "CODORSGIL period" of Chicherin's activities may be regarded as a hitherto obscure chapter in the history of conscientious objection to military service in the United Kingdom. Pacifists had felt a strong bond with the Russian refugees: "That we should...be faced with the proposal to deport or conscript Russian refugees...is a damning proof of the shallowness of the foundations on which some of our most treasured national traditions were based..."<sup>104</sup> while if one historian is to be believed, "one of the organisers of a No-Conscription Fellowship branch among these exiled revolutionaries was George Tchitcherine..."<sup>105</sup> Thus in a sense Chicherin and his helpers, and the FJPC were among the most successful conscientious objectors of the Great War.

Prisoner 6027 was now denied an active role in fuelling the revolutionary cause. The pen of the "graphomaniac" had been snatched from him - a vexation for the historian of Chicherin's intellectual odyssey from Populism to Bolshevism. We are denied his initial response to the news of "the Great October".

Dr./

Dr. Debo has dealt very fully with the events following Chicherin's arrest, when he was appointed Russian ambassador by Trotsky as a tactic to ensure his release.<sup>106</sup> The post of secretary of CODORSGIL now passed to Stefan Wolff,<sup>107</sup> while Mrs. Bridges Adams bombarded the labour press with demands for his release. She was bitterly critical of "the inaction of the leadership."<sup>108</sup> In fact, the centre of gravity in the movement on behalf of Chicherin, the Petroffs and other interned Russians was now Glasgow, where John Maclean, Leo Shammes and the Russian Political Refugees Defence Committee were very active. Meetings were held to explain their cause and the Defence Committee won the support of the Glasgow Trades Council.<sup>109</sup> The Foreign Office received protests from over twenty Scottish trade union branches and from BSP branches.<sup>110</sup>

On 18 September Chicherin appeared before the Advisory Committee<sup>111</sup> and the judges interned him. One of them "described him as a man of quite remarkable ability - during a short stay in this country he had organized no less than 8 revolutionary societies. He would be a danger at large."<sup>112</sup> By mid-December the Foreign Office were convinced that "Tchitcherine and Petroff should leave as soon as passages can be provided...To keep them interned only gives Lenin an excuse for interning our fellow-subjects in Russia."<sup>113</sup>

And so on 3 January 1918 Chicherin was released. He spoke with Mrs. Bridges Adams one last time. A cluster of comrades sang the "Internationale" as the train left King's Cross for the first stage of his journey back to Russia. But did Georgii Vasilyevich return a Bolshevik? R. K. Debo opines that, "Having begun World War I as a Menshevik, Chicherin left England a/  
a/

a Bolshevik, lacking only a party card to make it official."<sup>113</sup>

Can we be so sanguine? Was it revolutionary expediency or the simple truth on the part of Chicherin which occasioned the following statement? "Mr. King spoke to me about these two men and read me a letter from Tchicherine in which he professed himself to be a follower neither of Lenin nor of Trotsky."<sup>114</sup>

In his years of exile in Great Britain Chicherin had continued a long tradition of fraternal relations between political refugees from Tsarism and the radicals and socialists among their hosts. Between 1914/18 Georgii Vasilyevich raised the propagandist work of Russian political émigrés to a qualitatively new level. He had linked the causes of the common people of Britain and Russia in a way never seen before. He had conducted this work at an especially critical juncture in the history of the emigration. He campaigned with courage at a time when other revolutionary moles grubbed well below the surface or above earth had resort to the aesopian tradition of pen-names.

Given that neither was a theoretician and there was no British equivalent of the Freikorps to provide a gory ending, Chicherin and Bridges Adams emerge as Britain's Liebknecht and Luxemburg. But who was the senior in the partnership? Chicherin's importance in the history of international relations in the 1920's perhaps creates an optical illusion. But it must be remembered that M. Bridges Adams was already a convinced international socialist when she met Chicherin. She was a firm believer, along with Maclean, in the need to construct an alternative revolutionary leadership out of the proletarian rank and file in opposition to the reformist leaders of the class. Above all, with her long years of work in the labour movement she provided/

provided Chicherin with an abundance of contacts. Her importance in "the making of a Bolshevik" is clearly of significance and provides an ironic refutation of the facile "Kendall thesis" of the "Russian influence on British Marxist social democracy."<sup>115</sup>

While Chicherin became a Bolshevik, M. Bridges Adams - like Maclean, remained outwith the Communist Party. The paths of the two old comrades diverged. A letter of 1921 survives that indicates a rift - an appeal by Bridges Adams falls on stony soil - Chicherin's reply is granitic: "I have received a letter from you by post and some letters by courier<sub>(sicRG)</sub>. You speak of an 'impudent' letter but you do not send its copy, so I can't say anything about it. It was a collective official decision to propose to you personal sustenance (sic<sub>RG</sub>) of living but taking as granted that you cease to put forward your so-called claim. We can never recognise such transformation of proletarian principle into money claims. Help to feminine movement or to student movement is a thing to be considered in itself, not on ground of a bill."<sup>116</sup>

Footnotes to Chapter Seven

- 1 Richard K. Debo, "The Making of a Bolshevik: Georgii Chicherin in England 1914 - 1918" Slavic Review 25(1966), pp. 651/62 provides a lucid introduction.
- 2 S. V. Tyutyukin "Stranitsa biografii G. V. Chicherina (1914-1917gg), Istoricheskie Zapiski, no. 79 (Moscow 1966), pp. 243/58; S. Zarnitsky u A. Sergeyev Chicherin (Moscow 1966), pp. 44/58; I. Gorokhov, L. Zamyatin u I. Zemskoy G. V. Chicherin - Diplomat Leninskoy shkoly (Moscow 1973), pp. 33-68.
- 3 These papers, The Bridges Adams and Chicherin Papers (hereafter Chicherin Papers<sub>RG</sub>) are kept at present at St. Antony's College, Oxford. The writer sincerely thanks Mr. Nicholas Bridges-Adams, to whom they will revert, for the opportunity to read them.
- 4 Baron Alexander Meyendorff "My Cousin, Foreign Commissar George Chicherin" (edited and annotated by Igor Vinogradov) Russian Review 30, 1971, pp. 173/8.
- 5 Henri Guilbeaux Du Kremlin au Cherche Midi (Paris 1933) pp. 215/6.
- 6 Peter Petroff "George Chicherin " Labour (London 1936), p. 306.
- 7 Ivan Maisky Journey... op. cit., p. 74.
- 8 Constantin Nabokoff The Ordeal of a Diplomat (London 1921) p. 106.
- 9 I. Gorokhov et al, op cit., pp. 33/50.
- 10 Maisky op. cit., p. 75.

- 11 Brian Simon op. cit., p. 152, 235, 283, 324; John Saville "Mary Jane Bridges Adams (1855-1939)" in Joyce M. Bellamy and John Saville Dictionary of Labour Biography, Volume 6 (London 1982) pp. 1/7.
- 12 Walter Kendall op. cit., p. 89.
- 13 The solidarity of Maclean with Bridges Adams is attested by many references in the files of the Cotton Factory Times and Forward. For example Maclean spoke of "my revered friend" Cotton Factory Times 9 Nov. 1917.
- 14 S. V. Tyutyukin, op. cit., pp. 246/7.
- 15 I. Gorokhov et al, op. cit., p. 53.
- 16 G. V. Chicherin - Article on RPPERC in the Journal of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, reprinted in Cotton Factory Times 29 Oct. 1915.
- 17 The appeal appeared for example in Justice 24 June 1915 and the Labour Leader - 15 Jul. 1915.
- 18 G. V. Chicherin to W. T. Goode, 3 Aug. 1915 - Stow Hill Papers, DS/1/Good/2, in House of Lords Record Office. The late Dr. Barry Hollingsworth supplied the writer with this reference.
- 19 Maisky op. cit., p. 75.
- 20 M. Bridges Adams - letter to the Cotton Factory Times 7 Jan. 1916. See also Alexandra Kollontai to M. Bridges Adams, 18 Aug. 1925: "You were always so good and kind to me. You were the real revolutionary comrade at the time when many did not venture to know us..." (Chicherin Papers - "Letters to M. Bridges Adams" File).
- 21 John Saville, loc. cit., p. 1.

- 22 J. D. Lawrence to G. V. Chicherin, 5 Sep. 1915 (Chicherin Papers - "Correspondence With Individuals" File). Mr. Barefoot was the Trades Council secretary.
- 23 Cotton Factory Times, Yorkshire Factory Times - refer issues of July, Aug. and Sept. 1915. The editor of the Cotton Factory Times was the international socialist, A. W. Humphrey.
- 24 P. Snowden to G. V. Chicherin, 7 Dec. 1915 (Chicherin Papers - "Correspondence with Individuals" File).
- 25 RDPERC Financial Reports: (i) for the time ending 15 Aug. 1915 (ii) from 15 Aug to 30 Nov. (iii) from 1 Dec. 1915 to 29 Feb. 1916. In this period, receipts totalled £282: 9: 8. (Chicherin Papers - RDPERC Reports).
- 26 I. Naitsky op. cit., p. 75.
- 27 V. I. Lenin Split or Decay (written between Feb./Apr. 1916 but not published until 1931) - Works Vol. 22 (Moscow 1964).
- 28 Thus Joseph King, M.P., a U.D.C. member spoke on behalf of RDPERC in the House (see below fn. 45). Snowden was also on the Executive of the UDC.
- 29 P. Petroff to G. V. Chicherin, letter post-marked 24 Jan. 1916 (Chicherin Papers - Letters in Russian File).
- 30 With the exception of an open-air meeting held at Bristol where the TUC was in session. But the Standing Orders Committee refused Mrs. Bridges Adams permission to distribute to the delegates reprints of articles written by Chicherin (Yorkshire Factory Times 16 Sept. 1915).
- 31 W. H. Barlow to G. V. Chicherin, letter received 21 Jan. 1916 (Chicherin Papers Correspondence With Individuals File).

- 32 H. Wynn Cuthbert to G. V. Chicherin, 9 Nov. 1915  
(Chicherin Papers - "Correspondence With Individuals" File).
- 33 M. Bridges Adams to G. V. Chicherin, no date, ibid..
- 34 H. Wynn Cuthbert to G. V. Chicherin 29 Jan. 1916, 7 Apr.  
1917; Cuthbert to I. Maisky 8 Jan. 1916, (ibid.)
- 35 H. Wynn Cuthbert to G. V. Chicherin 7 Apr. 1917 ibid..
- 36 A. J. P. Taylor wrote of Wynn Cuthbert in his review of W.  
Kendall, op. cit., (The Observer Mar. 1969) and repeated the  
anecdote in A Personal History (London 1983), p. 54. The  
writer is also grateful to A. J. P. Taylor, for amplifying  
this information in a letter of 12 July, 1983.
- 37 Nashe Slovo (Paris), 8 Oct. 1915, p. 2.
- 38 Bridges Adams wrote of the affair in the Labour Leader  
28 Oct, 4, 11, Nov. 1915. See also Justice 28 Oct. 1915  
and Cotton Factory Times 5 Nov. 1915.
- 39 P. Snowden to G. V. Chicherin, 19 Nov. 1915 (Chicherin  
Papers, "Correspondence With Individuals" File).
- 40 I. Gorokhov et al, op. cit., p. 47.
- 41 The raid was described by M. Bridges Adams in Cotton Factory  
Times 7 Jan. 1916 whose editor acceded to her request that he  
publish the text of the "Open Letter...".
- 42 F. Perriman to G. V. Chicherin 25 Sept, 20 Nov, 1 Dec,  
5 Dec. 1915, 18 Jan, 1916 (Chicherin Papers, "Correspondence  
With Individuals" File).
- 43 Anon., "Who and What Is Peter Petroff?" Justice 23 Dec.  
1915; letter from Chicherin ibid., 6 Jan. 1916.
- 44 John Maclean to G. V. Chicherin, letter received 6 Jan 1916  
(Chicherin Papers "Correspondence with Individuals" File).  
The papers contain several letters dealing with the plight of  
the Petroffs.



- 45 J. King to G. V. Chicherin, 13 Feb. 1916 (Chicherin Papers  
"Correspondence With Individuals" File).
- 46 See above, Introduction.
- 47 R. K. Debo, loc. cit., p. 655.
- 48 John Rae Conscience and Politics - The British Government  
and the Conscientious Objectors to Military Service 1916-1919  
(London 1970) p. 66.
- 49 Colin Holmes, op. cit., p. 126.
- 50 I. Maisky, op. cit., p. 76.
- 51 Vladimir Zhabotinskii, Slovo o polku. Istoriya yevreyskogo  
legiona (Paris 1928) p. 62. (The book later appeared in  
translation, V. Jabotinsky, History of the Jewish Legion  
(New York 1945)).
- 52 Lloyd P. Gartner, The Jewish Immigrant in England 1870-1914  
(London 1960) p. 62.
- 53 Dalziel's career is outlined by R. C. K. Ensor in Dictionary  
of National Biography 1931- 1940 (Oxford 1949) p. 209.
- 54 Pamphlet of 16 Sept. 1916 published by CODORSGIL reviewing  
six months of activity. The full range of pamphlets are held  
in the British Museum.
- 55 R. K. Debo, loc. cit., p. 656.
- 56 "An Appeal to Public Opinion" p. 30 (CODORSGIL Jul. 1916;  
4000 copies printed).
- 57 Jewish Chronicle 4 Aug. 1916.
- 58 "Brief Summary of the Activities of the Committee of  
Delegates..." (CODORSGIL 16 Sept. 1916).
- 59 Jewish Chronicle 4 Aug. 1916.
- 60 Colin Holmes, op. cit., pp. 128/9 provides an outline account  
of the FJPC and official attitudes to it.

- 61 V. Zhabotinskii Slovo... op. cit., p. 70; see also Times, 15 Jul. 1916.
- 62 Thus the columns of the Jewish World contained lengthy obituaries of "the fallen" - Jewish casualties in the armed services.
- 63 Letter in Jewish Chronicle, 22 Sep. 1916; see also issues of 1 Sep. and 13 Oct. 1916.
- 64 V. Zhabotinskii, Slovo... op. cit., p. 54.
- 65 Chaim Weizmann, Trial and Error (London 1949) Chas. 15/18; David Ayerst, The Guardian, Biography of a Newspaper (London 1971) pp. 382/6; Trevor Wilson, The Political Diaries of C. P. Scott (London 1970) pp. 255/8 and pp. 271/2.
- 66 "Brief Summary..." loc. cit., (CODORSGIL 16 Sept. 1916).
- 67 Ibid.
- 68 Cotton Factory Times, 6 Oct. 1916.
- 69 "The Right of Asylum" (CODORSGIL 4 Sep. 1916).
- 70 Cotton Factory Times, 22 Sept. 1916.
- 71 Glasgow Trades Council Minutes (kept at the Mitchell Library, Glasgow), 11 Oct. 1916.
- 72 "Copy of Letter Sent to the Home Secretary" (CODORSGIL, no date but with British Museum date stamp 7 Nov. 1916).
- 73 "Comment of CODORSGIL on Lies of the Yellow Press" (CODORSGIL 17 Sep. 1916).
- 74 Jewish Chronicle, 27 Oct. 1916.
- 75 Ibid., 26 Jan. 1917.
- 76 The Call, 30 Nov, 7 Dec. 1916; Jewish Chronicle, 22 Dec. 1916.
- 77 R. K. Debo, loc. cit., p. 657.
- 78 CODORSGIL leaflet - untitled - dated Jan. 1917.

79 Times, 28 Feb. 1917.

80 Pamphlet pubd. by Russian Anti-Conscription League, 8 Mar. 1917, in English and in Yiddish, found in the British Museum's collection of CODORSGIL material. The League was affiliated to CODORSGIL. Its publications were "international Marxist" in language and perspectives yet its British spokesman C. G. Ammon was in later life no Marxist. He was created 1st Baron of Camberwell in 1944, having been Labour MP for North Camberwell 1922/31 and 1935/44. Ammon was a past President of the Band of Hope and a Methodist local preacher ( Who Was Who 1951/60 (London 1961)). But his entry in this roll-call of the great and prestigious said nothing of his life between 1914/18. However, between 1914/18 he was Parliamentary Secretary of the No Conscription Fellowship (David Boulton, Objection Overruled (London 1967) p. 175). Ammon participated in the Leeds Conference of 1917 on behalf of the BSP, having been one of those convening this assembly. ( Cotton Factory Times, 18 May, 8 June 1917). Ammon proposed the conference resolution on civil liberties (ed. and into. by Ken Coates "What Happened At Leeds..." in Archives in Trade Union History and Theory Series I (iv), (Leeds n.d.), p. 9). On the Leeds Conference see below, Chapter 8.

81 Jewish Chronicle, 16 Mar. 1917.

82 "To All Jewish Trade Unions and Workers Organizations" (CODORSGIL pamphlet in English and in Yiddish, no date, but with British Museum receipt stamp of 15 Mar. 1917).

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- 83 Ibid., The Pamphlet makes clear the error of Norman Davies who has spoken of the FJPC Secretary, Bezalel, as "one of Chicherin's two Jewish lieutenants." Refer, Norman Davies, "The Poles in Great Britain, 1914/9", Slavonic and East European Review, 50, 1972, p. 67.
- 84 G. V. Chicherin, letter of appeal, 26 Mar. 1917 (Chicherin Papers, "Correspondence With British Organizations" File). The circular letter and the rich trawl of replies to it are dealt with below in Chapter 8).
- 85 "Statement of the Russian Socialist Groups in London" (CODORSGIL 14 Apr. 1917).
- 86 On 26 March 1917 a deputation of representatives from East London Borough Councils, Tribunals and L.C.C. members had lobbied London MP's; once more the "job stealer" cry was raised - Jewish Chronicle 6 Apr. 1917.
- 87 C. Nabokoff, op. cit., p. 100.
- 88 V. Jabotinsky, History... op. cit., pp. E3/4.
- 89 Jewish Chronicle 27 April, 11 May, 1917.
- 90 Ibid., 15 Jun. 1917; Colin Holmes, op. cit., pp. 130/8 relates the outburst of anti-semitic unrest in Leeds and East London at this time.
- 91 Times, 20 July; 28 July 1917 - for the full text of the Convention.
- 92 Jewish Chronicle, 27 July 1917.
- 93 Leaflet, undated pub. by Russian Anti-Conscription League found in the Chicherin Papers. It was clearly a response to the Convention.
- 94 "Compulsion for Aliens" (CODORSGIL 22 July 1917) - Leaflet found in the Chicherin Papers.

- 95 R. K. Debo, loc. cit., p. 659.
- 96 V. Zhabotinskii, 'Slovo...' op. cit., p. 93.
- 97 Jewish Chronicle, 27 July 1917.
- 98 Times, 28 July 1917.
- 99 Jewish Chronicle, 3 Aug. 1917. On the subsequent history of the FJPC see Jewish Chronicle, 10 Aug. and 24 Aug. 1917.
- 100 John Maclean wrote at length of the arrest of Chicherin in Forward, 6 Oct. 1917.
- 101 Leonard Stein, 'The Balfour Declaration' (London 1961) p. 493.
- 102 Times, 14 Feb. 1918.
- 103 Murdoch Rodgers "The Anglo-Russian Military Convention and the Lithuanian Immigrant Community in Lanarkshire, Scotland, 1914-20" Immigrants and Minorities, 1 March 1982 p. 61.
- 104 Ploughshare - A Quaker Organ of Socialist Reconstruction (Dec. 1916) - anonymous article.
- 105 David Boulton, op. cit., p. 95.
- 106 R. K. Debo, loc. cit., pp. 659/62.
- 107 Justice, 4 Oct. 1917.
- 108 Cotton Factory Times, 26 Oct. 1917.
- 109 Ibid., 9 Nov. 1917; Glasgow Trades Council Minutes 28 Nov, 19 Dec. 1917.
- 110 Foreign Office Papers (Public Records Office), FO 371 Vol. 3016 entry 205655/1917.
- 111 Cotton Factory Times, 28 Sep. 1917.
- 112 FO 371 Vol. 3019 entry 238232 17 Dec. 1917.
- 113 R. K. Debo, loc. cit., p. 662.
- 114 FO 371 Vol. 3019 entry 233595 10 Dec. 1917.
- 115 W. Kendall, op. cit., p. 77.
- 116 G. V. Chicherin to M. Bridges Adams, 24 Jun 1921 (Chicherin Papers "M. Bridges Adams" file).

Appendix to Chapters Six and Seven

"The British Labour Movement 1914 - 1917".

The time had irrevocably passed when socialist parties were able to carry forward their work among the masses in comparatively legal, peaceful circumstances. There had begun an epoch of social upheavals, massive economic and political strikes, revolutions and military conflict. "There is placed before the proletariat of Western Europe - inexorably and inevitably - the question of the struggle for power, the overthrow of the bourgeois state by the socialist revolution."<sup>1</sup> So wrote the editors of Kommunist in May 1915; in their judgement the war would only intensify the crisis.

Certainly in Great Britain the four year period before August 1914 had seen a wave of mass strikes among miners, seamen, railwaymen, engineers and textile workers. The Miners' Federation, National Union of Railwaymen and Transport Workers Federation formed "the Triple Alliance". In the summer of 1914 further trouble loomed, to the alarm of "the Conciliator-in-Chief",<sup>2</sup> Lloyd George. But the sudden onset of the war emergency enabled the trade union leadership to postpone "for the duration" consideration of the employment of the General Strike weapon in the collective bargaining process. While many historians of the labour movement make cautious prognostications on the significance of this period of "the great unrest", yet it is evident that in their confident use of the strike weapon, working people had shown an awareness of the simple truth of the old union slogan "In Unity is Strength".

But from August 1914, reformist and revolutionary socialist leaders/

leaders who wished to harness this mighty energy and transform it into political forms found objective reality qualitatively altered. In what manner did war force socialists to recognise that perspectives had been so drastically changed? The aphorism of the international socialists and translators, Eden and Cedar Paul is stimulating: "War which necessitates the extremity of iron discipline imposed from without and the sedulous cultivation of the emotion of 'patriotism', is the polar opposite of Socialism, whose bases are self-discipline, resistance to 'irrational authority', and the assertion of a reasoned spirit of internationalism."<sup>3</sup> War would thus prove the sternest test of the depth and consistency of the varied confessions of faith professed by socialists. Were such tenets genuinely held? Had they entered the very marrow of their being? Would theory truly inform practice? Would the word become flesh?

The Labour Party, ILP and BSP had each affiliated to the Second International. At the Congresses of 1907 and 1912 members had bound themselves to the immediate use of the general strike against war. But in August the International had collapsed: "It fell, the first victim of the world war," and there ended "a distinctive phase in Socialist history" - the apostolic period of preaching and propagation which would precede the assumption of political power.<sup>4</sup>

The International had functioned only as a loose federation of autonomous and nationally organized parties and had lacked any power of sanction over wayward members. Its leading power had been the German Social Democracy but on 4 August the SPD had voted in the Reichstag for war credits and on this date the International had thus gone to pieces, the collective security of the/

the general strike against war had been exposed as a myth.

The apostasy of Kautsky and his comrades afforded Britain's Labour Party a fig leaf with which to conceal their own reneging from the Stuttgart and Basle resolutions. The initial opposition of the Labour Party to the war disappeared as rapidly as April snow from a dyke. The Party had supported demonstrations against war on Sunday 2 August and its Executive declared that the War resulted from "Foreign Ministries pursuing diplomatic policies for the purpose of maintaining a balance of power." But then, swayed by Grey's speech to the House of 4 August in which he introduced the Belgian factor, the Parliamentary Labour Party had voted for war credits: "It had inherited the anti-militaristic attitudes of the 19th Century Radicals who were its real intellectual ancestors...sections of it had also absorbed something of the Marxist notion that the working classes would be...an obstacle to any conflict which might be unleashed by their rulers. But these attitudes ran alongside a deeper vein of old-fashioned patriotism; they were easily overwhelmed by the wave of abhorrence...let loose...when the Germans invaded Belgium."<sup>5</sup>

MacDonald resigned as Party Chairman, to be replaced by the avuncular Arthur Henderson who was successful in preventing the Party from expelling any militant tendencies who resisted the war. In May 1915 Henderson entered the Coalition Cabinet and in December 1916 was promoted by the new Premier, Lloyd George, to the War Cabinet, remaining there until the "doormat incident" of the following year. Henderson and his other ministerial colleagues drawn from the ranks of Labour soon found themselves under fire from forces to the left of the Labour Party as they collaborated in the work of restricting wage agreements and in the dilution of labour./



labour.

Indeed it rapidly became apparent that large numbers of workers were unwilling to allow themselves to be hitched to the war chariot at the command of a handful of Parliamentarians and salaried union bureaucrats. There was only a brief truce before the re-emergence of industrial disputes. In many industries vital to the war effort, such as engineering and armaments, powerful rank-and-file organizations sprang up. These shop-floor movements were especially strong in South Wales, Sheffield and on Clydeside. In part their momentum stemmed from the anger of the labour force at the signing-away of union rights by the official union leadership in the 1915 Treasury Agreements.

The best-known episodes in the shop stewards' movement are those which occurred on Clydeside between 1915 and 1919. The history of the Clyde Workers' Committee (C.W.C.) has provided the opportunity for two generations of memoirists and historians to depict Clydeside in wartime in crimson hues.<sup>6</sup> The tonal value of other landscapes has, however, been more subdued.<sup>7</sup> These studies portray the unrest of the West of Scotland working class as a key episode in an epoch of working class history, that of "the rank-and-file movement, 1900-1926". The movement was especially strong in the engineering industry and came to a head in the Great War when, in especially favourable circumstances of full employment, there was the power to organize rebellion.

But by comparison of the movement in Sheffield and Glasgow, J. S. Hinton shows that the C.W.C. was reluctant to involve itself in the leadership of other trades, concentrating narrowly on the interests of the skilled engineers in the arms firms. It was a fairly straightforward matter for Lloyd George, employing  
a/

a subtle policy of mailed fist and soft paw, to smash the C.W.C. in 1916. Only late in the war did the C.W.C. revive to penetrate the shipbuilding sector and only in January 1918 did it become politicised. Thus, the history of rank-and-file organizations such as the C.W.C. "is to be found less in its political aspect than in its permanent...contribution to solving the problems posed for trade unionism by the 'second industrial revolution' of the engineering industry."<sup>8</sup> In sum, at the end of the war there existed a powerful shop stewards' movement of great militancy but with only a confused political understanding.

Nonetheless, the emergence of a vigorous shop-floor organization among leading layers of the British proletariat early in wartime impressed and encouraged not only British-born revolutionaries. The Anglo-Russian Marxist, Theodore Rothstein, was also excited. He noted how, after only a few months, the strike wave had re appeared in its pre-war form "renouncing its previous worship of legalism and juridicial scraps of paper."<sup>9</sup>

Like the Bolsheviks, the ILP had not become infected by the war-fever virus. In Rothstein's opinion this was owing to the opportunism of the Party leadership rather than to any conversion to any Marxist-Leninist interpretation of the war. The ILP leadership had mistaken the mood of their ideological bedfellows, the liberals and radicals, the majority of whom had supported the war. From August 1914 the ILP leadership found themselves cut adrift from most other labour leaders. However much they might twist and turn and like MacDonald have resort to woolliness,<sup>10</sup> the ILP leadership found themselves in the van of the anti-war movement in Britain. In Rothstein's opinion several of the ILP leaders sought to deflect criticism from themselves as insufficiently patriotic/

patriotic by emphasising their opposition to Russian militarism. But this brought little respite and they had fallen silent. Nonetheless, the attitude of the ILP to the war especially at the base of the Party was a source of encouragement.<sup>11</sup>

In his determination to tar the ILP with the brush of opportunism, Rothstein chose to understate the degree to which anti-Tsarism had percolated into the consciousness of radicals and socialists. Ironically, this was a process to which Rothstein had himself made a major contribution as a leading member of the SFRF.

In the first days of the War a group of radicals had formed the Union of Democratic Control. It was E. D. Morel "the Foreign Secretary of Dissent" who provided radicals and socialists with their perspectives on foreign policy in time of war: "no member of the Labour movement troubled to work out a Socialist foreign policy - if such a thing be possible - so long as Morel was alive."<sup>12</sup> But while this tribute to the status of Morel is substantially correct, it neglects the war-time transformation of Morel from radical to socialist, a process well advanced by August 1917 when the pamphlet "Tsardom's Part in the War" was published.<sup>13</sup>

Even more cheering to Rothstein than the stance of the ILP had been the emergence within the British Socialist Party of factions and cadres opposed to the leadership of H. M. Hyndman and "the old guard". In the spring of 1915 the Party had convened a series of district conferences to determine perspectives on the war. From these had come a series of rebuffs to the Hyndmanites, while elections to the Executive had produced a small majority of internationalists. Although the Party was not yet ready in Rothstein's opinion for a decisive split with its leadership the majority of members censured the slogan of war "to the finish", demanded/

demanding the International to be re-convened and refused to see Germany as the sole culprit of the war.<sup>14</sup>

With a self-effacement characteristic of his war-time writing, Rothstein made no mention of his part in this emergent opposition. In fact, however, he was one of a "gang of four" drawn from among the London members of the B.S.P. who were to provide the effective leadership which finally purged the B.S.P. of the "old guard" at the Easter Conference of 1916.<sup>15</sup>

A major problem of the London Left of the B.S.P. was that Hyndman and his friends controlled the Party press as their private property. Thus in February 1916 Rothstein and his comrades launched The Call - "an organ of international socialism". The journal's thesis was that "the present struggle serves no progressive purpose" and its editors pledged that "By every means in our power we shall assist towards the realization by the working class that the war depends on them, and that only when they make peace can a permanent settlement be achieved."<sup>16</sup>

Such a declaration was, however, mere fustian. The new paper remained aloof from active participation and agitation in working-class political life, its contributors content to peddle the innocuous wares of a "legal Marxism" which the Government felt safe to ignore. It was not so with the Vanguard. John Maclean had successfully urged the B.S.P.'s Glasgow District Council to publish a revolutionary anti-war paper in opposition to Justice. Launched in September 1915 Vanguard denounced the Hyndmanites and took succour from the Zimmerwald Manifesto: "Faithful Social Democrats here have been led a sorry dance...Our business is to trust ourselves and our cause...we in Glasgow are internationalists, first, last and all the time."<sup>17</sup>

In/

In January 1916, however, the authorities had closed the paper and in April Maclean was sentenced to three years for offences governed by the Defence of the Realm Act. No survey of the British labour movement in the years of the Great War would be complete without an assessment of Maclean. To some writers he has become a kind of secular saint. For Raymond Challinor he is "the first British Trotskyist"<sup>18</sup> while Walter Kendall sees him as a proletarian Prometheus-bound: "Maclean was unique in that with socialist consciousness he combined an unprecedented revolutionary will to power...It is a measure of the prescience of English (sic<sub>RG</sub>) government that in the crucial years of 1917-18...Maclean was at liberty for only nine months out of twenty-four."<sup>19</sup>

Before 1914 Maclean had emerged as one of the most forthright critics of the SDF leadership. He spoke out against the Hyndmanites whose sectarian abstention from the day-to-day manifestations of the class struggle, and capitulation to chauvinism were principal factors in the failure of the SDF to emerge as a mass party on the lines of the German SPD. In 1914 he had denounced those social democrats and reformists who had supported the war. Two generations after his death MacLean inspires socialists for his boundless courage, his respect for Marxist theory and for his insistence on the necessity to educate workers in Marxist economics.

From August 1914 Maclean refused to offer any support to the British Government and was equally critical of the pacifism of the ILP. The war in his view was a capitalist war and in his speeches and writing he sought to spread such a view. He was a committee member of the Clyde Workers' Committee which had existed/

existed since 1912 as a rank-and-file organization embracing many trades. By the autumn of 1915, shop steward members of the Committee were engaged in a campaign against dilution which greatly alarmed the Ministry of Munitions.<sup>20</sup> But Maclean broke with the leaders over their unwillingness to oppose the war. One of the CWC leaders was later to aver that this split arose because of the malign influence exerted over Maclean by Peter Petroff.<sup>21</sup> In fact, it was Maclean's revolutionary politics that had driven him to this stance, just as they had impelled him towards an attempt to politicise the Glasgow rent strikes of autumn 1915. But for all that Maclean was ever an informed and principled Marxist, he yet remained a prisoner of precisely those historic forces which he strove to understand.

Throughout his political life Maclean remained a propagandist and agitator but he was never a theoretical innovator or party-builder in the manner of Lenin or of Luxemburg. In his own words he declared in 1917, "The greatest 'crime' I have committed in the eyes of the British Government and the Scottish capitalist class has been the teaching of Marxian economics to Scottish workers".<sup>22</sup> Maclean remained a Marxist typical of the epoch of the Second International.

As such, an important part of Maclean's epistemology was internationalism. In the war years - when he was at liberty - Maclean vigorously supported the Zimmerwald Manifesto and actively aided the work of G. V. Chicherin and M. Bridges Adams.<sup>23</sup> But such work never included the construction of a revolutionary party in the manner of the Bolshevik Party. And thus - despite his strong links with the working class movement - Maclean never succeeded in building an organized political base on Clydeside and it/

it was a straightforward matter for the Government to pick him off and silence his voice.

Maclean's incarceration ensured that when the split came in the B.S.P. in Easter 1916 leadership fell into the hands of Marxists such as Rothstein and "the London Left", men not noted for their revolutionary audacity and whose perspectives on the war were radical rather than revolutionary. Mentor of the new leadership of the B.S.P. was Rothstein. He wrote regularly for The Call and other socialist journals but did so under the pseudonyms of 'John Bryan' and 'W.A.M.M.'<sup>24</sup> An encapsulation of Rothstein's theoretical analysis of the war may be found in a collection of essays published in February 1917. Here he glumly opined that "The war, contrary to all expectations, has proved a true gold mine to the capitalist class throughout the world."<sup>25</sup> The only force capable of stopping the slaughter was the working class: "Not by fighting against one another, but by joining hands in a common effort to stop the war...will the working class best achieve the security of their respective 'Fatherlands.'<sup>26</sup> Such strategies were - in Leninist terms, "centrist." While opposed to the social chauvinism of the Hyndmanites, Rothstein and his London comrades on the B.S.P. Executive held back from proclaiming the tactic of a revolutionary end to the war. They demanded not the construction of a new revolutionary Third International but instead insisted on the recall of the old Second International whose leadership had been thoroughly infected with the virus of social-patriotism.<sup>27</sup>

There were, however, Marxists in Britain whose perspectives on the war were well to the left of the new leadership in the B.S.P. Their numbers included rank-and-file members of the Party, /

Party, members of the Socialist Labour Party, and socialists who no longer found the I.L.P. and kindred organizations provide a valid interpretation of the war. They found a forum for their views in the pages of Plebs, "the only theoretical Marxist organ in this country".<sup>28</sup>

War-time readers of the journal were left in no doubt as to the severity of the crisis facing the working class. Not only was the future of socialist ideas at risk, but the very independence of the labour movement was imperilled. Analysing the significance of the Munitions Act, one writer argued that, "The problem that confronts us is two-fold. First, to maintain what is left of Trade Unionism. Second, to resist any further disruption of the Movement. It is becoming clearer every day that the responsibilities for these duties devolves upon the rank and file."<sup>29</sup>

Plebeians argued that this rank and file needed to be equipped with Marxist theory. Only thus might the proletariat grasp the essence of the war. Plebs thus dismissed E. D. Morel and the Union of Democratic Control as petty-bourgeois peddlers of utopian "panaceas." For all that Morel had succeeded in showing that Germany alone was not responsible for causing the war he nonetheless advocated "a pathetically futile remedy". Morel's cure for the world's ills, a return to Cobdenite Free Trade, was useless to the world's workers who had no commodities to exchange but could only sell their labour.<sup>30</sup>

The magazine argued that what was needed was a Third International binding together the world's workers. It thus supported the revolutionary perspectives of the Zimmerwald Left and accordingly gave prominence to the call of the Dutch revolutionary, Anton Pannekoek, for the speedy construction of such/



such a body.<sup>31</sup>

Plebs argued that the struggle to rebuild the socialist International was only one growth point of the revolutionary movement; equally important was the need for socialists to harness the industrial militancy which had arisen during the war. Such beliefs were also held by the Marxist Socialist Labour Party.

In August 1914 the SLP had been in a state of crisis: "Its most pressing problem was a miniscule membership, an inadequacy making it impossible to function effectively."<sup>32</sup> Its initial response to the war had been confused. On one side there was the recognition that the war had to be stopped through "the reconstitution of the International Socialist movement." On the other, the question was asked, "Shall I fight?": "until the working class movement builds up an International capable of surmounting and throttling national and racial animosities, it were idle to cry 'Peace! Peace!' where there is no peace". Such muddle led one correspondent to protest: "The absence of an official statement of the SLP attitude to war in general, and this one in particular, is a deplorable fact which is intensified by the deplorable attempts being made to formulate one."<sup>33</sup>

The Party was able, however, to weather this crisis, and as industrial unrest began to grow membership grew, the circulation of the Socialist increased<sup>34</sup> and its cheap pamphlets sold into several editions. It is difficult to estimate the ideological impact of the S.L.P. on the politically conscious layers of the working class. Recognition of the numbers of S.L.P. members involved in the war-time industrial disputes on Clydeside has to be tempered by the realisation that in other areas such as South Wales and London the impact of the Party was minimal.

Certainly, /

Certainly, however, the S.L.P. with its stress on the primacy of Marxist theory was able to attract socialists disenchanted with the failure of other organizations such as the B.S.P. and the I.L.P. One such was H. Wynn Cuthbert who argued that "The influx of the Quaker, neo-Christian, and Tolstoyan elements, together with the close association with Radical and religious peace societies have almost entirely removed the I.L.P. from the sphere of the industrial worker."<sup>35</sup>

An even more important recruit to the S.L.P. was the Lettish exile, Alexander Sirnis. Sirnis was the manager of the Tolstoyan Free Age Press. He had begun to write for Socialist early in the war<sup>36</sup> but his most important work was done in 1917 and 1918 at a critical juncture in the history of the S.L.P. By the autumn of 1917 he had quit the B.S.P. "because of its opportunism" and the S.L.P. gained not only an industrious translator but a creative revolutionary thinker. In 1914 Sirnis had been in the sanatorium at Davos in Switzerland and by the end of 1918 he was dead, still a young man. The S.L.P. had been robbed of the services of a comrade whose profound knowledge of the European revolutionary movement helped in the preparation of the potent revolutionary blend of De Leonism and Leninism.<sup>37</sup>

The Great War thus acted as a mighty catalyst accelerating the fissiparous tendencies which existed among Britain's revolutionary socialist organizations. While some socialists, as we have seen, were driven towards an intensification of their revolutionary will for others the war had precisely the opposite effect. What, for instance, were the war-time fortunes of Hyndman and the 'old guard' of the B.S.P.?

Hyndman had based his support of the Government on the notion/

notion of "the lesser evil." While recognising the baneful record of Tsarism he argued that German Junkerdom was the greater, more immediate manace.<sup>38</sup> Along with others such as the Fabian, Sidney Webb, and a number of union leaders, he had formed the War Emergency Workers National Committee. This body advocated controls and "socialist" measures as a way of making the Home Front more efficient as a war machine. Hence Hyndman argued that "Conscription of riches and means of making wealth, to balance conscription of men, will also settle our financial difficulties for once and for all. Any trouble from food prices are due wholly and solely to the dominant class represented by the illegal and worn-out rump of the House of Commons, which has steadily refused to grow food at home in order to favour the ship owners..."<sup>39</sup>

At Easter 1916, Hyndman and his supporters had lost control of the B.S.P. and in June 1916 he thus set up the National Socialist Party, while still retaining control of Justice.<sup>40</sup> Until his death in 1921, Hyndman continued to preach that amalgam of revolutionary socialism and patriotism which had for so long been his dominant characteristic.

But for some elements in the labour movement even Hyndman's degree of class collaboration and patriotism was not enough. On 16 April 1915 the Socialist National Defence Committee was formed at the home of Victor Fisher a former member of the Executive of the B.S.P. The S.N.D.C. was to resist the "pernicious and perilous cosmopolitanism of certain sections of the labour movement, a cosmopolitanism reinforced and supported by various wealthy 'Little Englanders.'"<sup>41</sup>

A member of the Fabian Society in 1899, Fisher had joined the S.D.F. and had rapidly risen to prominence as one of the party's/

party's Right wing outdoing even Hyndman in the intemperance of his language. Himself the son of a Hungarian refugee and an English mother, Fisher was concerned to appear "plus anglais comme les anglais."<sup>42</sup> By 1916 with Fisher at the helm, the SNDC had expanded its aims and had become the British Workers' National League, publishing its own weekly The British Citizen and Empire Worker. On a practical basis the NWNL helped servicemen's families deal with claims to pensions etc., but its main function was political. Highly chauvinist, protectionist and hyper-patriotic, the BWNL hurled abuse on conscientious objectors, the ILP, and what it termed 'shirkers'. Its membership included several Labour MPs such as John Hodge, Chairman of the Parliamentary Labour Party and leader of the Iron and Steel Workers Association. The BWNL also attracted to its ranks J. Havelock Wilson, the Liberal MP and leader of the seamen's union. A founder member and active participant was Joseph Frederick Green, former treasurer of the S.D.F. and Executive member of the Society of Friends of Russian Freedom.

In March 1917 the BWNL renamed itself the British Workers League and now decided to stand candidates in elections against MPs it regarded as un-patriotic. Green was chosen as prospective candidate for Leicester West, where the sitting member was J. Ramsay MacDonald. In November 1917 the B.W.L.'s self-styled "reconstruction policy" received wide coverage in the national press. The policy had two planks - "to combat the internationalist and peace-at-any-price propaganda of the ILP and other sections of the Pacifist movement among organized workers" and "to formulate a...programme of national and industrial reconstruction in which the/

the class-war theories of the extreme Syndicalists will be conspicuous by their absence." Thus, Fisher proudly claimed "The League goes over the top", <sup>43</sup> but in another sense of the phrase he had done this a month earlier with a grossly offensive article against Russian Jews: "Thousands of heavy nosed, heavy lipped and obese foreign male semites have been flocking into the tubes" to escape from German air raids and "have converted the tube railways into uncleanly pest houses."<sup>44</sup>

By such means did Fisher and his friends aim to build the B.W.L. as a mass party and in the spring of 1918 the Topsy-like growth of the organization continued. The General Council of the B.W.L. decided to constitute itself as the National Democratic and Labour Party, while keeping the League and the British Citizen going as a propaganda adjunct.<sup>45</sup>

But all was not what it appeared to be. Noting the rapid transition from SNDC to BWNL and BWL, Tom Johnston, the editor of Glasgow Forward smelt a rat. Referring to the enthusiasm for the B.W.L. expressed in the columns of the Times and the high Tory Morning Post he demanded that Fisher publish his movement's finances.<sup>46</sup> Fisher claimed to have met his detractors' allegations<sup>47</sup> but the suspicions of Johnston and others that a fifth-column had been established inside the working-class movement have been verified many years after.

Fisher's nationalist convictions were shared by one who in December 1916 became one of the most powerful men in the land, a man with "a mystical belief in Britain's imperial destiny and in the civilising power of a superior British race."<sup>48</sup> This was Alfred, Viscount Milner, confidant of Lloyd George and member of his War Cabinet. Among the Milner Papers has been found a letter of

20 January 1916 in which Milner agreed to pay Fisher a generous allowance and expenses "in each of the years 1916, 1917 and 1918".<sup>49</sup>

Several of the BWL's Labour supporters began by 1918 to have serious doubts as to the wisdom of belonging to an organization whose policies had become increasingly hostile to the maintenance of an independent working-class voice. At the Labour Party's Nottingham Conference of January 1918 the Scottish miners' leader, Robert Smillie, called for an inquiry into the activities of the BWL and what was described as its "black legging" in the constituencies.<sup>50</sup> Mindful of the increased power of the trade union voice in the Labour Party from January 1918 several of the BWL's leading lights now quit the organization.<sup>51</sup> Fisher was enraged: "YOU HAVE SURRENDERED UNCONDITIONALLY to that conglomeration of freaks, fanatics and intriguers..."<sup>52</sup> and from this time considered the Labour Party an enemy. It had gone over "bag and baggage to the rancorous...opposition which has characterised its maleficent inspirers in the ILP."<sup>53</sup>

In November 1918 the Armistice was signed and in the following month the "Coupon Election" was held. Ten National Democratic Party candidates were victorious; the most notable triumphs were at Leicester West where J. F. Green in a straight fight secured a 14000 majority over MacDonald, while at East Ham, A. C. Edwards triumphed with Arthur Henderson in third place. At Stourbridge, Victor Fisher could only come third.<sup>54</sup> By this time in fact he had disappeared from the councils of the organization.<sup>55</sup> But these electoral triumphs had been secured through the use of "the coupon" and in the 1922 election nine of the M.P.s (now standing as National Liberals) were defeated by Labour candidates.<sup>56</sup> There thus came to an end a strange interlude in/

in the history of the British labour movement, the S.N.D.C. and its successors had been mutations owing their growth to the freakish climatic conditions of a country at war. And, with the coming of peace the paymasters had no further use for such an organization. Mandarins of the ilk of Milner had seen the need for such a super-patriotic organization aimed at working folk to counter the impact likely to be made by critics and resisters of the Government's policies in the darkest period of the war.

The violent outbursts of Fisher and his friends against "the shirkers" was testimony to the fear felt by the demagogic "patriots" that resistance to the war might develop from intellectual criticism to use of physical force to resist military service or hinder the war effort of the Home Front. As we have seen, a wide variety of radicals and socialists opposed the war for reasons varying from an undiluted Marxian interpretation of events to ethical grounds for opposition. Of all these critics the most significant in terms of impact was E. D. Morel and the Union of Democratic Control. By 1917 the Labour Party was poised to make the transition from pressure group to a national party ready to bid for power. As part of its socialist programme it embraced the "alternative foreign policy" of the U.D.C. with its main objectives of an end to secret diplomacy and an early end to the great slaughter.<sup>57</sup>

At the same time as the U.D.C. had been formed a group of young socialists, including C. H. Norman, had formed the No Conscription Fellowship: "This fusion of idealism with the promise of active resistance attracted young men with a variety of religious and political views, though the young members of the I.L.P. provided the initiative and the leadership."<sup>58</sup> In January/

January 1916 a landmark in British history was reached when Asquith's Government introduced compulsory military service, provision being made for exemptions on the ground of a conscientious objection to the undertaking of combatant service. The N.C.F. now sought to force the Government to repeal the Military Service Act and urged its members to reject any form of alternative service, a policy which achieved limited results.<sup>59</sup>

To mollify troubled Liberal consciences the Act set up a network of local tribunals which were empowered to grant absolute or conditional exemptions. Of 16,500 cases heard, some form of exemption was granted to eighty per cent of conscientious objectors. Some 7,000 agreed to perform non-combatant service while around half this figure laboured in the Home Office scheme of alternative service.<sup>60</sup> There remained 1500 "absolutists", men such as C. H. Norman, who refused all compulsory service be it for political reasons or on religious grounds.<sup>61</sup>

In the view of one historian "The organized resistance to military conscription of the First World War is of importance because it added a draught of physical action to the internationalist theorizing of the U.D.C."<sup>62</sup> By their challenge to the authority of the political state's claim to absolute authority over its citizens and by their deeds, the conscientious objectors inspired a minority but enraged the vast majority. Having served a peculiar and painful form of political apprenticeship, many were to channel their idealism into pacifist activities after the Great War.



Footnotes to Appendix to Chapters Six and Seven

- 1 Kommunist (Geneva, 20 May 1915), p. 1.
- 2 Peter Rowland Lloyd George (London, 1975), Chapter 8, passim.
- 3 Plebs, Mar. 1918.
- 4 Julius Braunthal, op. cit., p. 355.
- 5 David Marquand, op. cit., p. 169.
- 6 Willie Gallagher - 'Revolt on the Clyde' (London 1949) and 'Last Memoirs' (London 1966), David Kirkwood - 'My Life of Revolt' (London 1935); R. K. Middlemas 'The Clydesiders' (London 1965).
- 7 Branko Pribicevic - 'The Shop Stewards' Movement and Workers' Control, 1910-1922' (Oxford 1959); J. S. Hinton - 'The First Shop Stewards' Movement (London 1973); Norman Longmate 'Class War on the Clyde' in Milestones in Working Class History (London 1975).
- 8 J. S. Hinton - "Shop Stewards' Movement in World War One" in Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Labour History, No. 13, Autumn 1966.
- 9 "F.R-N" (i.e. Theodore Rothstein) - "Razbrod v Anglii" (Disorder in England) Kommunist loc. cit., p. 158.
- 10 The locus classicus is MacDonald's letter (this "strange effusion" of "tortuous ambiguity") to the Mayor of Leicester of September 1914; the verdict is that of David Marquand, op. cit., p. 175.
- 11 "F.R-N" loc. cit., p. 157.
- 12 A. J. P. Taylor: 'The Troublemakers' op. cit., pp. 121, 123.
- 13 The process is discussed by Andrew Rothstein in his chapter on Morel in 'British Foreign Policy and Its Critics' (London 1969), especially pp. 88/93.

- 14 "F.R-N" loc. cit., p. 157.
- 15 A. Rothstein, "Iz Vospominanii ov ot'se", loc. cit., p. 51.
- 16 The Call, 24 Feb. 1916.
- 17 The Vanguard, Oct. 1915; also Dec. 1915. On the Zimmerwald Conference of international socialists, refer Isaac Deutscher, The Prophet Armed, Trotsky 1879-1921 (Oxford 1970 pp. 225/7.
- 18 Raymond Challinor, article in Red Weekly, 30 Nov. 1973.
- 19 Walter Kendall, op. cit., p. 132.
- 20 James Hinton, op. cit., pp. 131/2.
- 21 William Gallacher Revolt... op. cit., pp. 59/60. On Petroff, see above, Chapter 7. The relationship between Maclean and Petroff is examined in Murdoch Rodgers and James Smyth "Peter Petroff" in "Scottish Labour Leaders 1918-1939" op. cit., pp. 224/230.
- 22 Quotation found in Ray Burnett "The Fighting Dominie" (John Maclean) in Times Educational Supplement (Scotland), 15 Apr. 1983. For a stimulating reassessment of Maclean see Terry Brotherstone "John Maclean" in Fourth International 9, Summer 1974 pp. 14/20. A similarly revisionist interpretation of Maclean's historic role has been written by William Knox in the volume edited by him - "Scottish Labour Leaders 1918-1939" op. cit., pp. 179/192.
- 23 John Maclean Papers, File 10, "Typed Extracts from Newspapers", contain various gobbets from Vanguard 1915. On Maclean's links with Chicherin and Bridges Adams refer Chapter 7 above.
- 24 "During the first world war my father, as an un-naturalised alien, was not only abhorrent to the Tsarist government for his/

his Social-Democracy but also under deep suspicion of the British authorities for his known opinions on the war. His articles - John Bryan and W.A.M.M. - speak for themselves. He was, of course, very careful." Andrew Rothstein, letter to author, 20 Nov. 1970.

- 25 "John Bryan", Essays in Socialism and War, (Reprinted from The Call) London 1917 p. 15.
- 26 Ibid., p. 7.
- 27 Refer W. Kendall, op. cit., pp. 170/1 and R. Challinor, op. cit., pp. 163/6.
- 28 Thus spake "John Bryan" in a congratulatory message to Plebs on its hundredth issue, May 1918. The journal which sold just over a thousand copies in November 1915 was by the end of the war selling five thousand monthly. (Plebs, Sep. 1918).
- 29 H. Wynn Cuthbert, "Stop the Rot!" Plebs Feb. 1916 p. 8. A year earlier the same author had written "Will Socialism Survive the War?" Plebs Dec. 1914 pp. 256/260.
- 30 Robert Holder - "Strike at the Roots" - a review of E. D. Morel's Truth and the War, Plebs Oct. 1916.
- 31 Thus W. Craik in "The European Crisis - Part III" praised Pannekoek, (Plebs Jan. 1915 pp. 268/271) and the July 1916 edition published Pannekoek's article "The Third International."
- 32 R. Challinor, op. cit., p. 151; the author estimates SLP membership at that date as "around 200".
- 33 Socialist, Dec. 1914; the first quotation is from the article by "M.", "Stop the War...", the second from the Editor, John W. Muir, the third from a Sheffield reader.
- 34 3000 copies monthly were sold by March 1918, Socialist, Mar. 1918.

- 35 H. Wynn Cuthbert "Why I Joined the S.L.P." Socialist, Jun. 1917.
- 36 For example, an article on "The Horrors of Russian Prisons",  
Socialist, Aug. 1914.
- 37 Socialist, Dec. 1918 contains a lengthy obituary of Sirnis.
- 38 See above, Chapter 6.
- 39 Justice, 2 Aug. 1917.
- 40 Chushichi Tsuzuki, H. M. Hyndman and British Socialism  
(Oxford 1961), p. 285.
- 41 British Citizen and Empire Worker (hereafter British Citizen),  
31 Mar. 1917.
- 42 Refer entry on Fisher in Who Was Who 1951-1960 (London  
1961); in 1913 he attacked "comrades alien in blood and  
race" in the debate in the B.S.P. on the Citizen Army (Justice,  
4 Jan. 1913).
- 43 British Citizen, 3 Nov. 1917.
- 44 Ibid., 6 Oct. 1917.
- 45 Ibid., 8 June 1918.
- 46 Forward, 10 Nov. 1917.
- 47 British Citizen, 16 Mar. 1918.
- 48 Norman and Jean Mackenzie, op. cit., p. 269.
- 49 Charles Parkins - "The SDA and Their Illustrious Forbears"  
in Workers Press, 10 Oct. 1975.
- 50 Forward, 2 Feb. 1918.
- 51 One such was Charles Duncan M.P., of the Workers' Union,  
British Citizen, 9 Feb. 1918.
- 52 Ibid., 23 Feb. 1918.
- 53 Ibid., 15 June 1918.
- 54 British Citizen, 4, 11, 18 Jan. 1919.
- 55 The files of British Citizen afford no clue as to his  
departure, /

departure, which had been noted in Forward 26 Oct. 1918:

"he has gone to Italy on a Government job. He has earned it."

56 A. J. P. Taylor English History... op. cit., p. 256.

57 Refer A. J. P. Taylor The Troublemakers op. cit.,  
pp. 120/4. 128/130, 140/2.

58 John Rae, op. cit., p. 12.

59 Ibid., pp. 90/3.

60 Their number included the Bakuninist anarchist, Guy  
Aldred. His memoirs, No Traitor's Gait (Glasgow 1955) and  
the journal The Granite Echo provide a good description  
of the niggardly treatment of the men by the authorities.

61 On the "absolutists" see John Rae, op. cit., Ch. 10,  
pp. 201/33.

62 Arthur Marwick, op. cit., p. 87.

## Chapter 8: Radicals and Socialists and the Revolutions of 1917

Introduction: Historians who wish to assess the impact of the Russian revolutions of 1917 on British political life are faced with the task of unravelling a thing of great complexity. There is the paradox that among all sections of informed opinion welcome was given to the news of the fall of Tsarism. J. F. Green was enraptured: "...After the failure of the effort of 1905 I had not dared hope for this revival of democratic ambition and ardour..."<sup>1</sup> Equally ecstatic was Ramsay MacDonald who recorded in his Diary on 3 April, "Everybody of my faith immensely invigorated by Revolution."<sup>2</sup> In December 1918 the two men fought a most bitter election campaign against each other.

As news of the successful overthrow of the Tsar reached Britain there was a positive epidemic of public meetings held to welcome the Russian revolution. Over the weekend of 31 March - 1 April over 20,000 people attended meetings convened in the Albert Hall by the I.L.P. Speakers included George Lansbury and leading figures in the "Triple Alliance" of trade unions, Williams, Smillie and Bellamy.<sup>3</sup> At the Queen's Hall the meeting was chaired by the veteran Liberal, Lord Bryce, and speakers included the émigré David Soskice, formerly so active in the SFRF. Meanwhile at the Kingsway Hall the B.W.L. held a meeting of welcome for the revolution.<sup>4</sup>

It is unsurprising that among radicals and socialists weaned on the works of Stepniak and Prelooker there should be elation over the news from Russia. Relief rather than joy, however, was the keynote of the salutations of the House of Commons. At the behest of the British ambassador in Petrograd, Buchanan, "fraternal greetings" were sent to the Duma, "in full confidence that they might/

might lead not only to rapid and happy progress of the Russian nation...but to the prosecution...with renewed steadfastness and vigour, of the war..." At the meeting which had drafted the resolution Lloyd George and his four colleagues in the War Cabinet had begun to wash their hands of the Tsar.<sup>5</sup>

The explanation for the universality of the welcome given to the March Revolution by men who on the domestic political scene were ferociously hostile to each other lies in the "great fact" of the War. Attitudes to events in Russia cannot be separated out from attitudes to the prosecution of the Great War. Thus to the radical critic H. N. Brailsford, "The Russian Revolution came to it (the pacifist tendency among British socialists<sub>RG</sub>) at a moment of dejection and helplessness with an immense stimulus."<sup>6</sup> Brailsford earnestly hoped that the Revolution might be the first step on the road to peace in Europe, but for an advocate of war "à L'outrance" such as Arthur Henderson, the prospect was opened up of a regeneration of the Russian war effort. Henderson was thus entrusted by the War Cabinet to draft a telegram of exhortation to the labour deputies in the Duma, "to deliver themselves from power of reactionary elements which are impeding their advance to victory."<sup>7</sup>

As we shall see, many socialists defined the March Revolution as a bourgeois revolution: "The Whigshave won. The feudalists are beaten; the Capitalists are in control."<sup>8</sup> Russia thereby imitated the earlier historical experiences of Britain and France. But equally there was the beginning of a sharp revision in attitudes towards Russia. No longer were many observers content to view it as an object of sympathy. As the Petrograd Soviet gained in strength and articulated demands for an end to the war, many left-wing groupings/

groupings in Britain took heart from this initiative. This development is epitomised by the Leeds Convention and its aftermath. Here was an attempt to transplant soviets, all-inclusive local workers' committees, onto British soil.

In the summer of 1917 the Petrograd Soviet attempted to convene a multilateral conference of socialists to consider the question of how the war might be rapidly brought to an end. Alarmed by this initiative, the British Government made expedient use of the "social patriots" in the movement of organized labour and were prepared even to employ Ramsay MacDonald as an envoy. The failure of the accident-prone MacDonald to reach the Continent is one of the more bizarre episodes in the crowded year of 1917.

One Labour historian has viewed the impact of the March Revolution with jaundiced eye, opining that it began the extinction of the native British revolutionary tradition.<sup>9</sup> While this might be dismissed as an exercise in special pleading there can be no question that R. T. Shannon's image of a "fault line" in political life can be transferred from 1876 to 1917. From March 1917 the British working class movement underwent changes in organization, theoretical perspectives and in their translation of theory into practice. The chapter will thus survey the impact of March 1917 across the spectrum of organized labour in Great Britain.

A considerable body of writing exists on the effect of the Revolutions of 1917 on British political life but in this scholarship there is a lacuna. The part played by political émigrés in the orchestration of responses to the March Revolution has not been analysed by any historian in a systematic fashion.

In the summer of 1917 the struggle between the Provisional Government and the Soviet for the leadership of the Revolution intensified; /



intensified; thus the chapter will seek to interpret responses in Britain to the situation of "dual power" within Russia. As it became apparent that the Soviet sought an end to the war, the honeymoon of British patriotic labour elements with the Revolution came to an end. Likewise the War Cabinet became disenchanted and in the "ballet Russe" Arthur Henderson was suddenly relegated from "premier danseur" to a humble member of the corps.

The Bolshevik seizure of power ensured that among most British radicals and socialists the nuptials celebrated in March ended in the ashes of divorce in November. Two historians indeed cite Lenin as co-respondent: "The Bolshevik revolution of November estranged all but the most extreme Socialists...It was not only that the Bolsheviks dropped selfishly out of the war. The democratic Socialist leaders...became the principal targets for Lenin's abuse - Henderson and MacDonald above all." Thus argued A. J. P. Taylor in 1956.<sup>10</sup> Condemning the "unbelievable arrogance" of the Leninists in thinking they knew Britain better than the British, David Marquand has opined that "Insofar as any single person deserves the credit for preventing a revolutionary outbreak in post-war Britain it is not Lloyd George nor even Ramsay MacDonald. It is Lenin."<sup>11</sup> The validity of such a thesis may be tested by a second view across the spectrum of the Left, this time made in the period following the October Revolution in an attempt to gauge its impact.

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Throughout 1915 and 1916 the British Government had been deeply concerned with the Russian contribution to the Allied war effort. The feeble performance of the "Russian streamroller" had excited lengthy debate among Britain's war leaders (as Cabinet and/

and War Cabinet Minutes make abundantly clear).<sup>12</sup> There was thus a feeling of relief in the War Cabinet when they heard of the abdication of Nicholas II. Relief gave way to concern as it became likely that the March Revolution had not regenerated the enthusiasm of the Russian soldiery for the war.<sup>13</sup> The War Cabinet thus made it a priority to bolster the Provisional Government as against the Petrograd Soviet. In this activity Arthur Henderson - the "voice of labour" in the War Cabinet - played the leading role.

On 26 March Henderson reported that a delegation of French "social patriots" would shortly arrive in England en route for Petrograd, their object being to persuade "the Russian Socialist party...to do all in its power to bring the war to a satisfactory conclusion". Henderson's colleagues decided that he "should use his influence" to ensure that a similar British deputation accompany the French.<sup>14</sup>

The delegation was composed of the Labour MPs, Will Thorne Will Crooks and James O'Grady, though the "addition of a more academic Socialist of the type of Mr. Hyndman"<sup>15</sup> was considered. Thorne's anti-Tsarist credentials were impeccable - in 1909 he had campaigned against the Tsar's visit to the U.K. both within and outwith the Commons.<sup>16</sup> But in 1917 there was considerable opposition in the labour movement to his visit. His critics pointed out that he left, in Tom Johnston's phrase, "in borrowed plumes". Thorne had accepted the gift of a fur coat from the Government's chief law officer, F. E. Smith.<sup>17</sup> The mission was said to be unrepresentative: "...the Labour MPs...will not go to Russia representing British labour, but as the subsidised agents of the Government, which is a very different thing." The same writer was to opine that on their return the men would report not/

not to the labour movement but to the War Cabinet.<sup>18</sup>

Ramsay MacDonald was also quick to criticise the sending of the deputation. He found in it "a new justification and expression" of ILP policy. The men had been sent by the British Government to urge Russia to maintain the offensive against Germany. MacDonald noted the growing power of the Petrograd Soviet which would "fight a defensive war only against Germany in the name of democracy...Thus the ILP finds a new justification and expression of its policy. But this is exactly what our Government is afraid of. We want a European democratic peace; it wants an Allied military victory."<sup>19</sup>

In view of the opposition to the mission, Hyndman sent a telegram to Kerensky to "contradict most emphatically the lying statement of the ILP that Thorne and O'Grady do not fully represent British Labour." Supported by the executive of the National Socialist Party and by J. F. Green, Hyndman sought to assure Kerensky that "the overwhelming majority of our working people are quite determined to win this war against German militarist autocracy..."<sup>20</sup>

On his return to Britain early in June, Thorne stated the ILP resolution had been published in the Russian newspapers on 3 May and had put the mission in a bad light. He was bitterly critical of the Soviet claiming that Jews were well represented in it: "they are peace at any price men because they do not want to fight against their brethren in Germany." This remark in its turn provoked J. Baum "Temporarily in London on business for the Council of Workmen's and Soldiers' Delegates" to accuse Thorne of deliberately giving false information.<sup>21</sup>

Thorne had been called to an audience with the King who was anxious/

anxious to hear of his experiences.<sup>22</sup> Indeed, there exists a minor mystery concerning the kingly cousins, Geordie and Nicky. Did George V wash his hands of the Tsar in 1917 for fear of the outcry likely among the British working class should he offer Nicholas asylum?

The publication of Kenneth Rose's biography of George V has renewed debate as to why the Tsar was not offered refuge in Britain. A. J. P. Taylor has argued that "The King repeatedly urged that some refuge should be offered to the fallen monarch. It was the British Cabinet that feared the stimulus which this would give to republican feeling."<sup>22</sup> On the other hand Robert Blake states, "We have always been led to believe that Lloyd George was responsible for overruling the King's wish to rescue his Russian royal cousins from the revolution. On the contrary, it appears from the archives that the original offer to give asylum to the Romanovs, which had been endorsed by both Lloyd George and the King, was withdrawn primarily at the instance of the King."<sup>23</sup>

What, in fact, does Rose say? He writes, "Correspondence between the King and his Ministers in March and April 1917 reveals a...chain of events leading to the murder of the Tsar and his family fifteen months later. It shows that the British government would willingly have offered them asylum but for the fears expressed by Buckingham Palace; and that at the most critical moment in their fortunes they were deserted not by a radical Prime Minister seeking to appease his supporters, but by their ever affectionate Cousin Georgie."<sup>24</sup> The King had not wished to become identified with Tsarist autocracy and had placed the needs of his own royal house before those of the hapless Romanovs.

Nonetheless/

Nonetheless it cannot be said that Lloyd George fought with might and main to save the Tsar. He successfully persuaded the War Cabinet "that there was a strong feeling hostile to the Czar in certain working class circles in this country and that articles tending to associate the King with the Tsar had appeared in the Press...if the Czar should take up his residence here, there was a danger that these tendencies might be stimulated and accentuated." Lloyd George made this speech only a week after he had told the War Cabinet that "he had received indications from several sources of a very considerable and highly organized labour movement with seditious tendencies, which was developing in many industrial centres."<sup>25</sup>

The combination of a jittery Premier and a King who believed that the first principle of an hereditary monarch is to survive was sufficient to dash any prospects of the Tsar finding haven in England. The alarm of Lloyd George and George V is oblique testimony to the success of the patient labours across several decades of the anti-tsarist publicists in a line that ran from Herzen to Stepniak to Chicherin. Further evidence of their achievement may be found in the overwhelming welcome accorded by all sections of organized British labour to the news of the March Revolution.

1917 had begun dismally for the British people. The shadow of war lay across the land. The Somme offensive had finally petered out in November 1916 - the deadlock on the Western Front was no nearer to being resolved. On the Home Front shortages of food staples "brought a new phenomenon on the civic scene, the queue."<sup>26</sup> Wage rises often lagged behind the latest round of price increases. Resentment with the Government's repressive policies towards the trade unions had sapped the patriotism of the/

the more militant sections of the British working-class. Pre-war grievances reappeared and became the focus for the strikes of 1915 and 1916 which had halted the forges on the Clyde and in the Welsh valleys. There had been a revolt of the base against employers, the Government and class collaborationist union leaders. New types of social tension had arisen. National unity had lost its potent myth. The simple appeal of Kitchener's crusade had been shattered by the introduction of conscription. Until the end of 1916 the rightness or otherwise of the war and its aims had been largely accepted as a matter for Government. But the cracks had begun to show even before the Russian Revolution, when in November 1916 Lord Lansdowne had circulated his Cabinet colleagues with a memorandum on the prospects for a negotiated peace. It was to be a year before Lansdowne "came out", but in February of 1917 the Irish nationalist leader, Dr. John Dillon and several MPs who were members of the UDC had spoken in the House, demanding a negotiated peace.<sup>27</sup> Now with the fall of Tsarism the cracks became deep chasms.

To Socialists opposed to the War the March Revolution had qualitatively altered political perspectives. Evidence of this may be found in those newspapers such as Forward and Cotton Factory Times whose "free house" editorial policy allowed critics of the war a forum in which to express their views. Thus the ILP "Leftist", William Stewart, was scathingly critical of the "Allied Stock Exchange enthusiasts for Russian liberty" and "the great British Revolutionary Press controlled by Northcliffe and Hulton and Bottomley". "A revolution for the purpose of going more purposely to war!" he declaimed, "When did any nation rise in revolt for such a purpose as that?"<sup>28</sup> The socialist writer A. W. Humphrey/

Humphrey shared similar views. Prior to 1917 he had written "International Socialism and the War" which showed detailed knowledge of the tendencies in the Russian revolutionary movement opposed to the war. In the spring of 1917 Humphrey accused the British governing class of wanting to damp down the revolution. He argued that "for the sake of free Russia itself and for the sake of the larger freedoms of humanity...it is essential that the Russian revolutionaries' policy of a speedy people's peace should be furthered by Labour everywhere."<sup>29</sup>

British Marxists hailed the advent of the Revolution for similar reasons. One voice, however, remained silent. John Maclean was a hard labour convict in Peterhead Prison, sentenced to three years' penal servitude in April 1916. Thus less resolute voices dominated the British Socialist Party and The Call. One anonymous writer<sup>30</sup> argued that "The revolutionary democracy of Russia is fighting the battle of the world. It is fighting the forces of Imperialist and Militarist reaction which are responsible for the war and which are still opposed to the conclusion of peace." Russia would almost certainly quit the war but this would bring about a "tragic situation" in which "the greed and the lusts of Austro-German Imperialism" would be able to concentrate on the Western Front. A separate peace between Russia and the Central Powers would thus be a disaster. It could, however, be averted by a "people's peace." Hence the BSP welcomed the initiative taken at Leeds on 9 June 1917, whereby a broadly-based British movement calling for a peace of no annexations and no indemnities might emerge.<sup>31</sup>

To the left of the BSP stood the uncompromising Marxist theoreticians of the Plebs League. In hailing the March Revolution the/

the Plebeians stressed how the Petrograd Soviet's perspectives on the war had decisively altered international relations: "The Manifesto recently issued by the Petrograd Council...has a clear and unmistakable challenge to the Liberal bourgeoisie and the socialists alike in Germany when it declared that the Liberal elements of the Central Powers may justifiably support a war against Russian Autocracy but can no longer do so (sic<sub>RG</sub>) against the triumphant Russian Democracy."<sup>32</sup> Throughout 1917 Plebs closely analysed events in Russia. But owing to the peculiar features of its Marxism the organization remained aloof from active participation in the emergent "people's peace movement" in Britain. Members were present at Leeds on 9 June and the League's organ supported the initiative taken there but no major publicity was given to these events in its pages, the news being tucked away in the more obscure columns.<sup>33</sup>

By 1917 the industrial unionists of the SLP had grown both in numbers and in financial strength. This enabled the Socialist to launch a special two-page "Russian Revolution Supplement" soon after the March Revolution. In this the SLP launched an offensive against British capitalism. Why had the "reactionary bourgeois forces" welcomed the Russian Revolution? British capitalism was accused of having helped organize the overthrow of feudal Tsarism which had wanted to pull out of the war: "The aim of British capital is to control the routes of the East against Germany... (while)...Puny as is Russian capital, it realises how necessary it is for its future development to get an entrance to the Mediterranean Sea...Thus British capital found that its real ally in Russia was the Russian capitalist class."<sup>34</sup>

Socialist was equally scathing of the role of the "fakirs" (as/



(as they termed them), Thorne and O'Grady. The paper made mock of Thorne's "elephantine dancings before the throne of Capital...he possesses all the virtues necessary to pose as a delegate on behalf of British Labour, which is a bastard breed of antiquated Liberalism crossed with reactionary capitalism."<sup>35</sup>

But the Revolution had created a force stronger and more progressive than the bourgeoisie and Labour bureaucrats. This was the Petrograd Soviet. In welcoming the emergence of what was termed "the Russian Federation of Labour", the SLP stressed that it was qualitatively different from the form of the British trade union movement. Rather, "the Council is more in the nature of the Clyde Workers' Committee, and is a truly revolutionary body."<sup>36</sup> As the Soviet increased in strength and significance, it seemed as if the Marxian syndicalism of the SLP's theoretician, the late Daniel De Leon, was becoming reality. Hence the SLP was to emerge as the most unequivocal supporter of the Russian Revolution even before the events of "the Great October."

An important part in both the moulding and the reinforcement of such views was played by the Russian émigré, Alexander Sirnis. The obituary tribute to Sirnis that appeared in the Socialist along with fragments from the files of labour journals enable the compilation of a revolutionary silhouette to be attempted. Sirnis was Lettish; in Britain he had been manager of the Tolstoyan Free Age Press. He probably died of tuberculosis - in August 1914 he wrote from Wolfgang, Davos in Switzerland. As a member of the BSP he had strongly criticised Hyndman's deficient Marxism; in 1917 he had left the BSP "because of its opportunism." Sirnis had worked for the SLP both as translator and political commentator. He translated Liebknecht's "Militarism and Anti-Militarism" and was the/

the first to render Lenin's writings of 1917 into English. Sirnis also contributed a monthly resumé of "International Notes" to the Socialist. It was he who first drew the parallel between the Petrograd Soviet and the Clyde Workers' Committee. Indeed in the course of 1917 until his premature death, Sirnis emerges as the SLP's ideological precentor. By his translation of Lenin's seminal articles and his own writings, he struck the keynote which led the Party to joyously proclaim that, "We are proud of the title of British Bolsheviks."<sup>37</sup>

But Sirnis was not the only émigré active in the British movement of organized labour in the months following March 1917. Until his return to Russia at the end of May 1917 David Soskice appeared on various platforms and wrote energetically espousing the Revolution from the basis of social patriotism.<sup>38</sup> Ivan Maisky also wrote on the significance of Russian events from a more leftist standpoint.<sup>39</sup> However, it is unquestionably G. V. Chicherin who did more than any other political exile to orchestrate the response of British labour to the March Revolution.

As outlined in the foregoing chapter, Chicherin moved rapidly to politically educate the working class movement as to the significance of the events of March. As early as 17 March the ever-vigilant secretary of the Russian Socialist Groups in London conveyed the initial response of the socialist émigrés to the dramatic news from Russia. Chicherin now began a determined defence of the Revolution from "the attempts being made by the patriotic press subservient to capitalism in Britain...to make use of the events in Russia in the interests of Imperialist demagogy..." The appeal was made to workers of all countries to enter into the revolutionary struggle against the war. Chicherin was especially critical/

critical of the social patriots in the British labour movement. They were "varlets", attempting "to utilize the revolutionary movement in Russia for the interests of the Entente Imperialist coalition."<sup>40</sup>

CODORSGIL then organized a meeting in the heart of White-chapel. Over seven thousand people applauded speeches from leading members of the BSP and from émigrés. Resolutions were passed demanding the release of the interned Petroffs, supporting the Petrograd Soviet, urging it to fight with all its power "against the imperialist war and for international Labour solidarity."<sup>41</sup>

Chicherin then straight away wrote to the contacts established by him in his thirty months of exile in Britain. He enclosed a draft resolution of perspectives on the Revolution. The replies he received provide a rich trawl of information on the initial impact made by the Russian Revolution. The resolution intertwined Chicherin's long-standing campaigns in defence of the right of asylum and calls for the release of the Petroffs with a condemnation of "varlets" of the kidney of Arthur Henderson who were attempting "to utilize the revolutionary movement in Russia for the interest of the Entente, Imperialist coalition."<sup>42</sup>

Chicherin's letter of 26 March was sent to local branches of the ILP and BSP, to trade union branches and Trades Councils and to politically active individuals known to Chicherin and Mrs. Bridges Adams. The replies he received capture the excitement aroused among British socialists by the March Revolution.

One rank and file trade unionist, the railwaymen F. G. Temple, wrote: "Personally I am in great glee over this affair its the only bright spot that has shone during the war. Our only hope lies in holding out our hands to the proletariat of the world with an appeal/

appeal to realize our interests are identical and to fight no war but the one for the emancipation of our class."<sup>43</sup>

E. H. Eyres was both a conscientious objector and member of the National Union of Clerks. Assuring Chicherin "of my personal sympathy with the aims of the Russian proletariat whom I am proud to call my comrades," he promised to bring the resolution before both his union branch and the Woodford Trade Council.<sup>44</sup>

It was at this time that Chicherin was contacted by E. D. Morel, "the Foreign Secretary of Dissent", in A. J. P. Taylor's phrase. Morel "would be very pleased to meet" Chicherin "and discuss the Russian situation". He later sought Chicherin's aid in getting correspondence taken to Russia; "overloaded with work", Chicherin offered Maisky's services as a courier.<sup>45</sup> From the reams of correspondence in response to his appeal of 26 March it is clear that more than any other individual, Chicherin helped mould the response of the British labour movement to the March Revolution. His determination to unite British with Russian workers against the War refute an earlier biographer's claim that from the summer of 1916 Chicherin turned away from "internal British political developments back to the Russian émigré movement."<sup>46</sup>

Oblique testimony to the impact of Chicherin's labours is provided by the hostility he provoked in the press of patriotic Labour. "Foreign Sedition in Britain", thundered the British Citizen's headline. The journal went on to denounce Chicherin as "a political refugee straining the conditions of his asylum"; in CODORSGIL, "How many are Russians, how many are Jews, and how many...are of German origin?"<sup>47</sup> Alarmed by the work of both CODORSGIL and the FJPC, the British Workers' League anticipated the/

the tactics of Mosley by a generation. It launched a "Britain for the British" protest within the immigrant community, "Checkmating an insidious propaganda among the Alien Refugees." J. F. Green repeated the "shirker" and "job-stealer" accusations, accusing these "able bodied aliens of military age" of "moral treachery."<sup>48</sup>

Justice also raised a hue and cry over Chicherin and his agit-prop work. In an article published just after his arrest the author asked, "Who and What Are The Russian Socialist and Social Democratic Groups in London?"<sup>49</sup> It was a journalistic formula which exactly repeated what Justice had said at the time of the internment in December 1915 of Peter Petroff.

But Chicherin and his comrades were only one of the targets for the venom of the socialist super-patriots. Throughout 1917 they revelled in an orgy of abuse against those who hailed the Russian Revolution as opening the prospect of a revival of international socialism and the winning of a people's peace.

All sections of patriotic Labour had welcomed what one editor termed "the Russian sensation."<sup>50</sup> Thus the Executive of the National Socialist Party, the Hyndmanite rump of the BSP, hailed the March Revolution as increasing the likelihood of "complete victory over Germany."<sup>51</sup> Such sentiments were exactly similar to those of the British Workers' League whose leaders included J. F. Green. Stepniak's old comrade was overjoyed: "After the failure of the effort of 1905 I had not dared hope for this revival of democratic ambition and ardour...Let us pray that Russia will now take steps to prevent any unhappy disposition of her great forces."<sup>52</sup>

The reputation of Hyndman as "a more academic Socialist" allied/

allied with his vigorously preached defencism had led the War Cabinet to suggest that he might join the Labour Deputation which proceeded to Russia.<sup>53</sup> But throughout his long political life Hyndman had remained quirkily independent, a kind of socialist "Jackie" Fisher, his world-view a peppery mixture of chauvinism and radicalism. Thus in hailing the downfall of Tsarism Hyndman fired off a socialist ten-pounder on "The Need for a British Republic"<sup>54</sup> which alarmed the King's advisers.<sup>55</sup>

In the months following March while arguing that the Russian revolutionaries must "prevent German militarists from regaining ...(their) reactionary influence over Russia", Hyndman nonetheless advocated a policy of non-interference. British socialists should "let her alone. If she does not herself appreciate the German danger by now, no words of ours will convince her."<sup>56</sup> Hyndman and those who remained loyal to him were bitterly critical of those old comrades such as J. F. Green and Victor Fisher who had quit leading positions in the revolutionary party for a life of super-patriotism in the British Workers' League.<sup>57</sup>

By the summer of 1917 it was evident that Allied exhortations to revive Russia's will to win were not having the desired effect. Though revolutionary Russia rejected any notion of a separate peace the Petrograd Soviet proclaimed a policy of "revolutionary peace." Delegates from war-torn Europe would - it was hoped - come to neutral Stockholm, agree on a peace formula which by mass action could then be dictated to the ruling classes of the belligerent Powers. This call sent a wave of excitement through those sections of organized labour in Britain opposed to the war. However, such feelings proved alarming to patriots such as Green and his friends in the BWL. They determined that the Left must not go to Stockholm. Thus in mid 1917 there were to be bitter battles/

battles between activists of the Left and of the Right - but it was a conflict the origins of which lay many miles from Britain, in Russia.

The import of the March Revolution for the militant Left was encapsulated by one of Chicherin's many correspondents: "The overthrow of Tsardom would...be a great triumph for the principles of freedom, but a revolution of which the driving force is Socialist Internationalism is an infinitely finer event, as you yourself well know."<sup>58</sup> The writer thus warmly welcomed the decision by the United Socialist Council (hereafter the U.S.C.<sub>RG</sub>) to hold a Conference at Leeds on 3 June.<sup>59</sup> This body had been in existence since 1913 at the behest of the International Socialist Bureau, charged with the mission of forging unity among the reformist and revolutionary sections of the British Left.<sup>60</sup> In the early summer of 1917 it appeared as if this welding process might be effected by the intense heat generated from Russia. The Council took the view that "It is becoming increasingly evident that the forces which brought about the war are unable to make peace." They conceived their duty to be to work "for a complete and real International Peace based upon working class solidarity." That this latter was no chimera is manifested by the enthusiastic welcome which working-class meetings and organizations gave to the summons.<sup>61</sup>

Thus there gathered at Leeds 1150 delegates, of whom half represented trade union branches, Trades Councils and local Labour Party branches, while the ILP sent 294 delegates and the BSP 88.<sup>62</sup> Though opponents were to charge the convention as being unrepresentative of the labour movement there is evidence of alarm in the War Cabinet who requested the War Ministry "to ensure that no/

no soldiers in uniform attended the Conference."<sup>63</sup>

The Convention assembled in difficult circumstances. The original venue was denied the delegates and hotels refused to register visitors. In Leeds that day there were anti-semitic riots. At the Convention itself the super-patriotic 'Captain' Tupper attempted to discredit the claim of the organizers to speak on behalf of the labour movement.<sup>64</sup>

At the gathering, resolutions were passed in defence of civil liberties and calling for a peace made by the peoples of the countries. The co-ordinating force was to be Councils of Workmen's and Soldiers' Delegates to be set up on a nationwide basis in conscious imitation of the Russian Soviets.<sup>65</sup> The first great push towards the bouleversement of attitudes to Russia among Britain's radicals and socialists had begun. The March Revolution had transformed Russia from an object of sympathy into the lode-star for war-weary Europe to follow. One historian has said "This was the only achievement at Leeds. The eleven hundred delegates dispersed. The convention vanished into limbo..."<sup>66</sup>

Why was this so? A heckle of socialist scholars have shrilly denounced the ILP who dominated the proceedings at Leeds. Ken Coates has argued that "The parliamentarians were caught off-balance" at Leeds by the strength of rank-and-file feeling but headed it off by making revolutionary noises. For others, "They (the ILP-ers<sub>RG</sub>) fulfilled a definite role in riding the tiger only to kill it." A similar view is taken by another plebeian scholar: "most of the leading spokesmen...were right-wing politicians on holiday, indulging in the rare luxury of revolutionary speechifying...With an extremist stance they aimed to steal the thunder of/



of the real militants...and steer the movement into harmless channels."<sup>67</sup>

Do contemporary sources and opinions bear out this critique of the part played by that Lucifer of the Left, Ramsay MacDonald and his friends? One delegate reported the inspiring atmosphere at Leeds, but "the Conference lacked driving force." There had been much speechifying from the platform but too little from the body of the kirk: "Everyone pointed to the Russian road, but none was ready to lead the way."<sup>68</sup>

But apart from the alleged machinations of MacDonald and his ilk, very real obstacles prevented the translation into practice of the Leeds resolutions. Before, during, and after the Convention fears were voiced that the proposed workers' and soldiers' councils would interfere with the efficient working of existing organizations.<sup>69</sup> Even among sympathisers there were objections to developments that took place after 3 June.

In mid-July the Herald had reported "an inaugural meeting of what it believes to be the first military branch" attended by representatives from eight battalions.<sup>70</sup> Such developments alarmed at least one section among Britain's pacifists. This was the Socialist Quaker Society. A leading article in its journal stated, "the Russian model is not the right one...We have no right to call ourselves Pacifists...and then to set to organizing committees, the success of which is to depend upon the potential use of the Army, or parts of it, 'on the Russian model for the English Revolution.'...it is pseudo-pacifism that makes use of mutineers or potential deserters to kill the right people."<sup>71</sup>

Following on the Conference the U.S.C. had set up a committee to organize regional conferences which would then culminate in a national/

national Convention to be held in London. The provisional committee also issued circulars to the socialist Press. One of these claimed that the rank-and-file response was "without precedent" especially among the shop stewards in the engineering industry and in "The Railwaymen's Vigilance Committee."<sup>72</sup>

However, such developments took place in the face of ferocious opposition from a combination of the "union sacrée" of British labour and the Government. Thus the British Workers' League at public rallies and in its organ The British Citizen ran a sustained campaign against the Leeds Convention, "Mr. MacDonald's tame Conference...called in order to secure something like a vote, from which some plausible support may be secured for his mission" to Russia. The League claimed that "Behind the sneers of the Pacifists there was an international financial clique whose opportunities of making money were being interfered with by the War." The BWL attempted to counter the work of the U.S.C. in the regions after the Leeds Convention, taking every chance to smear what it termed "the English Leninites."<sup>73</sup>

The League did not, however, stop at the employment of counter-propaganda. It used physical force to break up meetings of the Workers' and Soldiers' Councils. Ploughshare reported one such episode at great length, in terms so lurid that the reader is put in mind of the pogrom and the knout. At the "Battle of Brotherhood Church" in Hoxton, London, 250 delegates were terrorised by an estimated 1800 B.W.L. supporters, who included Canadian uniformed soldiers. BWL Executive Committee members Victor Fisher and Joe Terrett were there, and an inflammatory leaflet had incited "Men of Hoxton" to "show these TRAITORS" on 28 July. Police in attendance had made no attempt to halt the mob forcibly/

forcibly entering the meeting place and bringing proceedings there to a dramatic halt.<sup>74</sup>

A few days later the War Cabinet discussed the disturbance at the Brotherhood Church. It decided that "Soldiers could not be permitted to join Soldiers' and Workers' Councils" and that "the Government intended to enforce Civil and Military Law regardless of whether the meetings were likely to be for or against the Government's war policy."<sup>75</sup> As an earnest of its intentions the War Cabinet confirmed the proposal of the Home Secretary to ban Soldiers' and Workmen's Committee meetings due to be held on 11 August and authorized the Scottish Secretary to prohibit a meeting due in Glasgow on that same date.<sup>76</sup>

Such action proved a telling blow against the attempts of the U.S.C. to "demonstrate the power of the people in a fashion never demonstrated before." The Scottish District Conference was banned. One report claimed that a protest demonstration was held a few yards away from the St. Mungo Halls: "thousands of people surge round an improvised platform" and "soldiers publicly shake hands" with Ramsay MacDonald.<sup>77</sup>

It has been alleged that "The Whitehall-sponsored violence and vandalism was a total success...and nothing further was heard of Workers' and Soldiers' Councils."<sup>78</sup> Yet the Glasgow Trades Council persisted. Council members met with shop stewards and representatives of socialist parties ranging from the Labour Party to the SLP: "It was ultimately agreed that a Local Committee be set up at once on the lines of the Workers' and Soldiers' Council." In the weeks that followed the Council discussed how the Government ban might be beaten and elected delegates to the local Committee.<sup>79</sup> Only in October does the business disappear from/

from the accounts of the Council's proceedings.

What judgement can be made on the significance of the "Leeds Convention"? Did it "vanish into limbo"? Was it a manoeuvre on the part of the devilishly sly MacDonald and his comrades in the ILP to secure a mandate for themselves? By autumn 1917 the attempt begun in June to set up "British Soviets" had foundered in the face of proscription and physical force displayed against it by the Government and the "super-patriots" of the labour movement. The social atavism unleashed in episodes such as "The Battle of Brotherhood Church" undoubtedly alarmed many of those who had welcomed the March Revolution and the revival of internationalism occasioned by it. As one section of pacifist opinion put it, "Some new form of propaganda for peace and freedom is needed for these times and the future...it is no use organizing meetings as of yore to be misunderstood."<sup>80</sup>

Equally significant, however, was a factor ignored by those who have written about the Leeds Convention. In July and August of 1917 the work of establishing Councils of Workers and Soldiers' Delegates in the U.K. was overshadowed by the fierce debate over whether or not the Labour Party and affiliated organizations should attend the Stockholm Conference. In fact, however, A. J. P. Taylor's use of the term "limbo" to describe the disappearance of the Councils may have been more accurate than he intended. In 1919 and 1920 the Councils were reincarnated in the shape of the "Hands off Russia" movement and the Councils of Action opposing British aid for Poland in the Russo-Polish war.<sup>81</sup>

Thus the Leeds Convention forms both a chapter in the history of British rank-and-file movements and it epitomises the euphoria occasioned by the news of the March Revolution. Leeds had been "a navvies/

navvies convention, a gatherin' of the rank an' file, the howkers, the hewers an' delvers, the spademen an' the navvies o' the movement...Ma bed-fellow had biked it a' the way frae Lanarkshire..."<sup>82</sup> And, as another delegate put it, "The supreme significance of the Convention was - the Convention" - the overwhelming feeling had been "a sense of liberation" not for the Russian people only but for "the British democracy."<sup>83</sup> In spontaneous fashion the members of the Convention had shown that they were tired of the war "that Labour has awakened to the horror of it, and are now demanding a people's peace without annexation and indemnity."<sup>84</sup> The champion of such a peace in the aftermath of March 1917 was Ramsay MacDonald. With inimitably audacious rhetoric he captured the notion of resurrection - the souls of the Bloody Sunday dead had risen "to a new triumph, a new power which was not for the Russian people only, but for the whole of Europe."<sup>85</sup> But, as we shall see, the attempt of MacDonald to harness this power to his political perspectives was to suffer set-backs in the course of 1917.

MacDonald's complex personality and eclecticism, the manner in which he elevated booming generalities to an art form and above all his actions in August 1931 made him an object of suspicion and execration among Socialists of all stripes both in his own lifetime and for decades thereafter. His most recent biographer has, however, gone far towards rescuing MacDonald from one dimensional analysis and has shown how the ambiguities of his personality and philosophy were assets: "His romanticism, his imprecision, his dislike of sharp outlines and his fondness for vague, elusive metaphors, all helped him to blur the differences between his heterogeneous...followers."<sup>86</sup> Hence the intellectual canvas of MacDonald's response to events in Russia was a chiaroscuro of light/

light and shade.

Straightaway MacDonald was immensely invigorated by the fall of Tsarism and hailed with enthusiasm the call of the Petrograd Soviet for a negotiated workers peace. The policies of the Petrograd workmen's leaders mirrored that of his own party - in this the ILP found "a new justification and expression of its policy."<sup>87</sup>

"A nimble susceptibility, an inflammable temperament, and that kind of eloquence which operates neither upon mind or will, but upon the nerves."<sup>88</sup> A character analysis of MacDonald? In fact, Trotsky's verdict on Kerensky shows how remarkably similar in temperament were the two men. Unsurprisingly MacDonald found in Kerensky a kindred spirit and in April wrote to him urging "that the Russian people should come into direct contact with our people and...announce the programmes upon which Europe may be at peace."<sup>89</sup> MacDonald was alarmed lest Kerensky be dished by "Pleckhanoff" and "Lanine" one of the "leaders of the extreme pacifist Left" and this early expressed his fear of Russia and Germany signing a separate peace.<sup>90</sup>

By the middle of May, therefore, MacDonald decided that he must go to Russia and ensure that Russia "put itself at the head of the Democracy of Europe"...but pursuing the ILP policy of a democratic peace freely arrived at by the belligerents.<sup>91</sup> The news enraged MacDonald's enemies among the super-patriots: "Unless British and French public opinion intervenes we may shortly anticipate a choice gathering of French and British treason mongers in Stockholm, whence a short journey will take them to Petrograd, there to support the pro-German propaganda of the miserable Lenin... and hasten the consummation of a German peace." They took the view/

view that MacDonald had set up the Leeds Convention to secure credibility for himself as tribune of the plebs. MacDonald must not be allowed to proceed abroad.<sup>92</sup>

A less alarmist view of MacDonald's proposed mission was taken by the War Cabinet, which heard that MacDonald and Jowett of the ILP along with Albert Inkpin of the BSP had applied for passports to Petrograd "presumably with the intention of stopping at Stockholm." In the discussion that followed "it was urged that he (MacDonald) could probably be counted on to take up a sound line in regard to annexations and indemnities."<sup>93</sup> The decision was then made that the men be allowed to proceed to Russia. When, in the aftermath of the Leeds Convention, there were protests from the National Sailors' and Firemen's Union and the BWL, the War Cabinet did not waver: "It was pointed out that, if Mr. Ramsay MacDonald went to Stockholm and adopted a German point of view, he would be absolutely discredited in this country. On the other hand, if he adopted the Allied point of view about Alsace Lorraine, the Germans would see that even extreme socialistic opinion was against them. In either case we should stand to gain." The decision stood - MacDonald might proceed to Petrograd but in Stockholm he was not to tarry. The Prime Minister himself "undertook to see Mr. MacDonald before his departure, and to obtain an undertaking in this sense."<sup>94</sup>

But despite his Premier's valedictory, MacDonald got no further than Aberdeen. There he found himself "not wanted on voyage" by the crew of the Burns Line vessel, the "Vulture", the only ship available on the Aberdeen-Bergen route. The reef on which MacDonald's progress foundered was his old adversary "Captain" Tupper. One of the crew has recorded his memories of the "'Vulture" Incident/

Incident': "we were addressed by Captain Tupper...He told us that at a meeting during the previous week Ramsay Mac. had condemned the Seamen's Union for claiming that the first reparation payments received from Germany should be paid to the widows and orphans of Seamen...As I understood it, Ramsay said there should be no such thing as Reparations. The purpose of Ramsay's visit across the sea, was to try and persuade the Russians to settle the war by arbitration. Thus it was decided that although Ramsay held a valid British Passport, we civilian members of the "Vulture's" crew could bar him from leaving Aberdeen!" The men then "trooped down the gangway each carrying an empty suitcase!" Instead of "six months' hard for our mutinous actions...the Burns Line awarded us all a gold medal..."<sup>95</sup> The "blacking" of MacDonald was loudly applauded by the leadership of the BWL which on the same day claimed that 10,000 of "London Labour Again Arraigns the Pacifists." J. F. Green attacked the proposed visit of MacDonald and Jowett while Victor Fisher claimed that "Behind the sneers of the Pacifists there was an international financial clique whose opportunities of making money were being interfered with by the War."<sup>96</sup> Perhaps with some sense of relief, the War Cabinet decided on "no further action to be taken...as Mr. Ramsay MacDonald was not engaged on any Government mission..."<sup>97</sup>

In fact, however, though MacDonald had been physically prevented from travelling to Petrograd he now waged a campaign to ensure the participation of a British delegation at the proposed round table conference at Stockholm. In such activity he was aided by an unlikely paraclete in the person of Arthur Henderson. Relations had been strained between MacDonald and Henderson in the period after August 1914 but in the summer of 1917 the two men both campaigned, albeit for different reasons, to get the British/



British labour movement to accept the Petrograd Soviet's invitation to send delegates to Stockholm.

Before going to Petrograd on behalf of the British Government as "a person calculated to exercise a powerful influence on the democratic elements which now predominate in Russia",<sup>98</sup> Henderson had openly campaigned against any assembly of socialists being held which might force the warring governments towards a negotiated peace settlement. In Petrograd, however, the scales had fallen from his eyes and he had come to support both the strategy of "revolutionary defencism" advocated by Tseretelli and the Provisional Government and the idea of a peace conference of socialists. On his return from Russia, Henderson had - in the company of Ramsay MacDonald - campaigned for such policies.<sup>99</sup>

The War Cabinet learned with shock that Henderson had slipped his leash and there ensued the famous "Doormat Incident" of 1 August in which Henderson was left outside the room as his War Cabinet colleagues discussed his wayward behaviour.<sup>100</sup> Henderson now put his full weight behind the campaign for Labour to attend Stockholm and on 10 August the specially convened Labour Party Conference voted overwhelmingly to attend Stockholm. Henderson was promptly dismissed by the War Cabinet which now passed through a stage of jitteriness: "It was generally agreed that the action of the Labour Party was likely to damage this country in the eyes of foreign Powers who would say that the British democracy had by its vote shown itself tired of the war..." One member even suggested "that a General Election should be held immediately...in order that the direct authority of the whole country might be behind the Government in their future conduct of the war." Sang froid prevailed, however. The War Cabinet decided to/

to wait for Prime Ministerial statements condemnatory of Henderson to take effect.<sup>101</sup> It was decided that no passports be issued to British delegates to Stockholm and in September the TUC came to the British Government's rescue when it overwhelmingly voted for a resolution that "no good purpose could be served by the holding of any such Conference at the present time..."<sup>102</sup> In mid-September, MacDonald - and by extension, Henderson - admitted defeat and gave up the idea of attending any conference held in Stockholm.<sup>103</sup>

Nonetheless, their response to events in Russia had conspired to bring together the powerful combination of straw boss and prophet, Henderson and MacDonald. After August, Henderson "acknowledged Labour's obligation as well as its right even in wartime to act from its own particular standpoint and in the light of its interests." He now set about reorganizing and restructuring the Labour Party.<sup>104</sup> Henderson now shared many of MacDonald's perspectives on foreign policy: "Both accepted the Russian formula of a peace without annexations or indemnities. Both opposed a separate peace between Russia and Germany. Both wanted a meeting of the International..."<sup>105</sup> Hence one of the consequences of the March Revolution was the way in which, both in organizational and in ideological terms, the Labour Party shook itself free from the ties of "Lib-Labism" and came to believe in itself not as a political pressure group but as an alternative to the Liberals and Tories. From the summer of 1917, and this directly as a consequence of the revolution in Russia, it was a party equipped with its own radically distinctive perspectives on foreign policy.

In the autumn of 1917, during the period of the Kornilovshchina, there existed confusion as to what was taking place/

place in Russia. Then in November came news of the seizure of power by the Bolsheviks. "What is Lenin After?" queried one writer.<sup>106</sup> It was in fact to be some weeks before the British Left crystallised its attitudes to the new state power. Thus Justice consigned the first news of the "Ten Days That Shook the World" to page 6, leading instead with tributes to the memory of Jack Williams, one of the founders of British social democracy. The paper relied in part on information received from David Soskice who had become Kerensky's secretary on his return to Russia. Soskice declared Lenin to be "a German agent...helped by German money through agents in Copenhagen and Stockholm."<sup>107</sup>

By the end of the year, however, the determination of the Bolshevik leaders to publish details of the secret agreements concluded between Tsarist Russia and its allies had given fresh stimulus to calls for an end to the fighting and for the signing of a peace treaty openly arrived at by the warring powers. Thus Forward gave great prominence to Foreign Commissar Trotsky, "The man who is giving the deceivers of Europe a red face by publishing the Secret Treaties."<sup>108</sup>

Relations between the British Government and the new state power in Russia had, however, remained on a plane of fractiousness - the respective Foreign Offices had become embroiled in the affair of the imprisoned Bolshevik nominee as ambassador to Great Britain, Chicherin.<sup>109</sup> Such a policy was roundly condemned by Ramsay MacDonald: "The new phase of the Russian tragedy is even sadder than the old. We do not like the new men in power and we show it... Either on account of our recklessness or of our blindness, we throw them into the hands of Germany." The Government had passed up favourable opportunities. It ought to have maintained contact/

contact with the new régime to prevent it "from drifting away from sympathy with the British democracy". And, the Government "ought at once to have revived the Stockholm Conference."<sup>110</sup>

MacDonald rendered these views simultaneously with the meeting of a special conference of societies affiliated to the TUC and the Labour Party. Here delegates had voted solidly for a radical foreign policy package. The following morning MacDonald had breakfast with the Prime Minister who then proceeded, on 5 January 1918, to articulate British war aims at a meeting with trade unionists.<sup>111</sup> A. J. P. Taylor has described this as a momentous event. "The government had hitherto evaded all demands for a definition of British war aims", but now Lloyd George was anxious to head off unrest among British workers and their leaders and so subscribed in public to such policies as recognition of the right of self-determination and the creation of a League of Nations.<sup>112</sup>

Justice pounced on Lloyd George's opportunism: "If the declaration is so powerful an epitome of the 'War Aims' of the Allied nations, the pity is that it was not made sooner. If made seven months ago, its effect in Russia would have been a matter of fact and not of conjecture."<sup>113</sup> Indeed by this time, the Bolsheviks had opened peace negotiations with the Germans at Brest Litovsk, which caused Ramsay MacDonald to grudgingly, but publicly, praise Lenin for his revolutionary will: "Russia required peace, and so did the peoples of Europe, and he went straight at it...fighting militarism with democracy's weapons". Lenin addressed himself not to the German war lords but to German social democracy: "Lenin in a week has done more...to bring about the democratic changes in Germany which President Wilson says are the/

the victory he seeks, than the American Army will do in a year of fighting."<sup>114</sup> When a Carthaginian peace was imposed on Russia in March, MacDonald was doleful: "...a separate peace has been forced upon her. She offered Europe a democratic settlement. She was made an outcast and had to accept a humiliating peace."<sup>115</sup> Since the March Revolution MacDonald had constantly feared a separate peace; now he was deeply disappointed that the appeal of Lenin and Trotsky across the trenches to the German workers and their leaders had had no palpable effect. On the Western Front the slaughter continued unabated.

The subtleties of MacDonald's response to the Revolutions of 1917 were, however, ignored by the super-patriots of the labour movement. As ever, his chief tormentors were the British Workers League who from September 1917 paid ever-closer attention to MacDonald with the adoption as prospective parliamentary candidate in Leicester West of J. F. Green. Green assiduously cultivated the notion that MacDonald was a fellow-traveller of Bolshevism: "he had listened without protest to Litvinov's speech at the Nottingham Conference of the Labour Party, had defended him in the House of Commons, and had praised the Bolsheviks in the Socialist Review." Green claimed his mission to be to disinfect Leicester.<sup>116</sup>

In the frenzied atmosphere of war-time politics it paid the BWL leadership to bang the patriot's drum. But in fact MacDonald was no Bolshevik. His praise of Lenin was an act of political expediency. He was attracted to one side of Bolshevism - its challenge to the expansionist war-aims of the belligerent governments - but he eschewed the Marxist-Leninist theory of the dictatorship of the proletariat. In this he was typical of many centrists/

centrists of his day, as was noted by his fellow-columnist in Forward, "Rob Roy": "the favour shown in this country to Bolshevism, ranging from doubtful friendliness to persistent championship and discipleship largely arose from the unfounded hope that it would hurry on a 'Pacifist' peace."<sup>117</sup>

Chicherin's London comrades had hailed the October Revolution as an inspiration and object lesson for the world's workers, "seeing in it the first truly proletarian revolution" and expressing confidence "that the powerful call of the Russian proletariat will awaken in all countries the desire for peace".<sup>118</sup> But only among the revolutionary groupings that came together to form the Communist Party of Great Britain in 1921 was there to be direct emulation of Bolshevism. Yet it can be argued that the Revolution encouraged the militancy of British workers, leading sections of the rank and file to identify themselves with Bolshevik policies.<sup>119</sup>

Who, then, were the British revolutionaries who came to regard the simulation of Leninism as not merely a gesture of fraternal sympathy but as an inexorable necessity?

On the extreme left of the political spectrum were the Bakuninist anarchists grouped round the journal Spur which was edited by Guy Aldred. Spur had appeared throughout the war despite several of the British Bakuninists falling foul of the military authorities.<sup>120</sup> Welcoming the October Revolution, Spur argued that the Bolsheviks were boldly innovative: "Whilst continuing to denominate themselves social democrats...(they)...have no longer anything in common with German 'scientific socialism'; they have burnt the tomes of the savants..." These anarchist-communists were thus excited by the possibilities of a new form of socialism taking/

taking shape based on "the workshop unit." But as a member of the Glasgow group put it: "the Spur appeals only to those who do not need a spur." The Bakuninist message had failed to make any impact on the working class.<sup>121</sup>

Less isolated was the De Leonist S.L.P., which like the Bakuninists understood the essence of the October Revolution. Even before the Bolshevik seizure of power, the Party's organ had spoken of "More Lessons from Russia." The counter-revolutionary thrust of Kornilov had both alarmed the SLP and reinforced its theory of the State: "...the capitalist class in order to carry forward its economic ambitions must capture the State in order to restore order and to subdue the workers."<sup>122</sup> Hailing the October Revolution, Socialist asked, "Will British Labour take a lesson from Russia?" for "the great driving force in the revolution was the clear-sighted working class."<sup>123</sup>

In the months that followed the SLP hailed the "Triumph of SLP Tactics" in Russia. One article compared the Paris Commune of 1871 with the Great October and declared that the Bolsheviks had not repeated the error of making a fetish of the "maintenance of the political state." The Bolsheviks had rightly abolished the Constituent Assembly: "rightly too, they established an industrial government, a government of Soviets. This is the policy of the SLP, which we have propagated for years."<sup>124</sup> In the course of 1918 the grafting of two varieties of Marxism, De Leonism and Leninism, continued and by the end of the year was complete. In the General Election the SLP put forward three candidates as a tactic in the class struggle which in their view now approached its Armageddon. Bourgeois democracy since the crises of August 1914 and the Revolutions of 1917 lived on borrowed time. Society was now "governed/

"governed and controlled by a small ring of very wealthy capitalists." Against this, the working class must seize state power "as a Proletarian Dictatorship over the whole of society and bend it to its will." The power base must be Workers' and Soldiers' Councils which already existed in embryo on the shop stewards' movement and industrial unionist societies. Calling for "A SOVIET REPUBLIC FOR BRITAIN" the comrades of the SLP doubtless agreed with the declaration of one of its most vigorous publicists, "We are proud of the title - of British Bolsheviks."<sup>125</sup>

Analysis of the files of the Socialist reveals that in this process of implantation Alexander Sirnis played a large part. In the last year of his life Sirnis had translated several key articles written by Lenin for the Socialist and provided readers with a digest of the Russian press. Sirnis also contributed to Plebs which magazine also gravitated towards Bolshevism in the months after October 1917.<sup>126</sup> The Marxist theoreticians of the Plebs League emphasised the great social experiment that was under way in revolutionary Russia: "The revolution cannot content itself with the political transformation of Russia. It must also philosophise with the hammer, must forge anew in the economic and social smithies." They sought to transfer Russia's "New Tactics for the Social Revolution" onto British soil. The workers' committees, the outgrowth of the shop stewards' organizations were the basis of an entirely new method of political organization, "the skeleton of the means by which the economic power of the workers will secure its new political expression. This is why the analogy between the workers' committee movement here and the soviet revolution in Russia is so full of interest and so abounding in promise for the future." So complete was the enchantment/



enchantment of British Marxists by the Russian experience that the Constituent Assembly could be dismissed as "a sacrosanct parliament" and "Anyone who condemns them (the Bolsheviks<sub>RG</sub>) on this count may be a good democrat, but is certainly a bad socialist."<sup>127</sup> Such sentiments were unlikely to be echoed by the leadership of the ILP!

The BSP likewise became committed to both defence and imitation of the October Revolution. Thus in the course of 1918 the solidarity of purpose which had existed in 1917 under the aegis of the United Socialist Council was subject to increasing strains. The BSP had assiduously followed events in Russia. Before the storming of the Winter Palace they had called for the Soviets to take power since only they could "rally the people of Russia in the defence of the revolution." Hence the Party was unqualified in its applause for the October Revolution: "Socialists - genuine and not make-believe socialists - have seized the reins of power. For the first time we have the dictatorship of the proletariat established under our eyes."<sup>128</sup> The advice of the Party was that its members should "Learn to Speak Russian" and the idea of a workers' convention was again revived: "a gathering of the direct representatives of the rank and file, elected in the factories, workshops, and mines...then we shall soon see how easily Russian can be spoken even in these islands without the knowledge of grammar or vocabulary!"<sup>129</sup>

In the period from 1918 to 1920 a complex - and controversial - period in the history of the British revolutionary movement ensued. Revolutionaries could hope to make political capital out of the wave of industrial militancy and the unrest in the armed forces which were a feature of the immediate post-Armistice politics./

politics. The numerically small conglomeration of Marxist sects and groups who gave unqualified support to the October Revolution embarked on tortuous negotiations. In 1920 the Communist Party of Great Britain was born but it never became a mass party of the kind which came into existence in France and Germany. MacDonald and the ILP leadership proved unwilling to "Learn to Speak Russian", in spite of the enthusiasm of many of the ILP rank and file to do so. There was no equivocation or woolliness in MacDonald's rejection of Leninism in 1919-20: He remained firmly committed to parliamentary roads to the socialist arcady and used all his political will and energy to resist the move to affiliate the ILP to the Comintern. "So long as that International stands on the Moscow pronouncements, every particle of influence I can command will be against the ILP joining it."<sup>130</sup>

The Communist Party was to remain an ultramontanist sect, degenerating in the 1930s into lickspittle loyalty to Stalinism. One writer has advanced an explanation of this phenomenon pertinent to this dissertation. Walter Kendall has crudely ascribed the failure of the revolutionary groups to break out of their minority position in the British labour movement to the malign influence of the Bolsheviks in general and Theodore Rothstein in particular.

Kendall's view is that "the CPGB was an almost wholly artificial creation which wrenched the whole course of the movement's left wing out of one direction and set it off on another." In Easter 1916 the BSP had finally rid itself of the malign influence of Hyndman which "represented a major step towards the formation of a native British Marxist tradition." After the expulsion of Hyndman "there was...a maturing crisis between the party's reformist wing, led by Fairchild and Alexander, and its revolutionary/

revolutionary wing of which Maclean was the most articulate spokesman." In Kendall's eyes, John Maclean "was the only BSP leader to possess a revolutionary will to power" but in the crucial year of 1918 Maclean's arrest and imprisonment removed him from the battle for revolutionary leadership of the BSP. The way was clear for Theodore Rothstein to become "chief Bolshevik representative in Britain". The BSP "now became increasingly dependent on Soviet financial aid, and came ever more under Russian influence."<sup>131</sup>

Kendall's construction is in fact an intellectual house of cards. Soviet aid to British revolutionaries was minute compared to the cost to the British Government of the war of intervention in Russia between 1918-21. At a time when capitalist Britain attacked Soviet Russia with fire and sword, subsidising counter-revolution and subversive intrigue it was a legitimate revolutionary tactic for the sorely-pressed communists to render financial aid to British revolutionaries.

Kendall's "native British Marxist tradition" is a somewhat weird notion. As a form of political theory Marxism is international in its component parts. British economic history French socialist ideas and German philosophy were welded together by Marx into his system of revolutionary politics. It is unlikely that Mr. Kendall's revolutionary heroes would themselves have accepted such a description for they were convinced international socialists. In the formation of their world-view they had been deeply influenced by the writings of the "native German" Marxist, Karl Kautsky!

More seriously, in his pursuit of the notion of the British Communist Party as an artificial creation, Kendall insufficiently stresses/

stresses the opposition of the leadership of the centrist ILP such as MacDonald. It was not a case of fear, pusillanimity or corruption that made politicians such as MacDonald reject ILP affiliation to the Comintern. It was that they were convinced democrats who believed in parliamentary government. "We cannot cheer Spen Valley and adhere to Moscow at the same time. I am cheering Spen Valley."<sup>132</sup> Thus Ramsay MacDonald hailed Labour's electoral success of January 1920.

And, Mr. Kendall's assessment of Theodore Rothstein, the devil's disciple of his morality tale, will not do. In his view, Russian refugees had an undue influence on the British revolutionary movement. In a quite uncritical way and with no regard for the multiplicity of political opinions held by them, ranging from narodism to anarchism to Zionism to Marxism Kendall argues that "the Russian émigré colony laid the basis for a tie between the British revolutionary socialist movement and the Russian Revolution far more directly and explicitly than could otherwise have been possible."<sup>133</sup> Rothstein, as we know, had come to Britain as a Narodnik, had then worked for the SFRF and then become a social democrat deeply influenced by German Marxism. We have observed that Rothstein played political possum during the Great War, concealing his identity through a variety of aliases. Furthermore, in these years Rothstein's Marxist perspectives equated to those of Kautsky, the very man vilified by Lenin!

The conversion of Rothstein from Kautskyism to Leninism can be placed somewhere in May 1918. On the eve of the October Revolution, Rothstein had sought to minimise the differences between Mensheviks and Bolsheviks: "This distinction between the two currents is probably smaller among the rank and file than among the/  
the/

the leaders..."<sup>134</sup> But in May 1918 Rothstein began to polemicise for a "New International of Revolutionary Socialism".<sup>135</sup> Rothstein's Damascus experience was not untypical of the ultra Left during this period. These socialists passionately identified with the Bolsheviks, most of them wanted nothing more than to become members of the British Bolshevik party. The natural and sensible policy for the Russians was thus to see that a single unified party emerged out of groups which prior to October 1917 had engaged in years of inter-necine feuding. This too is unsurprising. In the past generation there has been observed the imitatory revolutionary politics of the Guevaras of Gilmorehill and the Sandanistas of Surbiton!

Ironically, in view of the way in which he has been exalted by Mr. Kendall for his revolutionary ardour and "will to power",<sup>136</sup> John Maclean may be taken as the best example of the effect which the Russian Revolution had on one revolutionary socialist. In the months of freedom which Maclean had in 1917/8 he flung himself whole heartedly into his work as Soviet Consul in Scotland. His speech from the dock of 9 May 1918 shows that he passionately identified with the October Revolution.

- "...the finest Scot of his day,

One of the few true men in our sordid breed

A flash of sun in a country all prison-grey."<sup>137</sup> -

On one level alone, Maclean is remarkable as the only 20th century Scot in political life to have poetry (as opposed to lampoon) written in his honour. Indeed a personality cult has grown up around his memory which Maclean would doubtless have detested. For two generations of Scots radicals and socialists he has become something of a cult figure. His undoubted courage in the face of vicious persecution is indisputable as is his consistent/

consistent respect for Marxist theory and his insistence on the importance of educating the working class in Marxism. One contemporary has captured the essence of Maclean: "The workers' message dominated and consumed him until that message became his personality. Apart from his class, he was nothing, because his class, its sorrows, its struggles, had become his life and being."<sup>138</sup> If Maclean may be encapsulated in a single term, he was "raznochintsy".<sup>139</sup>

In the previous chapter it has been established that before 1917 Maclean had established a close working relationship with Petroff and Chicherin. Hatred of Tsarism was a component part of Maclean's weltanschauung and he enthusiastically hailed the Revolutions of 1917. In January 1918 he was appointed Bolshevik Consul in Glasgow and for the next five months until his imprisonment worked energetically on behalf of the families of the men who had a few months earlier been deported to serve in the Russian Army. This was work carried through in the face of the deliberate obstructiveness of the British Government.<sup>140</sup> An instance of MacLean's selflessness was the donation by him of the surplus of the "Maclean Release Fund" to the wives and children of the deportees.<sup>141</sup>

In mid-April 1918 Maclean was arrested and charged with sedition. At his trial, in the best tradition of socialist revolutionary principles, he turned the tables on his accusers. A succession of witnesses alleged that at various meetings Maclean had urged Scottish workers to follow the example of the Russian proletariat. At times Maclean's defence reads strangely. He offered no analysis of the way in which the working class had taken power in Russia, but instead concentrated on the argument that the/

the Bolsheviks had been responsible for far fewer deaths than the Tsarist authorities: "Inside Russia, since Lenin and Trotsky and the Bolsheviks came into power, there have been fewer deaths than for the same period under any Czar for 300 years."<sup>142</sup> At one stage Maclean interrupted his political analysis to claim that during his previous sentence in Peterhead the authorities had tampered with his food. Yet despite this, through Maclean's conduct of his defence there runs as a red thread his intense admiration for the great Soviet experiment, and for the strategies adopted by the Russian delegates at Brest Litovsk. By contrast the British Government had thrown over the opportunity thereby given to end the war.

Maclean was sentenced to five years' penal servitude but by December 1918 he was again at liberty, the direct result of a sustained agitation by the movement of organized labour. A few weeks later he polled a large vote in the Gorbals constituency poll - 7436 as against the 14,247 cast for the "coupon" candidate, George Barnes.<sup>143</sup> This represented the summit of Maclean's political career. In 1919 he became increasingly hostile to the pro-Comintern leadership of the BSP and at Easter 1920 he quit the Party. Until his death on 30 November 1923 he campaigned against the Communist Party of Great Britain and its policies, calling instead for a Celtic anschluss of Scottish and Irish workers' republics.

Why did Maclean break so dramatically with the BSP? In the years after his death Communist Party stalwarts such as William Gallacher and Tom Bell claimed that Maclean's behaviour was the result of mental instability, brought on by his dreadful experiences in jail and by the malign influence of Peter Petroff.<sup>144</sup>

Evidence/

Evidence to the contrary has been provided by James Clunie who as a young man was a comrade of Maclean in the years 1921/3. Letters written by Maclean reveal him as enthusiastic as ever a campaigner on behalf of the working class.<sup>145</sup> Maclean may have been morbidly suspicious but a persecution complex is not in itself part of the mental illness of paranoia ascribed by Gallacher. Clunie's observations were confirmed by Nan Maclean Milton in her biography of her father, published in 1973.

In this study Mrs. Milton has argued that Maclean refused to join the CPGB because of his acute distrust of Theodore Rothstein and Lieutenant Colonel Malone M.P. (the latter was a sudden convert to Bolshevism). Maclean was bitterly critical: "The less Russians interfere in the internal affairs of other countries at this juncture, the better for the cause of Revolution in those countries. Rothstein's activities drove Fairchild out of the BSP, and his approaches to me created a situation that compelled the BSP to gently slip me out. The leadership of the BSP then fell to...Malone...who in 1918 was on the executive of the Reconstruction Society, the body that flooded the country with leaflets poisoning the minds of the people against Russia and the Russian Revolution."<sup>146</sup>

But as we have seen in the preceding chapter, Maclean's distrust of Rothstein was almost certainly not new. Maclean's comradely relationship with Peter Petroff is well established and we have documentary evidence of Petroff's dislike, even hatred, of Rothstein. Petroff must have conveyed this sentiment to his friend Maclean. Yet this observation does not explain why Maclean, a revolutionary socialist devoted to the defence of the Russian Revolution, did not - like the bulk of British revolutionaries - become/



become a member of the Communist Party. Why did he journey across the moors and heathers of Celtic nationalism rather than to the steppes of Muscovy? Scholars such as Mr. Kendall argue that he took this path for ideological reasons. Yet study of Maclean's political itinerary in the period 1920/3 fails to reveal that he had thought out principled differences with Lenin and the Bolsheviks. The answer to the "mystery" of John Maclean is perhaps more humble and prosaic. He increasingly allowed personal antipathies to predominate, thinking - perhaps correctly in view of the bad blood between Rothstein and his old comrade, Petroff - that Rothstein and his group wished to push him into the wings of the revolutionary party, as a propagandist for the "Hands Off Russia Movement."

This quirkiness of character allied to Maclean's limited development as a Marxist combined to drive Maclean into a political cul-de-sac. Maclean was a propagandist and educationist of merit, a man of limitless courage. But he was a man with no experience in building a revolutionary party like the Bolshevik Party and he had no experience of underground work. These negative tendencies combined to ensure that one of History's ironies came to pass. Through his close contact with the mass of Russian émigrés in the West of Scotland and his work on their behalf, Maclean drew enormous inspiration from the events of 1917 yet it came to naught and Maclean is remembered today as Scotland's Connolly rather than Scotland's Lenin.

Footnotes to Chapter Eight

- 1 British Citizen, 31 Mar. 1917.
- 2 David Marquand, op. cit., p. 207.
- 3 Justice, 29 Mar, 5 Apr. 1917; the awakening of Russia was doubtless aided by the vocal renderings of Madame Clara Butt, Clarion, 30 Mar. 1917.
- 4 British Citizen, 7 Apr. 1917.
- 5 War Cabinet Minutes (Cab 23)/2/100 21 Mar. 1917 (held at the Public Record Office, London).
- 6 Article in the New Republic, 4 Aug. 1917 quoted by "Rob Roy" in Forward, 22 Sept. 1917.
- 7 Cab 23/2/98 16 Mar. 1917.
- 8 Tom Johnston, Forward, 24 Mar. 1917.
- 9 Walter Kendall, op. cit., passim.
- 10 A. J. P. Taylor, "Troublemakers..." op. cit., p. 146.
- 11 David Marquand (r) of Kendall, op. cit., in The Listener 27 Mar. 1969.
- 12 Thanks to the generosity of the Carnegie Trust, the writer was able to study the Cab 23 series and Volumes 33/37 of the Cab 41 series and Volumes 1/26 of the Cab 42 series held by the Public Record Office. These records provide much evidence of the increasing concern of British politicians and service chiefs with Russia's military performance. The Records of the Cabinet Office to 1922 - Public Record Office Hand books No. 11 (London 1966) outline the records available.
- 13 Cab 23/2/128 1 May; Cab 23/2/134 8 May 1917.
- 14 Ibid., /2/104 26 Mar. 1917.
- 15 Ibid., /2/107 28 Mar. 1917.
- 16 Justice, 3, 10, 17, 24, 31 Jul. 1909.

- 17 Forward, 14 Apr. 1917.
- 18 Cotton Factory Times, 6, 13 Apr. 1917.
- 19 Forward, 14 Apr. 1917.
- 20 Justice, 10 May 1917.
- 21 Ibid., 7 Jun. 1917; Cotton Factory Times, 22 Jun. 1917.
- 22 A. J. P. Taylor in The Observer, 10 July 1983.
- 23 Robert Blake in The Listener, 7 July 1983.
- 24 Kenneth Rose, George V (London 1983) p. 210.
- 25 Cab 23/2/118 13 Apr. 1917; Cab 23/2/115 6 Apr. 1917.
- 26 Arthur Marwick, op. cit., p. 205.
- 27 Forward, 3 Mar. 1917.
- 28 Ibid., 24 Mar. 1917. Stewart was a fairly frequent contributor and was later to polemicise on the question of ILP affiliation to the Third International (ibid., 17 Jan. 1920).
- 29 A. W. Humphrey, International Socialism and the War (London 1915), chapter 15 "The Russian View"; Cotton Factory Times, 11 May 1917.
- 30 The style certainly suggests Rothstein.
- 31 The Call, 21 Jun. 1917.
- 32 Plebs, May, 1917.
- 33 See, for example, ibid., June 1917.
- 34 Socialist, Apr. 1917. Hence the mission of Lord Milner to Russia on the eve of the March Revolution was accorded sinister significance.
- 35 Ibid., May, 1917.
- 36 Ibid., Apr. 1917.
- 37 Socialist, Dec. 1918; no. 195; Dec. 1918 no. 196. See also Justice, 30 July, 1914; Socialist, Aug. 1914; ibid., Apr. 1917 and passim 1917/8. Sirnis also wrote for Plebs magazine Aug. 1917.

- 38 Barry Hollingsworth "David Soskice in Russia in 1917"  
(European Studies Review 6 (1976)).
- 39 Article in the I.L.P.'s Socialist Review, May/June 1917.  
Maisky was also billed to speak in Birmingham at a meeting  
convened by the Trades Council, Justice, 17 May 1917.
- 40 Cotton Factory Times, 23 Mar. 1917.
- 41 Ibid., 30 Mar. 1917.
- 42 G. V. Chicherin, letter of appeal, 26 Mar. 1917 (Chicherin  
Papers "Correspondence with British Organizations" File).
- 43 F. G. Temple, a member of both the Ashton - under - Lyne  
ILP and the Manchester District Council of the National Union  
of Railwaymen, letter to Chicherin, 8 Apr. 1917 (ibid.)
- 44 E. H. Eyres to Chicherin, 6 Apr. 1917 (ibid.). Over seventy  
replies to Chicherin's circular letter have survived - of these  
over half are from branches of the ILP.
- 45 J. P. Moss (manager, National Labour Press), writing on  
behalf of Morel to Chicherin, 18 Apr. 1917; Morel to  
Chicherin, 17 May 1917; Chicherin to Morel, no date (ibid.).
- 46 R. K. Debo, George Chicherin: Soviet Russia's Second Foreign  
Commissar (University of Nebraska, 1964; Ph.D. thesis) p. 63.
- 47 British Citizen, 28 Apr. 1917.
- 48 Ibid., 21 July 1917.
- 49 Justice, 13 Sep. 1917.
- 50 Clarion, 23 Mar. 1917.
- 51 Justice, 22 Mar. 1917.
- 52 British Citizen, 31 Mar. 1917.
- 53 Cab 23/2/107 28 Mar. 1917.
- 54 Justice, 5 Apr. 1917.
- 55 Kenneth Rose, op. cit., p. 213.

- 56 Justice, 7 June 1917.
- 57 Ibid., 21, 28 June 1917.
- 58 A. W. Humphrey to G. V. Chicherin, 7 Apr. 1917 (Chicherin Papers "Correspondence With Individuals" File).
- 59 Article in Cotton Factory Times, 18 May 1917.
- 60 Ken Coates, loc. cit., p.(i).
- 61 Forward, 19 May, 1917.
- 62 Cotton Factory Times, 8 Jun. 1917.
- 63 Cab 23/2/147 25 May 1917.
- 64 Forward, 9 Jun. 1917. The local press for week beginning 4 June 1917) refers to an anti-semitic pamphlet "Our Hyphenated Citizens" which circulated in Leeds during this period. The writer records his gratitude to the staff of Leeds City Libraries for their help in providing information and their efforts to locate this pamphlet. Colin Holmes op. cit., pp. 130/3 analyses the riots but does not suggest any connection with the Convention. On Tupper, see British Citizen 9, 16 June 1917; Edward Tupper, The Seamen's Torch (London 1938) pp. 185/8. Campbell Balfour, "Captain Tupper and The 1911 Seamen's Strike in Cardiff" in Morgannwg 14, 1970 delves into the origins of this kenspeckle figure.
- 65 Ken Coates, loc. cit., passim.
- 66 A. J. P. Taylor, The Troublemakers op. cit., p. 139. It is a view shared by Mr. Taylor's old friend, Lord Bullock, for whom Leeds was "a preview of the British Left between the wars, anarchical, Utopian, already fascinated by and profoundly ignorant of the Russian experience." Alan Bullock, Ernest Bevin (London, 1960), p. 75.

- 67 Ken Coates, loc. cit., p.(iii); A. Clinton and G. Myers, "The Russian Revolution and the British Working Class" in Fourth International 4(iii), Nov. 1967, p. 74; Raymond Challinor, "The Origins of British Bolshevism" op. cit., pp. 180/1.
- 68 Catholic Socialist Notes reporting Councillor John Wheatley's verdict. This noted Clydesider had attended Leeds as a delegate of the Catholic Socialist Society (Forward, 16 June 1917).
- 69 Refer Forward, 19 May 1917, "Answers and Notes" column; speech of J. L. Toole (National Union of Clerks) at the convention reported in Cotton Factory Times, 8 June 1917; throughout the summer of 1917 writers in Justice repeated the claim that trade unionists such as Smillie and Williams had attended Leeds in a personal capacity.
- 70 The news was repeated by A. W. Humphrey in Cotton Factory Times 13 July 1917.
- 71 Ploughshare, Aug. 1917.
- 72 Cotton Factory Times, 20 July 1917.
- 73 British Citizen, 2, 16, 30 June 1917; 4 Aug. 1917.
- 74 Ploughshare, Sep. 1917.
- 75 Cab 23/3/200 31 July 1917.
- 76 Cab 23/3/207 8 Aug. 1917. Throughout this period the War Cabinet was regularly briefed on "pacifist and revolutionary organizations in UK" as it termed them. (See for example Cab 23/4/253 and Cab 23/4/274A.
- 77 Forward, 21 July, 18 Aug. 1917.
- 78 Raymond Challinor Origins.... op. cit., p. 183.
- 79/

- 79 Glasgow Trades Council Minutes 15 Aug, 5, 26 Sept. 1917.  
A recent history has maliciously suggested that the Glasgow Soviet "folded up when the Corporation would not provide it with a school classroom to meet in." - Christopher Harvie 'No Gods and Precious Few Heroes...' (London 1981) p. 21.
- 80 Ploughshare, Sep. 1917.
- 81 Allen Hutt, The Post-War History of the British Working Class (London 1937) pp. 33/40.
- 82 "Sanny McNee" in Forward, 16 Jun. 1917.
- 83 William Stewart, ibid., 9 June 1917.
- 84 Glasgow Trades Council Minutes, 6 June 1917: report back from delegates.
- 85 Speech in the Metropole Theatre, Glasgow, reported in Forward, 21 Apr. 1917.
- 86 David Marquand, op. cit., pp. 245/6. Professor Marquand has relied extensively on MacDonald's papers.
- 87 Forward, 14 Apr. 1917.
- 88 Leon Trotsky, op. cit., Vol. I p. 183.
- 89 David Marquand, op. cit., pp. 210/1 quotes the letter in full.
- 90 Forward, 28 Apr. 1917.
- 91 Ibid., 5, 12, 19 May 1917.
- 92 Victor Fisher, leading article, "The Internationalism of Treason" in British Citizen, 12 May 1917; see also issues of 19, 26 May and 2, 9 June 1917.
- 93 Cab 23/2/141 21 May 1917.
- 94 Cab 23/3/154 5 June 1917; ibid., /3/158 7 June 1917.
- 95/

- 95 John H. Anderson to R. Grant, letter of 2 Apr. 1971. Mr. Anderson also wrote to the Aberdeen Evening Express (28 Dec. 1970) an account of the affair. The writer records his gratitude to the Evening Express for publishing his request for participants to come forward with their memories (refer editions of 15, 18, 28 Dec. 1970 and 7 Jan. 1971). See also Marquand, op. cit., pp. 214/5 and Tupper, op. cit., pp. 188/191.
- 96 British Citizen, 16 June 1917.
- 97 Cab 23/3/160 11 June 1917.
- 98 Ibid/2/144 23 May 1917.
- 99 J. M. Winter - "Arthur Henderson, The Russian Revolution, and the Reconstruction of the Labour Party", The Historical Journal (Cambridge) 15 (1972) pp. 759, 767/9; David Marquand, op. cit., p. 218.
- 100 Cab 23/3/202 1 Aug. 1917.
- 101 Cab 23/3/212 11 Aug. 1917.
- 102 Justice, 13 Sep. 1917.
- 103 Forward, 15 Sep. 1917.
- 104 J. M. Winter, loc. cit., p. 770.
- 105 David Marquand, op. cit., p. 220.
- 106 Forward, 1 Dec. 1917.
- 107 Justice, 15, 22, 29 Nov. 1917.
- 108 Forward, 15 Dec. 1917.
- 109 See above, Ch. 7, *passim*. The minutes of the War Cabinet reveal that the initial response of the British Government to the Bolshevik proclamation of power was little other than a policy of "drift". Thus Balfour opined that, "it is to our advantage to avoid as long as possible, an open breach with this crazy system." (Cab 23/4/295 10 Dec. 1917).



- 110 Forward, 29 Dec. 1917.
- 111 Ibid., 5 Jan. 1918; David Marquand, op. cit., p. 222.
- 112 A. J. P. Taylor, 'Troublemakers op. cit., pp. 140/2.
- 113 Justice, 10 Jan. 1918.
- 114 Forward, 12 Jan. 1918.
- 115 Ibid., 9 Mar. 1918.
- 116 British Citizen, 23 Mar, 20 Apr. 1918.
- 117 Forward, 12 Oct. 1918.
- 118 Cotton Factory Times, 30 Nov. 1917.
- 119 Walter Kendall, op. cit., p. 164, pp. 167/8; On 27 January 1918 a mass meeting of members of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers in London's Albert Hall threatened resistance to the Government's manning proposals if the Government did not enter into immediate negotiations for a peace of "no annexations and no indemnities." (British Citizen, 2 Feb. 1918).
- 120 Guy A. Aldred, No Traitor's Gait (Glasgow, from 1955 in monthly instalments) passim. On Aldred refer J. T. Caldwell's affectionate memorial in "Essays in Scottish Labour History - A Tribute to W. H. Marwick" (Edinburgh, 1978).
- 121 Spur, Mar/Apr. 1918; Dec. 1917.
- 122 Socialist, Oct. 1917. The anonymous author of this article may well have been the Derby bookseller, William Paul, who in 1917 had written a booklet, "The State, Its Origin and Function" (Glasgow, 1917).
- 123 Socialist, Dec. 1917.
- 124 Ibid., Mar. 1918. The article's author is given as A. E. Cook. From its style and content the writer considers this to be a pseudonym for William Paul.

- 125 Socialist, Dec. 1918. The author of the title was H. Wynn Cuthbert.
- 126 Ibid., Feb, Mar. 1918. The former issue contained Lenin's "The Aims of the Bolsheviks" and the latter a fourteen point Bolshevik manifesto on state power; see also Plebs, Aug. 1917.
- 127 Plebs, Mar, Oct. 1918. The authors were Eden and Cedar Paul whose main contribution to revolutionary politics in Britain was their translation into English of articles from continental theoretical journals.
- 128 Call, 4 Oct, 29 Nov. 1917.
- 129 Ibid., 14 Feb. 1918. The deliberate aesopianism suggests Theodore Rothstein as the author.
- 130 Forward, 10 Apr. 1920; this newspaper gave wide coverage to the "unity negotiations" of 1919-20. See also David Marquand, op. cit., pp. 256/60.
- 131 Walter Kendall, op. cit., pp. (xii), 104, 180, 182.
- 132 Forward, 17 Jan. 1920.
- 133 Walter Kendall, op. cit., pp. 82/3.
- 134 'John Bryan' in Plebs, Aug. 1917.
- 135 Walter Kendall, op. cit., p. 245.
- 136 Ibid., p. 234. In the 1970s Mr. Kendall was one of the pillars of the John Maclean Society, delivering the main address at the meeting commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the death of Maclean.
- 137 Hugh MacDiarmid "John Maclean" (1934), found in Collected Poems of Hugh MacDiarmid (Edinburgh, 1962), p. 242.
- 138 Guy Aldred, quoted by Nan Milton, John Maclean (London 1973) p. 13.

- 139 The word used by Leon Trotsky in The Young Lenin, (Harmondsworth 1974) p. 23, to describe Lenin's father, like Maclean a schoolteacher.
- 140 Refer John Maclean Papers - File 4: Russian Consulate, 1918. See also Glasgow Trades Council Minutes 29 Nov. 1917, 13 Feb. 1918. Forward, 30 Mar. 1918, reported the arrest of his Russian aide Louis Shamnes who was then deported.
- 141 Forward 1 Dec. 1917.
- 142 Condemned From the Dock...John Maclean's Speech From the Dock (London n.d.).
- 143 Nan Milton op. cit., pp. 175/83.
- 144 William Gallacher Revolt on the Clyde (London 1936; 1949 edn,) pp. 59/60, 121/2, 214/6. Also, his Last Memoirs pp. 72/3, 92/3, 141. Iain MacLean The Legend of Red Clydeside *passim*, Edinburgh 1983, offers the reader a prophylactic to Gallacher's outpourings.
- 145 James Clunie The Voice of Labour, (Dunfermline 1958) pp. 81/101.
- 146 John Maclean, article of 1920, printed in The Vanguard, found in Nan Milton, op. cit., p. 219. Maclean repeated his distrust of the two men in his 'Open Letter to Lenin', published in The Socialist 30 January 1921 and found in Nan Milton op. cit., p. 227. Mrs. Milton and other writers have been denied access to the official prison documents on Maclean. Malone served in the Royal Navy 1905/18; Coalition Liberal M.P. for East Leyton in 1918 but joined the BSP in 1919 after visiting Russia. Jailed for sedition after a speech of November 1920. Quit the Communist Party before 1922, joining the I.L.P. Refer Kendall op. cit. pp. 404/5 and Dictionary of Labour Biography, Vol. 6, s.v. "Malone, Lieut.-Col. Cecil John L'Estrange" by David Martin.

### Conclusion

In 1869 Marx had written to his old friend Dr. Kugelmann on the need for the British working-class to take the lead in dissolving the Union of 1800. "This aim," he said, "should be followed, not as a matter of sympathy with Ireland, but as a necessity based on the interests of the English proletariat."<sup>1</sup> Such sentiments anticipated the bouleversement in attitudes to Russia brought about by the October Revolution. For many revolutionary socialists it was now not so much a question of attitudes to be adopted towards Russia as a rejection of one's past political experience and the espousal of novel beliefs: "Modern political parties, such as the BSP and the SLP have practically ceased to function, for this reason - that they are very little advanced from what Lenin described as pitiable debating clubs. The only legitimate British equivalent to the Russian Soviets are the Industrial and Social Committees... gradually arising throughout the country..."<sup>2</sup>

Yet for the majority of socialists such a step was too large to take. Formed in the early 1920s, the Communist Party of Great Britain never became a mass party unlike the Communist Parties of Germany and France. In this isolation the centrists of the ILP played a crucial part, with MacDonald especially energetic in the leadership's campaign against affiliation to the Comintern. For him the Soviet system was to be resisted. Any "method of government which permanently disfranchises any class as a class cannot be stable, and is not consistent with Socialism...If revolution were to come, the Soviet would have to be instantly established, but if workmen knew their power, they would require neither revolution/

revolution nor Soviets."<sup>3</sup>

To MacDonald, direct action, Soviet-style, was a weapon to "be used sparingly and only on big and urgently important issues." One such occasion was when East India dockers "blacked" the cargo of the "Jolly George". The cargo had been marked "Munitions for Poland." MacDonald commented that, "The encouragement and equipment of Poland to engage upon an aggressive war with Russia...is such a crime as justifies direct action on the part of the nation."<sup>4</sup> In the weeks that followed hundreds of Councils of Action were set up and a general strike was threatened. The spirit of the Leeds "Soviet" of 1917 now became flesh and blood.<sup>5</sup>

The mass action of 1920 was evidence that if only a few thousand intellectuals and workers were to form the cadres of the British Communist Party, nonetheless a deep reservoir of sympathy existed in all sections of the British labour movement for the fledgling Soviet regime. Throughout the inter-war period and beyond, the USSR was seen through a pinkish haze by fellow travellers of all classes. "A roseate broad view of Russia"<sup>6</sup> persisted; which not even the grotesqueries of Stalinism was to disturb. In part this was due to the achievement of the pre-Revolution generation of anti-Tsarist publicists, from the Stepniak circle to Chicherin and his comrades. Owing to their labours a kind of "Popular Front" of sympathisers had been created, of radicals and socialists held together by hatred of Tsarism and sympathy for the broad aims of the revolutionaries. In the generation after the Revolution of 1917 this "Popular Front" continued to exist, though much altered in personnel and in its activities.

In large part the methodology of this dissertation has been to/  
to/

to focus on charting the activities of numerous individuals. These have been categorised as British radicals and socialists, while the émigrés have been divided into the "Anglo-Russians" and the "native Russians." Indeed it is the émigrés who give coherence to the tale. If this thesis were to have an alternative title it might be, "Russian political émigrés and their impact on British political life, c1890/1917".

One image of the refugees speaks of the "guttural sorrow" that "seeps from heavily-jowled or hawk-like foreign faces"<sup>7</sup> but in fact from Stepniak to Prelooker to Chicherin one is impressed by the boundless energy that characterised each of these men. Each sensed that one of the peculiarities of their hosts was a sense of sympathy for the fate of the downtrodden beyond England's shores. Thus the émigrés set to work to provide otherwise blunt ideals with a whetstone - the cause of suffering Russia.

In the decades after 1917, death, changed opportunities and widely different objective circumstances affected the "dramatis personae". Among the Anglo-Russians Theodore Rothstein played the most decisive, and controversial role. His activities centred on the fight to form a Communist Party: "The initiative in this came directly from him - first in persuading the leading group of the BSP (in the first months of 1919) and then in acting as a mediator in discussions with the other Socialist groups involved." In this work Rothstein quarrelled with his old comrade, E. C. Fairchild, who "thereafter carried on a bitter personal campaign against F. A., not hesitating to 'uncover' my father's necessarily conspirative part."<sup>8</sup> Since the war years, as we have seen, Rothstein had become well-versed in these subterranean labours. Hence, when the Communist Party of Great Britain was founded after protracted/

protracted unity negotiations, Lenin may well have exclaimed, borrowing a phrase of Marx, "Well grubbed, old mole!"<sup>9</sup>

Jaakoff Prelooker, as we have seen, was hostile to Bolshevism, but took no part in the political activities of the new generation of Russian émigrés that was born in October 1917. Until his death in 1935 he continued to write but his literary productions became increasingly esoteric. His last work was the fantasy, "Petrified Alive on Mount Parnassus", a tale inspired by a dream of a visit to Greece.<sup>10</sup>

When Kerensky was consigned to the rubbish bin of History as a consequence of the seizure of state power by the Bolsheviks, his aide, David Soskice suffered similar misfortune. He returned to Britain and resumed political work but much of it was performed "sotto voce".<sup>11</sup> He was involved in the activities of the remnants of the S.R. party abroad and worked for the defence of human rights in the Soviet Union just as he had done before 1917. Soskice acted as a consultant to the British Government in their involvement in the Civil War and wrote on Russian politics for the Observer and for the Christian Science Monitor. Soskice died during the war years and until the emergence of a recognisable "school" of historians of the Russian emigration in the past two decades he was to be chiefly remembered as the father of Frank Soskice who as Home Secretary in Harold Wilson's administration was to have his own particular involvement with immigrant life.<sup>12</sup>

In January 1918 Chicherin and Petroff were deported. Chicherin was never to return to Britain but the career of Petroff took many twists and turns. In the 1930s he found a haven in Britain that had been denied to Trotsky in 1929. In 1934 his condemnation of the Stalinised Comintern was published with the title "The Secret of/  
of/

of Hitler's Victory" and to the end of his life Petroff remained enmeshed in revolutionary polemics, attracting the most bitter hostility from enemies such as William Gallacher.<sup>13</sup>

Last of the "old guard" of the Russians in the SFRF, N. W. Chaikovskii had likewise returned to Russia. From his base in Archangel he endeavoured to act as a "third force" in the Civil War. He attempted to set up a socialist republic which was both anti-monarchist and anti-Bolshevik. From afar he received the sympathy of both MacDonald and Hyndman who argued that malign monarchist and capitalist interests had interfered with Chaikovskii's Union of the Regeneration of Russia, sabotaging its aims.<sup>14</sup>

So Chaikovskii returned to exile but there was to be no revival of activities in the manner of the SFRF. It was the view of MacDonald for one that the intellectual environment in which organizations such as the Friends of Russian Freedom had flourished no longer existed: "A generation ago the moral authority of the Free Churches of Leicester was supreme. It was a generation which sought cash and which believed in itself. But it had a backbone...It was fired by freedom as it understood it. Now that has gone."<sup>15</sup> It was an environment in which the "cultivated late Victorian" and "Gladstonian liberal internationalist" MacDonald had thrived.<sup>16</sup>

Outwardly it might seem that J. F. Green secured his greatest moment of triumph winning victory over MacDonald in the December 1918 election. Green was, however, soured by the triumph of Bolshevism which he consistently attacked in the following years.<sup>17</sup> On the death of Lenin Green recognized his crucially important role in the successful seizure and retention of power: /



power: "an able, logical and ruthless fanatic, he had none of the idealism so characteristic of the older Russian reformers with whom I was so long associated."<sup>18</sup>

In tracing the careers of these groups of individuals across a generation of time it has been the writer's intention to eschew eclectic crudities. Chapters have been written which, it is hoped, add to the history of political ideas in Britain and in particular help revise stereotypes of the insularity of the informed British public. One "peculiarity of the English" was to be periodically subject to gusts of outward-looking moral indignation, as evidenced in the "Bulgarian Atrocities" campaign of 1876. A generation of refugees from Tsarism succeeded in harnessing and energising these blasts of outraged sensibilities. The inter-action between these émigrés and their hosts explains the nature of the response in Britain to events in Russia between 1890 and 1917. Anti-tsarists from Stepniak to Chicherin transformed Russophobia to a form of Russophilism which had as its base rejection and hatred of Tsarism and sympathy for the demands of the revolutionists.

Limits are imposed on any writer by such diverse factors as editorial edicts and the reserves of energy available to the writer. These ensure that the historical process is inevitably fitted onto a bed of Procrustes. Thus it is unsurprising that in the inter-War period many of the salient features of the dissertation are again observable.

Hence MacDonald's intimation of the demise of the form of internationalism as espoused by Allanson Picton was premature; the creed was perpetuated by such disciples as Gilbert Murray and Lord Cecil, activists of the League of Nations Union. Russophobia re-emerged/

re-emerged with Churchill its inspirator. Russophilism after the heady episodes of the "Hands Off Russia Movement" waned but was given fresh stimulus with the coming to power of Hitler in 1933. A new generation of sympathisers towards Russia was born among the British intelligentsia but for some at least their practical activities took warped form in the "climate of treason", their internationalism a bastard caricature of the noble principles of Spence Watson and his generation.<sup>19</sup> Yet it was in the 1930s that proletarian internationalism enjoyed its finest hour. The British members of the International Brigades were fired with the same enthusiasm as the workmen and socialists who three decades earlier had helped the gun-runner, Thomas Dugger Keast, in an outpouring of unsullied personal idealism. But it is for others to unravel this thread of continuity. If History is seen to repeat itself after 1917 it is to be remembered that the elements have different weights. New chapters in the history of internationalism await their historian.

Footnotes to Conclusion

- 1 Quotation found in article "The Freedom of Small Nations" (no author given) in Plebs August 1918.
- 2 "Mr. John S. Clarke (editor of the Worker) on the Third International" article in Forward, 24 Jan. 1920.
- 3 Ibid., 7 Jun. 1919.
- 4 Ibid., 22 May, 1920.
- 5 A. J. P. Taylor, English History... op. cit., p. 193, describes the outcome of this mass pressure on the Lloyd George Government as "a glorious victory."
- 6 Ronald Blythe, The Age of Illusion - England in the Twenties and Thirties (London 1963) p. 107.
- 7 Louis McNeice, "The British Museum Reading Room" in the collection Plant and Phantom (London 1941) p. 22.
- 8 A. Rothstein, Iz Vospominanii ov ot'se, loc. cit., pp. 52/3. The author makes no mention of the alienation of Maclean from the new Party.
- 9 Walter Kendall, op. cit., Chapters 13 and 14, constructs an account largely hostile to Rothstein.
- 10 Hastings and St. Leonards Observer, 30 Mar. 1935 - found in the Prelooker Papers.
- 11 Thus Soskice sent apologies for his non-attendance at a "Conference on Russia" at which the keynote was anti-Bolshevism, Positivst Review, Feb. 1919.
- 12 John Slatter 'The Soskice Papers: A Guide', Sbornik, 8 1982 passim.
- 13 William Gallacher, Last Memoirs (London 1966) pp. 72, 73, 92, 93. A revision of Gallacher's vilification of Petroff is found/

found in James Smyth and Murdoch Rodgers "Peter Petroff and the Socialist Movement in Britain, 1907-18" in Immigrants and Minorities 2(iii), Nov. 1983.

14 Forward, 26 Oct. 1918; Justice, 12 Sep. 1918.

15 Forward, 21 Dec. 1918. In the previous issue MacDonald spoke of the influence on him of the works of J. Allanson Picton, Leicester Liberal MP and leading SFRF member.

16 David Marquand, op. cit., p. 3.

17 Thus Green moved the resolution at a conference organized by the National Democratic Party to fight "the Bolshevik Menace", British Citizen, 5 Jun. 1919.

18 Positivist Review, Mar. 1924.

19 Andrew Boyle, The Climate of Treason op. cit., has attempted to unravel the bizarre beliefs of four chronically alienated members of the British intelligentsia.

Appendix: "Contemporary Illustrations and Graphics"

Key to Materials

- 1 Century Magazine 36, May 1888 p. 2: "The Boundary Post", illustration accompanying George Kennan's article "Siberia and the Exile System".
- 2 Ibid., 36, June 1888 p. 162: "An Exile Party on a Muddy Road Near Tiumen".
- 3 Ibid., p. 178: "Exiles Going on Board the Barge".
- 4 Ibid., p. 182: "Inside the Women's Cage, Convict Barge".
- 5 Ibid., 37, December 1888: "A Break for Liberty", illustration accompanying Kennan's article, "Life on the Great Siberian Road".
- 6 Free Russia 7(ii), February 1896: Memorial Portrait of Stepniak.
- 7 Ibid., new series n/v July 1911: Black-bordered title page in memoriam Robert Spence Watson. The journal's masthead was designed and drawn by Walter Crane.
- 8 Publicity photograph of Jaakoff Prelooker.
- 9 Souvenir photograph of Jaakoff Prelooker's presentation "An Evening With Count Tolstoi and Rubinstein".
- 10 Justice 29 May 1909: The Social Democratic Party went on to reprint the front page of this issue in poster and leaflet form.
- 11 Ibid., 24 July 1909: The cartoon "The Czar's Nightmare" signed "AN, Paris" accompanied an article by Tom Quelch.
- 12 Punch, 15 August 1917: Cartoon by Bernard Partridge. The cartoon is reprinted with detailed analysis in Martin Walker, Daily Sketches: a cartoon history of British Twentieth century politics . (St. Albans, 1978).

- 13 Hinckley Times, 8 September 1917: Cartoon of J. F. Green and J. Ramsay MacDonald published at the time of Green's adoption as British Workers' League candidate for the parliamentary constituency of Leicester West.
- 14 G. V. Chicherin: an autographed photograph presented to M. Bridges Adams and lent to the writer by her grandson, Mr. N. Bridges-Adams.
- 15 The Socialist, 12 December 1918: the Socialist Labour Party's election manifesto "A Soviet Republic for Britain".

Commentary:

- 1/5 Kennan's revelatory articles "created a sensation on both sides of the Atlantic"<sup>1</sup>. His exposure of the treatment of political prisoners and exiles was heightened by the stark images of the line drawings which liberally illustrated each article in Century magazine. The reader was left in no doubt that Tsarism imposed its rule by the drastic imposition of physical force imposed on all type of dissident.
- 6 Stepniak's will-power and determination shine forth from the photograph. Addleshaw's epilogue pays testimony to Stepniak's struggle to maintain the offensive against Tsarism during a period of acute difficulties for the revolutionary movement.
- 7 The illustration is interesting on several counts. The British founder of the SFRF was justly remembered. With his death the SFRF faced a further blow as it struggled to remain in existence and to publish Free Russia. Walter Crane's masthead neatly encapsulates how many SFRF supporters conceived/

conceived their activities and that of Britain, offering succour to the sorely-tried Russian democracy.

8 Prelooker's questing, lively, irrepressible personality is here shown.

9 An illustration both of how Prelooker managed to subsist during the early years of his self-imposed exile in Britain and how in one manner awareness of Russian culture percolated into the British consciousness. Not all Russian émigrés agreed with such methods. Thus Volkhovsky argued that such displays might degenerate into caricatures of Russian life more worthy of the music hall than a serious political campaign.<sup>2</sup>

10 In summer 1909 the S.D.P. ran a campaign of protest against the second visit of Nicholas II to Britain. The nature of their dissent may be seen from the article by "Wat Tyler". It is a litany of curses against the Tsar and a criticism of the Liberal Government's part in the visit. Questions were asked in the House about the S.D.P.'s campaign and on 3 July Justice asked, "Dare They Prosecute Us?" The author obliquely suggests the use of physical force against Nicholas. In the end the Tsar only travelled as far as Cowes, Isle of Wight making the affair something of a triumph for Britain's Marxian revolutionaries.

11 Tom Quelch wrote a dramatic and atmospheric article for Justice reciting the indictment against the Tsar. The cartoon and its footnote skilfully intensified the impression of contempt and disgust that the reader might feel. It was published the day before the Trafalgar Square demonstration of protest against the Tsar's visit to Britain. At this meeting the/

the police confiscated this edition of Justice (reported in Justice, 31 July 1909).

- 12 Russia's March Revolution opened up the possibility of an end to the war through a freely negotiated peace. But the efforts of British radicals and socialists to attend the Stockholm conference called by the Petrograd Soviet were met with a barrage of Press hostility of Passchendaele intensity.
- 13 The main target for the gunfire of the patriotic Press both locally and nationally was Ramsay MacDonald. The excerpt is illustrative of this, while it sheds light on an important juncture in the life of J. F. Green, one of the key figures in the leadership of the SFRF.
- 14 No date exists for this autographed photograph of Chicherin clad in the diplomatic garb of the Soviet state. Little warmth exudes from this severe portrait to which the subject has added no message.
- 15 This double-page spread from the Socialist neatly illustrates the bouleversement in attitudes towards Russia felt among British revolutionary socialists, a process wrought by the October Revolution. It may thus be compared with illustration 7 above.



Footnotes To Appendix

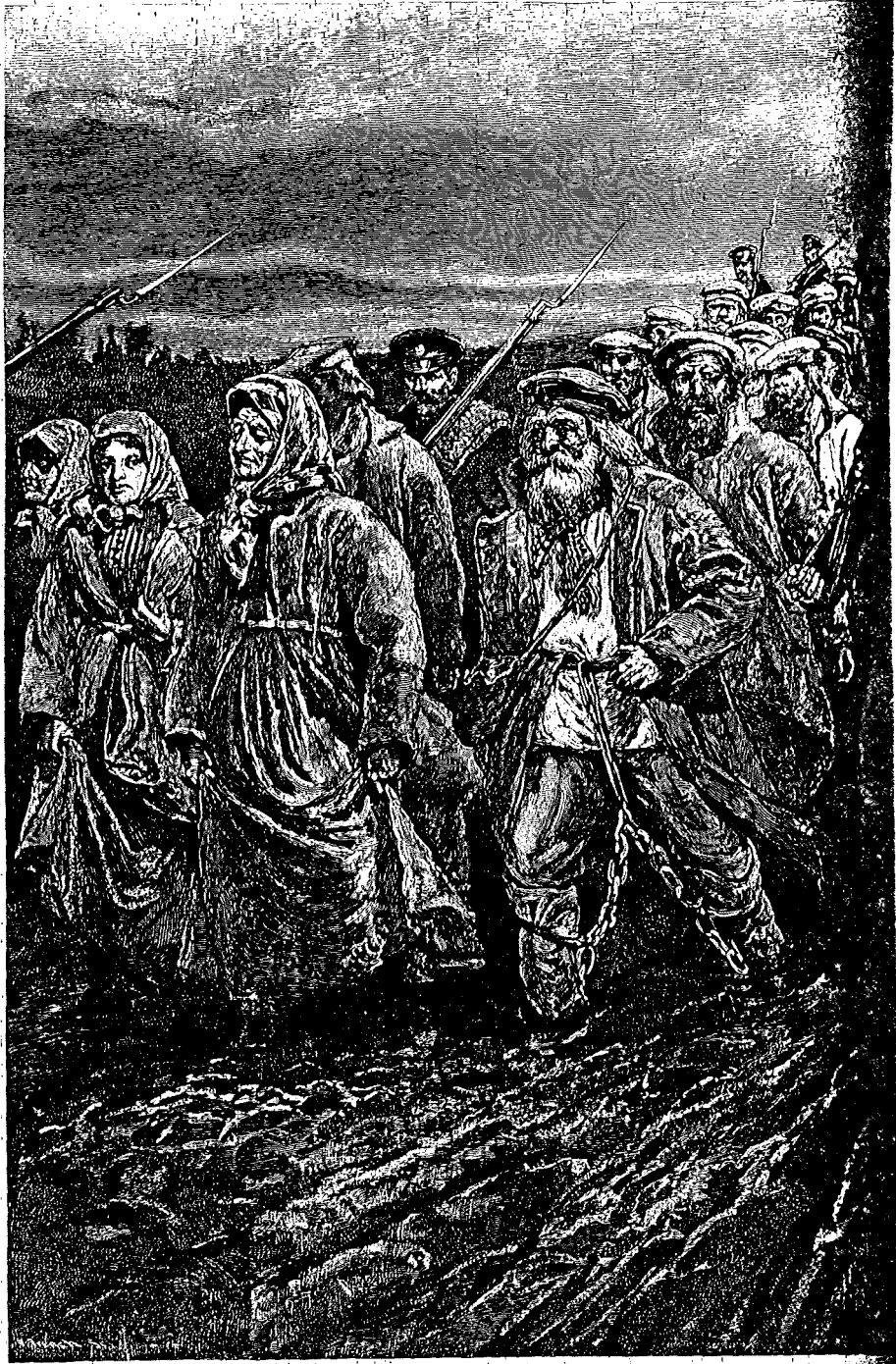
- 1 Donald Senese, "Felix Volkhovsky..." loc. cit. p. 69.
- 2 Free Russia 8(ix), Sep. 1897.



THE BOUNDARY POST.

*They have marched away into Siberia*





AN EXILE PARTY ON A MUDDY ROAD NEAR TIUMEN.



EXILES GOING ON BOARD THE BARGE.

committee had strongly recommended it, and when the Government disapproved the recommendation, he resigned.

Subsequent conversation with other citizens of Tiumen and with officers of the Exile Administration more than confirmed all that had been told me by Mr. Ignatof and the warden. The report of the Medical Department of the Ministry of the Interior, extracts from which were furnished me, showed that the sick rate of the Tiumen forwarding prison for 1884 was

28.4 per cent.; or, in other words, nearly third of the whole prison population received hospital treatment. When one considers from 17,000 to 19,000 exiles pass every through the Tiumen forwarding prison, that thousands of sick are treated at the pensary and in their cells, and are not included therefore in the hospital records, one can partly realize the human suffering and the extent of which that prison is the scene.

In order fully to understand the scope

their rifles; the exiles crossed themselves devoutly, bowing in the direction of the prison chapel; and at the word "March!" the whole column was instantly in motion. Three or four Cossacks, in dark-green uniforms and with rifles over their shoulders, took the lead; a dense but disorderly throng of men and women followed, marching between thin, broken lines of soldiers; next came the telegas with

## THE CONVICT BARGE.

HAVING witnessed the departure of the marching parties, we went down Saturday afternoon to the steamer-landing to see the embarkment of seven hundred exiles to Tomsk. The convict barge, which we were permitted to inspect, did not differ much in general appearance from an ordinary



INSIDE THE WOMEN'S CAGE, CONVICT BARGE.

the old, the sick, and the small children; then a rear-guard of half a dozen Cossacks; and finally four or five wagons piled high with gray bags. Although the road was soft and muddy, in five minutes the party was out of sight. The last sounds I heard were the jingling of chains and the shouts of the Cossacks to the children to keep within the lines. These exiles were nearly all penal colonists and persons banished by Russian communes, and were destined for towns and villages in the southern part of the province of Tobolsk.

steamer, except that it drew less water and had no rigging. The black iron hull was 220 feet in length by 30 in width, pierced by a horizontal line of small rectangular ports which opened into the sleeping-cabins on the lower deck. The upper deck supported large yellow deck-houses about seventy feet apart, one of which contained three or four hospital wards and a dispensary, another, quarters for the officers of the crew, and a few cells for exiles belonging to the noble or privileged class. The space between





A BREAK FOR LIBERTY.

Behind oaken doors and padlocks,  
Behind bars and locks of iron,  
We are held in close confinement.  
We have parted from our fathers,  
From our mothers;  
We from all our kin have parted,  
We are prisoners;  
Pity us, O our fathers!

If you can imagine these words, half sung,  
half chanted, slowly, in broken time and on a  
low key, by a hundred voices, to an accom-  
paniment made by the jingling and clash-  
ing of chains, you will have a faint idea of  
the "Miloserdnaya," or exiles' begging song.  
Rude, artless, and inharmonious as the appeal

# Free Russia

THE ORGAN OF THE ENGLISH

Society of Friends of Russian Freedom.

Edited by F. V. Volkovsky and J. F. Green.  
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VOL. 7.—No. 2.]

FEBRUARY 1st, 1896.

[ONE PENNY.]

STEPNIAK—KRAVCHINSKY.



One man there was ignored a tyrant's will,  
One resolute voice that thundered o'er the fight;  
The vallant heart, though dead, is living still,  
Lo! the sun rises while we wail 'Good-night.' "

"STEPNIAK" (*The Academy*, Jan. 4.)

PERCY ADDLESHAW

Robert Spence Watson, LL.D., *Hon. Treasurer*, Bensham Grove, Gateshead.  
Miss G. L. Mallet, *Hon. Secretary*, 132, Cromwell Road, South Kensington, London, S.W.

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## CONTENTS.

Robert Spence Watson (with portrait. By F. Volkhovsky and J. F. Green).—Constitutionalism under the Tsars.—Russian Universities and High Schools.—A letter from George Kennan.—The Bloody Five Years.—Prison Atrocities.—The Aliens Question.—The Aliens Bill.—Two Books on Finland (by Primus Secundus).—Notes and News.—Our Annual Gathering.—Sale of Russian Peasant Industries.—The "Potemkin" Fund.—List of Subscriptions.

We must apologise for the non-appearance of the April number of FREE RUSSIA. The Editor was unfortunately too ill at the time to undertake the work, but made arrangements with a friend to take his place. By great ill luck his friend was also taken ill, and was consequently unable to do the work of editing the number at the proper time. This caused such delay that it was thought better to omit the issue and to publish an enlarged number in July.

## Robert Spence Watson.

I.

Do not palter with the truth, out with it, whatever the consequences may be.—

R. SPENCE WATSON.

Every country has its own pressing needs, its own problems of the day which absorb public attention, and it is difficult to awake and maintain real, active and widespread interest in a foreign movement, however just, however appealing to the best feelings of humanity. This is especially true of the liberation movement of a country so unlike Great Britain, and, therefore, so little comprehensible to a foreigner, requiring from him so vigorous an effort of imagination, as Russia. And yet, nowadays, national life has become so inter-twined with international, that no important national movement in the interests of liberty and justice can ignore international support.

So it is not surprising that when Stepaniak in the eighties of the last century began his crusade in this country, denouncing Russian official tyranny and pleading in favour of the Russian people; his voice was for a considerable time that of one crying in the wilderness. Not that his words produced no effect. They did. They prepared the soil of interest and sympathy for





JAAKOFF PRELOOKER, RUSSIAN REFORMER.

# COUNT TOLSTOI AND RUBINSTEIN

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ALEX. AYTON, PHOTO.

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QUEEN STREET HALL, EDINBURGH.

3RD MAY 1884.

# JUSTICE

## THE ORGAN OF SOCIAL DEMOCRACY

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DISTRICT COUNCIL.

H. QUELCH

(Editor of "Justice")

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8:15 Sunday Morning, June 6th—

COLNE MARKET GROUND.

8:45 Sunday Afternoon, June 6th—

NEELSON.

8:45 Sunday Night, June 6th—

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## NICHOLAS THE BLOODY!

### An Open Letter to the Czar.

Sir,—I understand that you are accustomed to being addressed in much more obsequious terms than that which an ordinary Englishman like myself would use towards any other man—friend or foe. But in the English language does not contain any one word by which I could express my loathing and detestation for you, this cosmopolitan expression will have to serve. I offer no apologies. If it offends you, so much the better. I have no fear that this will not meet your eye, because, serious as are your crimes in keeping "Justice" out of the hands of your subjects, you are fully aware of the fact that they are not by any means lavishly successful, and you yourself, like every other member of the monarchist international, take care to be regularly supplied with a copy. It is, indeed, the only justice you know, although you hate it as much as you do the great principle for which it stands, and after which it is named.

I cannot say that I, in behalf of "Justice," welcome you to these shores. I would only do so in the name of "Justice." If you were coming here to be hanged over to the common hangman. Opposed as I am to capital punishment, I am, nevertheless, forced to recognise that there are certain poisonous and dangerous creatures whose existence is so harmful to humanity that they are destroyed without mercy wherever found, their destruction not being regarded as a punishment, but simply as an act of self-protection on the part of society. You are it to yourself that you should be in that category, and as one who would be welcomed anywhere outside of hell. I am ashamed of my fellow-countrymen when I think that we have failed to show a level that King Edward and his Liberal colleagues should not hesitate to insist on as to invite you here as the honoured guest of the British nation.

Your friend and fellow-criminal, Abdul, has been forced by his loving subjects to do that long-deserved and well-merited journey into which it is much to be regretted you have not already been compelled to enter.

But Abdul was long ago consigned to oblivion by British statesmen and doctors, none of whom would have dreamed of inviting him here to confer honour upon him! And Abdul has been an angel of light by comparison with yourself. The massacre which he aided and perpetrated—were for the most part, provoked by racial and economic antagonism, apart from which, all credits and debts were balanced in his dominion. He

did not, either, as a rule, make war upon his own people.

You, on the contrary, have aided and abetted the imprisonment, torture, and massacre of thousands of the Russian people. You are known to them—poor, defenceless, industrious, thrifty, docile, faithful, credulous and loyal as most of them are—as their Little Father. And well do you deserve the title. There is, indeed, little of the paternal about you, except that you have been careful to observe "Justice's" admonition not to "spare the rod and spoil the child."

As proof of your paternal love for your people, it may be said with truth of you, as of one whose superiority you would scarcely admit: "Those whom he loveth he chasteneth." If your love for your people is to be judged by the chastening they have received at your hands, it must be well-nigh immeasurable.

You have been proud to inscribe yourself as the head and chief of the order, the Black Hundreds, which have been organised in all parts of Russia to pillage, rob, outrage, torture, and murder thousands of innocent men, women, and children of your own people. You and your child, the hereditary heir to your blood-stained throne, both wear upon your breasts the badge of murder and outrage—the insignia of this gang of butchers. You have compassed the persecution of Populists, his imprisonment for five years, and his exile to Siberia, because he dared to have the courage to expose the scoundrelly treachery of your creature and accomplice, Axel.

Even Stolypin, the hangman, whose love of executions has led to the hangman's noose being nicknamed "Stolypin's necktie," has proved too mild and humane to satisfy your lust for human blood. It has been alleged that your Black Gang were party to a plot of wholesale assassination, of which he was to be one of the victims, some of the agents of which are even now being tried in Finland for the murder of Professor Heltainen.

It is idle for your apologists—it is, indeed, wonderful that you should have any—to pretend that you are only an innocent puppet in the hands of an unscrupulous gang of bureaucrats. Any man, and still more an absolute monarch, is responsible for his own acts and for those of his agents; and I cannot but hold you guilty of the deeds of the Black Gang, when you have openly expressed your approbation of that sinister organisation, and have subscribed £10,000 to the funds

of its St. Petersburg president, Dr. Dubrovic.

That you are a neurotic, superstitious epileptic is probably true. That fact, if fact it be, might well excite pity, were it not that your monstrous cruelty bespeaks all one's pity and sympathy for your unhappy victims. If you are so madly abnormal as not to be accountable for your crimes, you should be put under restraint as a dangerous lunatic, or be consigned to a lethal chamber, or be exiled to England as an honoured guest.

For your crimes are colossal, great as the crimes of the teachers in numbers, and monstrous as well for their abominable cruelty. The whole ravished world—too appalled at a tribunal—has been horrified by the story of your inquiries and the sufferings of your victims. The horrible tortures inflicted on men, women, and children in your prisons at Kiga; the horrors of the fortress of Schmalenberg and of Peter and Paul, the beatings to death, the hangings; the starvation, the tortures and diseases due to overcrowding; the ruthless shooting down of prisoners in order to thin their too crowded ranks—all these are crimes for which you, Nicholas Romanoff, are directly responsible.

You are never known to have taken any step to arrest these horrors, or to condemn any of your accomplices, the passive parasites. On the contrary, they have always had your approbation, and you have even rewarded with money trophies who have shot down girl prisoners at sight.

Over and over again have the abominable outrages for which you are responsible been condemned in the country. Even our capitalists' newspapers term with the record and denunciation of your infamous, cruel, and blood-greasy. What shameful irony it is, then, for you to be called upon to welcome you as our guest, if you are well advised you will stop away. I do not make any appeal to you, otherwise I would ask you to spare us the shame and disgrace of your advent here; our people are too patient and servile for anyone to threaten you, and so there seems no reason why you should not have the luxury of visiting to thrust your monstrous presence upon us. I wish, however, that we could be spared this humiliation until some kindly terrorist had shot your blood-besotted soul in its father, the devil, when a niche may be found for your effigy in Madame Tussaud's Chamber of Horrors. In any case, may we never look upon your like again, is the heartfelt hope of your devoted countrymen.

WAS TRUTH

## "NICHOLAS THE BLOODY!"

We have received a large number of orders for this poster—a facsimile of which is reproduced above—but we can still supply it at the price previously advertised—5s. per 100.

The size of the poster is 20 in. by 30 in., and if well displayed in all the large towns, should present an effective protest against the visit to these shores of the inhuman monster, Nicholas.

We are also receiving orders for the small copy of the poster—size as printed above—for distribution as a leaflet. This can be supplied in any quantity at the rate of 2s. 6d. per 1,000. Orders should be sent to Manager, "Justice," 37a,

## THE CZARS NIGHTMARE



Look again! See that beautiful girl he flogged—flogged until she drops dead—that is Nagyeshda Sigida. That mangled corpse—that is the body Marie Vetrova, who was raped and murdered. So they go on.

What a monstrous procession! Men and women of genius, poets, philosophers, scientists, journalists, doctors, workmen, peasants, noble-minded and great hearted—the soul of Russia; all of them the victims of the Czar. In prison, in torture chamber, in exile, in death and Nicholas sees them. Their pale faces startle him. Their looks of sorrow, pain, of hate, make him tremble in affright. He cries aloud in his sleep.

The visions of his crimes fade away and Nicholas sees himself as he really is. A puny second-rate Hussar officer, Tolstoy calls him, and a criminal lunatic. He sees the Czardom—vile, horrible, decaying, triumphant, gilded and stained. He realises what a collection of swindlers, butchers, hangmen and murderers are gathered round the throne, among whom are Dubrovins, the organisers of pogroms, his uncle Vladimir, Azeff and Trepoff. What a cesspool of shame, dishonour, grace, opprobrium and dishonour is there! What a black pit of vice and treason! He conspires with Azeff to get rid of his uncle the Grand Duke Sergius. He shakes the bloody paws of the human beasts that carry out his criminal behests. He bestows honours and wealth upon violators of God's law and butchers of babes. On the throne, in the midst of all the glitter and pomp, he is stifling the light, strangling liberty, barring the progress of the Russian people. He and his crew laugh and mock and jeer over Russia—

But suddenly there is a great blue flash and a terrific explosion.

The same obsequious attendants that put him to bed discovered him the following morning, all shrivelled and purple with cold, cowering in a corner of the room, trembling like one who had passed through hell.

TOM QUELCH.

### The Visit of the Fleet.

We tender the Government our hearty thanks for bringing the fleet to the Thames. From our point of view nothing could have been better, as it enabled us to shake by the hand many of our numerous Socialist sailor comrades.

The incident of "on the knee" has in no means been forgotten by the men. By the visit of the fleet Socialism will increase in the Navy. It would be a good thing if it could be permanently stationed in the Thames.

## IMPORTANT NOTICE.

We shall shortly commence a new and original story in "Justice" entitled "DAVID DEXTER—"

illed and 2,790 wounded on Bloody Sunday, January 22nd, 1905. 2,533 hanged or of courts-martial, 1905-1909 (March). 15,000 killed and 100,000 wounded by the Black Hundreds since "Constitutional" Manifesto, October 30th, 1881; 137 were in prison on February 1st, 1909. 74,000 are exiles in Siberia, 100,000 sacked for "sedition" in Siberia and the Caucasus, and 200 in the Baltic Provinces. No wonder he has a nightmare!

At last, the softness of the bed and physical weariness induced sleep, and he lay a prey to a fearful nightmare. His dreams, let loose by a stifled conscience out of the bosom of darkness, the fantastic imagery of his brain, and the previous occupants of the throne of Russia. Murderers, traitors, imbeciles—they crowded on

Scenes of the silent snows of Saghatien; of the damp dungeons below the icy Neva in the Fortress of Peter and Paul; of the reeking cells of Schlüsselburg and the old Boutyrki; of the putrid typhus hells of Sevastopol, Lodz, Warsaw, and Eastern Siberia; of the torture chambers of Riga; of the whole of Russia with the Legion Famine stalking through the land—



THE REAL VOICE OF LABOUR

TOMMY: 'So you're going to Stockholm to talk to Fritz, are you? Well, I'm going back to France to fight him.'

## LINES FROM LEICESTER.



Mr. Green (British Workers' League prospective candidate for Leicester), "I'll stop your capers, Macdonald!"

Here is seen Mr. Green,  
A man who works for lasting peace,  
Out to whack Ramsay Mac,  
To terminate his Leicester lease;  
To stop him dancing on the Flag,  
To deal full justice unto Mac,  
To out him and his carpet bag.

A Labour man, who has a plan  
To cleanse us from Macdonald's shame;  
To aid our friends, and make amends  
For treachery done in our name.  
To deal full justice unto Mac,  
Who stabbed his country in the back.

Mr. Macdonald's epistolary supporters  
ry ingeniously try to drag all sorts of red  
irings over the trail of their wanderings in  
a path of treason and treachery, but I am  
going to be led off the track. I do not  
re whether Macdonald be more or less  
arian than Marx, Baxian than Bax,  
ietzschean than Nietzsche, or Shavian than  
aw. All that matters is that out of his  
own mouth he stands condemned as a traitor  
the country which pays him £200 a year,  
at he has blackened the cause of Britain  
ider Allies, and has encouraged the  
emy by every means in his power. He  
ght to have been sent to a better land long  
ago.

A formidable opponent has come to Leicester  
to fight Macdonald, and out of a meeting  
2,000 people in De Montfort Hall, last  
hursday evening, only ten hands were held  
in Macdonald's favour. Mr. J. F. Green,  
hairman of the British Workers' League,  
or many years Secretary of the International  
eace and Arbitration Association, and treas-  
urer of the Social Democratic Federation,  
as pulled off his coat and sworn that he will  
oppose Macdonald wherever he puts up,  
ther in Leicester or elsewhere. Mr. Green  
ade a most favourable impression upon the  
e Montfort Hall meeting, and Macdonald  
as severely trounced by all the speakers,  
nd particularly by Mr. J. A. Seddon and Mr.  
ictor Fisher. After the meal-mouthed,  
amby-pamby, way in which timorous Leicester  
speakers have dealt with Macdonald  
uring the past three years it was most re-  
freshing to hear these manly outspoken  
enunciations of his attempts to betray British  
Labour to Germany. Mr. Stephen, the  
hairman, described Macdonald's pandering  
to the enemy as "an outrage on the con-  
science which we sternly repudiate," a state-  
ment which evoked loud cheers. Mr.  
Green's candidature has brought a breath of  
he wholesome, fresh air of a healthy demo-  
cratic patriotism, into the fetid den of Mac-  
donaldism, and he will undoubtedly gain  
upport rapidly.

The Sunday papers have been suggesting  
hat Macdonald intends leaving Leicester, at  
he next election, and putting up for a Glas-  
ow Division. I hope this is true. It will

be a good riddance of bad rubbish. All the  
responsible leaders of Labour in Leicester  
are privately of that opinion, and they know  
him better than anybody else does.

I hear that Sergt. Basham, the wester-  
weight champion, Seaman Hayes, and other  
well-known boxers, will take part in the dis-  
play on the Rugby football ground, and that  
Captain Gilbert L. Jessop, "the Crucher,"  
is expected to play in the cricket match on  
the 8th. During the tea interval there will  
probably be a single-wicket match, reminis-  
cent of "the dear dead days beyond recall."

The new Food Control Committee look like  
having a lively time. Councillor Sheriff  
went for them hammer and tongs when they  
were appointed, and as there are no food  
supply experts among their number, their  
critics are on the look out for blunders, as  
if any committee of Britishers, expert or  
otherwise, was not certain to make blunders.

A very unusual display, for Leicester, of  
impassioned eloquence, pouring out like a  
verbal Niagara, was witnessed in the Borough  
Police Court on Tuesday, when a Belgian  
barrister and M.P. appeared on behalf of a  
fellow-countryman charged with a breach  
of the Alien Orders. Even M. Bouchout, the  
Belgian interpreter, seemed quite taken  
aback by the forensic fireworks, and publicly  
dissociated himself from the advocate's views.

If young gentlemen holding exemption  
certificates, founded on their indispensability  
in business circles, are anxious to fight for  
their country, they should go out holiday-  
making as frequently as possible. A Leicester  
manufacturer's son in that position got  
caught at Newmarket recently, and is now  
in the army. I saw him in khaki the other  
day, and I believe he is really glad to have  
found out what, as everybody knew, was  
a false position.

The Tramways Committee have played a  
great joke on the Stonegate people. As  
you are probably aware, the Clarendon Park  
cars run on the same metals as the Stone-  
gate cars, as far as Mayfield Road, where  
the former turn off the London Road into  
Victoria Park Road. St. James' Road is a  
point from which the fare to the Clock  
Tower is a penny on Clarendon Park cars,  
but 14d. on Stonegate cars. This induces  
the elite of Stonegate to walk to St. James'  
Road, and to stand there in a bunch waiting  
for a Clarendon Park car, while several  
Stonegate cars pass them. It is delightful  
to see snobbery thus branding itself with the  
hall-mark of meanness for the sake of a half-  
penny. And St. James' Road corner is a  
very bleak and draughty spot in winter time.  
Alderman Flint has a subtler sense of hu-  
mour than I gave him credit for.

A.B.T.

"Peace." A little baby-boy presented the  
first wreath to hallow the memory of the  
brave dead. The Union Jack floated majes-  
tically over the shrine. The preacher, the  
Rev. James Parle, M.A., St. Patrick's, Lei-  
cester, very eloquently, clearly and cogent-  
ly pleaded remembrance of those who had  
made the Christ-like sacrifice that they may  
rest in peace in the love of God. Religion,  
said the preacher, is called by some old-  
fashioned, but, he retorted, so are the moun-  
tains and so forth, as also the throne of  
England. They improve with age. So does  
religion, i.e., a developing religion founded,  
however, on an unchangeable basis. So, he  
continued, let us love those in death whom  
we loved in life. Such a love finds its  
purest expression in prayer. During the  
sermon many gave evidence of sorrow for  
their brave ones. A human cry, however,  
brings relief to the afflicted heart. A very  
touching scene was that in which seven young  
ladies, representing seven Allied nations,  
were artistically attired in native costume.  
Holding the flag of each nation aloft until  
the preacher mentioned the name of each  
nation, they then reverently laid their re-  
spective flags in front of the shrine as a lov-  
ing tribute of international sympathy to the  
war-bereaved Catholics of Earl Shilton. Two  
boy scouts intoned the "Last Post." And  
now the war shrine stands as the patriotic  
sentinel of the hard-working men and women  
who subscribed towards its erection on the  
waiver of Mill Lane, Earl Shilton. After  
good weather, the ceremonial success of the  
religious and patriotic demonstration of Sun-  
day was attributable in very great part to  
the charity of a great number of men and  
women, young and old who came from Lei-  
cester. The young ladies and the Boy  
Scouts were much admired. The Rev. J.  
Parle unveiled the war shrine.

On Sunday evening the following members  
of the Midland Counties' Association rang  
upon the church bells at Barwell a quarter  
peal of grandsire triples, in 45 minutes:—  
W. Powers 1st, W. White 2nd, N. L. Walker  
3rd, W. A. Needham 4th, C. H. Briggs 5th,  
A. R. Aldham 6th, H. Briggs (conductor)  
7th, J. Needham tenor. This peal was rung  
half-muffled as a tribute to the late Corp.  
T. W. Belton, of the Shropshire Light In-  
fantry, who was killed in action on August  
22nd. Much sympathy is felt for the widow  
and his parents in their sad bereavement.  
Messrs. Briggs and Walker are Stoney Stan-  
ton ringers.

Amidst every token of respect and sympa-  
thy the remains were laid to rest in Earl Shil-  
ton churchyard, on Monday last, of Mrs. E.  
Birch, farmer, of Earl Shilton. Mrs. Birch  
was a most devoted mother. She had a  
family of fifteen children. She was a thorough  
churchwoman, and one of the oldest inhabi-  
tants of the village. Five years ago she  
visited Canada to see her two daughters,  
whose homes are there. She passed away  
after a short illness at the age of 69 years.

A very happy welcome home party was  
held in the Congregational Church school-  
room on Saturday last, in honour of the safe  
return of the pastor, the Rev. J. H. Jensen,  
who for the past four months has been in  
France as chaplain at Y.M.C.A. huts. In  
the evening a concert was held and much  
enjoyed. On Sunday evening Mr. Jen-  
sen gave a most interesting address on his  
experiences, and also of the good work done  
by the Y.M.C.A. huts amongst the soldiers.  
His lectures will be continued the next two  
Sunday evenings.

## FARMERS AND GRAIN PRICES.

### HOW GRAIN MAY BE SOLD.

As there seems to be some misunder-  
standing in certain parts of the country as to  
what farmers may or may not do with home-  
grown grain, the following are the chief  
points of the Grain (Prices) Order, 1917, so  
far as it affects farmers:—

(1) Farmers may now sell their grain to  
any recognised merchants, millers or buyers,  
subject to the terms of the Order.

(2) The following are the maximum prices  
which may be paid to the grower or produc-  
er of the grain:—(a) Wheat and rye fit for  
human food 75s. 6d. per 504 lbs.; wheat and  
rye unfit for human food 60s. 6d. per 504  
lbs. (b) Barley for flour milling for human  
food 62s. 6d. per 443 lbs.; barley for manu-  
facturing purposes other than flour 68s. per  
428 lbs.; barley unfit for human food 68s.

## HINCKLEY TRIBUNAL

### THE DEMAND

### UNFULFILLED VOTING

A meeting of the Hinckley  
Tribunal was held at the Town Hall  
Tuesday, the members present  
G. Kinton, W. H. Bott, G.  
Heaton, S. H. Pilgrim, Le-  
gals (military representative),  
Kins (clerk).

### UNSUCCESSFUL APPEAL

It was reported that there  
appeal against the decision of the  
Tribunal, the appellant being  
dent of an assurance society,  
considered by the Appeal Tri-  
bunal.

### WHAT THE ARMY

Lieut. Arculus reported that  
he received instructions from  
at Lichfield directing  
the large number of  
categories lower than A requi-  
plete the allotments for vari-  
ing this month, and to the  
very small number of such men  
ing called up and posted.  
The shortage of men in these  
able might be, to some extent,  
fact that members of Tribuna-  
lise that there was a real and  
for men in such categories,  
training reserves and labour  
for other units.

This was followed by a tel-  
the attention of all concern-  
military representatives, to the  
structions. Many local Tribu-  
did not realise the urgent need  
for recruits of a low medical  
following list showed that  
men of low medical category  
required:—

Royal Flying Corps.—At the  
recruits of all trades were ur-  
ged for the R.F.C., and no man  
jected solely because he was  
gory, provided the medical  
ified that he would be able  
trade in the corps under the  
vailing there. Apart from 11  
men of categories B2, C2, B  
required by the R.F.C. If 0  
and C2 they should be over 3  
Lieut. Arculus explained it  
follows an impression abroad  
fellows from 18 to 20 years  
the Flying Corps. This  
wrong. Men would be allotted  
units they were fit for.

Royal Engineers.—All skill  
including men in categories  
specially certified by a medica  
serve at their trade.

Army Service Corps.—Man-  
gories B2 and C2 were usefu  
e.g., as loaders. Recruits of  
should be aged not less than  
R.A.M.C.—Recruits of cat-  
C2 were urgently required,  
aged not less than 20 years.

Army Ordnance Corps.—R-  
gory B2 or good muscular de-  
education were required by th  
men should not be less than

Labour Corps.—Recruits of  
and C2 aged not less than 25  
posted to Labour Corps prov-  
no defects which would rend-  
for them to perform the ord-  
labourers in civil life. Rec-  
not fit for heavy work might  
to the Labour Corps for emp-  
men, orderlies, etc.

Clerks.—Recruits of categor-  
and C2 might be posted up-  
age. If of categories B2 or  
should not be less than 20 ye-  
it might be taken that any me-  
a fair education, and whose h-  
legible, might be made use of  
some unit.

Lieut. Arculus said it mi-  
therefore, that no man who w-  
his work was unfit for th-

### UNVOLUNTEERS NOT A THE DRILLS

Lieut. Arculus mentioned a  
meeting of the Advisory Com-  
tee were made about condition  
granted in January last. In  
exemption was granted with-  
being ordered to join V.T.C.  
cases where the condition was





*James F. Smith*

# A SOVIET REPUBLIC FOR BRITAIN!

## INTRODUCTION.

Fellow-workers of Britain, "The air of Europe is quivering with revolution!"

And not alone the air, but the whole land-owning and capitalist class of this country are quivering with fear at the unforeseen results of the European War. Immediately following the armistice the Prime Minister proclaimed the speedy dissolution of the Government, hoping that in the psychological moment of victory (?) and the resulting disturbance to the public mind, the capitalist class would snatch at the public victory at the polls. Obtaining a new lease of power they would be enabled to re-establish their system of society on the old basis.

Accordingly they proclaim themselves to be reconstructionists, as if, forsooth, it was some extraneous force that has disrupted their society and not the conscious, deliberate actions of the capitalist ruling classes of Europe who, arming their workers to the teeth, let war loose upon their unhappy countries in the struggle for markets for their products and wealth for themselves.

Fellow-workers, what is the society that Mr. Lloyd George and the Coalition Government wish to reconstitute?

It is the capitalist system, the society that produces strikes and lock-outs, unemployment and poverty.

One thing alone can save them and that is the willingness of the workers of Britain to replenish their exhausted coffers.

Fellow workers! shall we sweat and toil for these men—to replace their worn-out machinery and to build up for them their neglected industries?

If so, then, during the brief period we shall glut the market with declining and unemployment and a beggarly State will be our reward, whose resources will be being hoarded on the wealth we have created for them.

Mr. Lloyd George makes certain glowing proposals, because of "this quivering revolutionary air." His promises of high wages, shorter hours, and increased production are shrieking absurdities. During the war we worked long hours and increased production, and the capitalist class promptly blew our products to smithereens, and called for more.

Justice, then, between the proposals of the Industrial Socialists or Communists and the economic fallacies and plausible rhetoric of Mr. Lloyd George and the Coalition ruling class. On the one hand lies an opportunity for the workers of Britain to emancipate themselves from all the evils that now threaten them, and to form a society of free men and women living in their own land and enjoying the fruits of their industry in comfort and leisure.

On the other hand—capitalist employment and all that it means to the working class—social degradation, poverty, and economic servitude.

Choose, then, fellow workers, the choice is here and now.

## STATE, GUILD AND INDUSTRIAL SOCIALISM.

The Socialists of Britain have three schools of thought. The State, the Guild, and the Industrial Socialists. The State and Guild Socialists base their ideas on the economics of the capitalist system. The Industrial Socialists frame their future society on the economics of Karl Marx.

The State Socialists declare that the State must control industry, that the private employer shall be eliminated or given a maximum of profit, and that the workers shall be suitably clothed, fed, and sheltered.

The Guild Socialists divide society into three categories: the State, the Consumer, and the Guilds. The latter are subdivided into Guilds of Industries, deciding their own conditions of labour and wages, whilst the prices of their products are fixed by consultation and agreement between themselves, the State and the consumer, the State acting as a sort of referee or arbitrator. The whole machinery of production and distribution is passed to the Guilds by the State, and part of their profits provide for its upkeep and administration, the remainder belongs to the Guild producing them.

Both State and Guild Socialists are putting the new wine of Socialism into old capitalist bottles. They declare that under Socialism goods will be produced for the market for profit, and wages will be paid to the workers. Profit and wages mean capital, whether owned by State or Guild or private capitalist.

Both State and Guild Socialists assume a churning of interests between consumer and producer. Their minds are still in the class ruled capitalist system, with its strikes and lock-outs and the haggling of the markets. What do they mean by the State? They mean that the direction of the whole economic problem shall be in the hands of the State.

## INDUSTRIAL SOCIALISM OR COMMUNISM.

The Industrial Socialists or Communists declare that in order to emancipate themselves the working class must abolish the entire capitalist system of production, distribution, and exchange. With it will disappear the capitalist State and the division of society into classes. The new society will be a Co-operative Commonwealth, wherein the land and the means of production and distribution will be controlled by, and on behalf of, the whole of the people by the democratic vote of all its adult members. The production of goods will be for their use-value for consumption, and their distribution on the basis of social and economic equality.

These are the objectives of the Co-operative Commonwealth: Within industry to increase production in order to give ample leisure to all its members for the enjoyment of life, and to further their intellectual development.

Each adult member of the Co-operative Commonwealth functions as a co-controller of its society and as a co-worker in its industries.

The control of the Co-operative Commonwealth is by the democratic vote of its adult members.

The Parliamentary vote is not a democratic franchise. As a capitalist institution Parliament is purely a law-making machine to keep the working class in subjection and to adapt capitalist society to any new environment—or situation—brought about by the change of the capitalist mode of production.

The working class, who have no hand over complete power, are also in possession of the means of production, and, justly, within Parliament, the capitalist class justly and control capitalist society in their own interests. At the same time, by softening the economic hardships inflicted on the workers by what they term reform legislation, the workers are deceived into the belief that Parliament, by its remedial legislation, will relieve them ultimately of all the social and economic ills that afflict them.

However essential Parliament is to the capitalist class, it is unnecessary in a society where all men and women are socially and economically equal. Within the Co-operative Commonwealth there is no class to dominate and exploit.

A democratic franchise is a vote by which every body has a hand in the whole social order of production, distribution, and exchange.

Within the Co-operative Commonwealth, in place of a central legislative body whose legislation is administered by local bodies, the whole social order must be decentralised and local councils elected. These councils, linked together, formulate their demands, which are executed by a central body under their direct control. In other words, **THE CO-OPERATIVE COMMONWEALTH IS A REPUBLIC OF SOVIETS OR COMMUNAL COUNCILS.**

The Communes in Britain would comprise areas approximating to the Parliamentary constituencies.

Every adult member of 21 years possesses the vote on a residential qualification.

Each Commune elects a Communal Council to deal with its wants. Also each Commune elects one of its members to a Communal District Council whose area of administration is determined by dividing Britain into ten Communal Districts.

The members of each Communal District elect two representatives to an Executive Council.

Each Commune elects a representative to the Communal Congress.

Accordingly by direct Communal vote there results: About 800 Communal Councils.

Ten District Councils.

One Executive Council.

One Communal Congress.

The functions of these Councils are as follows:

The Communal Councils are concerned with distribution.

The District Communal Councils with supply.

The Central Executive with centralised production and supply, and also functions as the Executive of the Communal will as expressed by the Communal Congress.

The Communal Congress decides upon all matters relative to the united Communes, that is all questions concerning the social and industrial relations of the members of the Co-operative Commonwealth and their relations with the inhabitants of other territories.

The detailed work of these Councils is concerned with the sub-divisions into which the life of the Commune is divided.

These sub-divisions are:—

(a) The ordered demand of the Communes to satisfy their wants.

(b) The methods of production and distribution.

The Communal Councils, from Departments of Supply, Labour, Public Health, and Sanitation. The Department of Supply is concerned with the

The Department of Labour is concerned with the distribution of the labour available in each Commune.

The Department of Public Health and Sanitation concerns itself with all methods for the preservation of public health.

The District Councils form corresponding departments, and in addition form Departments of Roads, Transport, and Communication.

The Central Executive forms Central Departments for the Production and Supply of all essentials to Communal Life. These Central Departments form the link between the Industries and the Communes.

The actual working of these Councils would be somewhat on these lines. The Communal Departments of Distribution would affect the details through the Communal Deposits to the members of the Commune.

The supply to the depots from the Communal warehouses would be by requisition to the corresponding Communal Department. The latter would obtain their supplies through the Communal District Supply Departments who would tabulate and submit their requirements from time to time to the Central Supply Departments.

The Central Departments would also tabulate the immediate and future wants of the Communes, and give the necessary orders to the various Communal Industries for a supply of their products. They would also act as Supply Departments to distribute raw material and labour to the industries as required.

Just as the great armaments of Europe have been supplied with their essentials from the centralised control of the munitions of war through the various departments and sub-divisions of Army Supply and Transport, in order that each unit of the armies shall be supplied with food, clothing, etc., so will the men, women, and children of the Communes be supplied from the Communal Industries through the Communal Departments of Supply and Distribution—only with this difference that they will be supplied according to their expressed wants and not according to the will of bureaucrats and army generals.

The methods of production and distribution.

The next step is to discuss the second sub-division. (b) The methods of production and distribution upon the basis of economic equality.

Let us turn for a moment to the capitalist system of the production of commodities. Raw material enters the factory and is worked upon by the labour of the workers with the aid of machinery. The resulting product is sold either directly to the consumer, or usually to a middleman who disposes of the goods through the usual trade channels. The price of the commodity is determined by the value of the average socially necessary labour embodied in its production, but not by the demand and supply. The owner of capital determines his profit by the difference between the cost of production of his commodity and the price realised in its sale. He determines his profit by the adoption of the following methods:—

Cost of raw materials and depreciation of machinery and rent and repair of factory and administration expenses and cost of distribution, i.e., cartage, advertisements, etc., and wages paid to workers.

The difference is his profit or the surplus value extracted from his workers. For in this cost of production new values are created in the first five items. These values have already been created by other labour. Therefore the only source of his profit is the difference between the price realised for his product and the price paid to his producing workers for the labour they have expended.

Three methods: 1st by increasing the length of the working day; 2nd by a reduction in wages; 3rd by increasing the productivity of his workers.

Within the Co-operative Commonwealth the rent of land and the extraction of surplus value is abolished. But the Communal Industries must still produce surplus products over and above those essential to meet the needs of the producing workers. Therefore it is possible at this period in Capitalist Society to maintain and if possible increase its productivity, and also to establish economic equality by the adoption of the following method, whereby each Communal member can freely interpret his or her needs?

Tuning again to Capitalist Society we find the greatest difficulty of the capitalist is to dispose of his products. This difficulty of finding markets is due to the enormous ratio between the production of goods and of the products produced by the producing workers, and the exchange value paid to them as wages. In other words, not only are the producing workers unable to purchase but a small amount of the products of their labour, but the whole of capitalist society, with its millions of parasites, State officials, armies, navies, and non-producing wage workers, cannot absorb the product. Thereupon stagnation of trade and unemployment, and results until the glutted markets are relieved of

capitalist Europe, Great Britain, and America were engaged either as workers in the organised production of munitions of war or as combatants organised to consume them. Let him reflect upon the enormous masses of wealth produced by labour and literally thrown away in that mad struggle between the contending ruling classes, and he will doubt no longer that within the Co-operative Commonwealth wealth can be made to flow like water!

Therefore, taking into consideration the productivity of man only as it is to-day, and also seeing that during the transitional period of the abolition of capitalism and the establishment of communism a definite standard of subsistence based on capitalist values and a definite number of working hours must be established, we are justified in stating that the following conditions could at once be adopted and would provide for the immediate needs of the whole population.

(1) A working day of six hours, i.e., 36 hours per week.

(2) A subsistence grant to all adults, represented in capitalist values, of £7 per week.

And in addition a sliding scale of subsistence grants to the children up to five, ten, and fifteen years respectively, and a subsistence grant to both sexes over fifteen and under 21 years of age.

The equalised standard of subsistence is reckoned in capitalist values for these reasons:

1st—It is essential that all individuals shall be able to gratify their wishes in realising the use value of the products of industry. Thus the progress of invention is unobstructed and the human mind, so varied in its like and dislikes, is not compelled to adapt itself to some ungenial environment of food, clothing and shelter, whose quality of horror is that determined by the capitalist class for the producers of their wealth.

Accordingly it is necessary at any rate during the transitional period to have a free market for the product, based on the cost of production in labour time from the source of the raw material to the finished product. Eliminating from this cost the expenses of transport and administration, the cost of production would be, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th, 13th, 14th, 15th, 16th, 17th, 18th, 19th, 20th, 21st, 22nd, 23rd, 24th, 25th, 26th, 27th, 28th, 29th, 30th, 31st, 32nd, 33rd, 34th, 35th, 36th, 37th, 38th, 39th, 40th, 41st, 42nd, 43rd, 44th, 45th, 46th, 47th, 48th, 49th, 50th, 51st, 52nd, 53rd, 54th, 55th, 56th, 57th, 58th, 59th, 60th, 61st, 62nd, 63rd, 64th, 65th, 66th, 67th, 68th, 69th, 70th, 71st, 72nd, 73rd, 74th, 75th, 76th, 77th, 78th, 79th, 80th, 81st, 82nd, 83rd, 84th, 85th, 86th, 87th, 88th, 89th, 90th, 91st, 92nd, 93rd, 94th, 95th, 96th, 97th, 98th, 99th, 100th, 101st, 102nd, 103rd, 104th, 105th, 106th, 107th, 108th, 109th, 110th, 111th, 112th, 113th, 114th, 115th, 116th, 117th, 118th, 119th, 120th, 121st, 122nd, 123rd, 124th, 125th, 126th, 127th, 128th, 129th, 130th, 131st, 132nd, 133rd, 134th, 135th, 136th, 137th, 138th, 139th, 140th, 141st, 142nd, 143rd, 144th, 145th, 146th, 147th, 148th, 149th, 150th, 151st, 152nd, 153rd, 154th, 155th, 156th, 157th, 158th, 159th, 160th, 161st, 162nd, 163rd, 164th, 165th, 166th, 167th, 168th, 169th, 170th, 171st, 172nd, 173rd, 174th, 175th, 176th, 177th, 178th, 179th, 180th, 181st, 182nd, 183rd, 184th, 185th, 186th, 187th, 188th, 189th, 190th, 191st, 192nd, 193rd, 194th, 195th, 196th, 197th, 198th, 199th, 200th, 201st, 202nd, 203rd, 204th, 205th, 206th, 207th, 208th, 209th, 210th, 211st, 212th, 213th, 214th, 215th, 216th, 217th, 218th, 219th, 220th, 221st, 222nd, 223rd, 224th, 225th, 226th, 227th, 228th, 229th, 230th, 231st, 232nd, 233rd, 234th, 235th, 236th, 237th, 238th, 239th, 240th, 241st, 242nd, 243rd, 244th, 245th, 246th, 247th, 248th, 249th, 250th, 251st, 252nd, 253rd, 254th, 255th, 256th, 257th, 258th, 259th, 260th, 261st, 262nd, 263rd, 264th, 265th, 266th, 267th, 268th, 269th, 270th, 271st, 272nd, 273rd, 274th, 275th, 276th, 277th, 278th, 279th, 280th, 281st, 282nd, 283rd, 284th, 285th, 286th, 287th, 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2nd—It is essential that all individuals shall be able to gratify their wishes in realising the use value of the products of industry. Thus the progress of invention is unobstructed and the human mind, so varied in its like and dislikes, is not compelled to adapt itself to some ungenial environment of food, clothing and shelter, whose quality of horror is that determined by the capitalist class for the producers of their wealth.

Accordingly it is necessary at any rate during the transitional period to have a free market for the product, based on the cost of production in labour time from the source of the raw material to the finished product. Eliminating from this cost the expenses of transport and administration, the cost of production would be, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th, 13th, 14th, 15th, 16th, 17th, 18th, 19th, 20th, 21st, 22nd, 23rd, 24th, 25th, 26th, 27th, 28th, 29th, 30th, 31st, 32nd, 33rd, 34th, 35th, 36th, 37th, 38th, 39th, 40th, 41st, 42nd, 43rd, 44th, 45th, 46th, 47th, 48th, 49th, 50th, 51st, 52nd, 53rd, 54th, 55th, 56th, 57th, 58th, 59th, 60th, 61st, 62nd, 63rd, 64th, 65th, 66th, 67th, 68th, 69th, 70th, 71st, 72nd, 73rd, 74th, 75th, 76th, 77th, 78th, 79th, 80th, 81st, 82nd, 83rd, 84th, 85th, 86th, 87th, 88th, 89th,



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9. S. M. Stepniak ( S. M. Kravchinskii)

Outline of Contents

- (a) Works by Stepniak in English.
  - (b) Contemporary studies of Stepniak.
  - (c) Secondary sources on the career and influence of Stepniak.
  - (d) Soviet studies of Stepniak.
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- (a) Stepniak, S. M., - Underground Russia, London, 1884.
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