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THEODORE ROTHSTEIN AND RUSSIAN POLITICAL
EMIGRE INFLUENCE ON THE BRITISH LABOUR
MOVEMENT 1884 - 1920.

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David Burke PhD Thesis: 'Theodore Rothstein And Russian Political Emigre Influence On The British Labour Movement 1884-1920.'

This thesis examines the influence of Russian political emigres on the British labour movement, 1884-1920, with particular reference to the career of Theodore Rothstein. It takes as its starting point Sergius Stepniak's comments on the impact of a small group of socialists on a Liberal-Radical demonstration in Hyde Park in 1884, and closes with the formation of the Communist Party of Great Britain in 1920 and the refusal to allow Th. Rothstein re-entry into Britain in August 1920. It takes issue with those historians who have argued that the Russian political emigre influence was essentially harmful, serving only to undermine natural developments already in evidence on the British Left and imposing new perspectives, which later made the CPGB subservient to the needs of Soviet foreign policy. This thesis, on the contrary, argues that the Russian political emigre community in Britain, predominantly Jewish, had become an integral part of the Left-wing of the British labour movement by the time of the formation of the CPGB, and as such formed part of the British socialist tradition that favoured Marxism.

It looks specifically at the history of the Social-Democratic Federation, (SDF) which between 1884 and 1920 adopted the titles Social-Democratic Party and British Socialist Party before it merged itself with the CPGB in 1920. The SDF appealed particularly to the Russian political emigres, as opposed to other groupings, because it saw itself as a Social-Democratic body and part of an international movement, to which the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party was affiliated. The emigres, therefore, felt that their activity within the British socialist movement was not something imposed upon a reluctant nativist body; but an integral part of that movement's development.

List of Abbreviations

ASE	Amalgamated Society of Engineers
BSP	British Socialist Party
CAB	Cabinet Reports in the Public Record Office, London
CI	Communist International
CORSGL	Committee of Russian Socialist Groups in London
CPGB	Communist Party of Great Britain
CUG	Communist Unity Group
CWC	Clyde Workers' Committee
DORA	Defence of the Realm Act
DRFP	Daily Review of the Foreign Press
EL(J)B	East London (Jewish) Branch, (SDF)
FO	Foreign Office
GDC	Glasgow District Council, (BSP)
HO	Home Office
ILP	Independent Labour Party
ISB	International Socialist Bureau
IWW	International Workers of the World
LRC	Labour Representation Committee
MI7(d)	Military Intelligence 7 (d)
NUR	National Union of Railwaymen
RFPF	Russian Free Press Fund
RPPERC	Russian Political Prisoners' & Exiles' Relief Committee
RPPEF	Russian Political Prisoners' & Exiles' Fund
RSDLP	Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party
RSFSR	Russian Socialist Federation of Soviet Republics
SDF	Social-Democratic Federation
SDP	Social-Democratic Party
SFRF	Society of Friends of Russian Freedom
SLP	Socialist Labour Party
SRs	Social Revolutionaries
SWSS	South Wales Socialist Society
TCP	Twentieth Century Press
TUC	Trades Union Council
WO	War Office
WSF	Workers' Socialist Federation

Introduction

This thesis looks at the influence of Russian political emigres on the British labour movement from 1884 - 1920. It takes as its starting point the attendance of Sergius Mikhailovich Kravschinskii (better known by the pseudonym Stepniak) at the Liberal-Radical demonstration in favour of the Franchise Bill in Hyde Park in 1884, and concludes with the exclusion from Britain of Theodore Rothstein, described by one historian as 'the chief Soviet representative in Britain', in August 1920.¹

Stepniak, whose political thought had been formed by the peasant socialism of the Narodnaya Volya (People's Will), represented that stage in the development of Russian revolutionary thought which advocated political revolution as a prelude to further socialist struggle. Unconvinced (until later in his life) that a socialist working class movement was capable of mounting a challenge to the Tsarist regime, Stepniak, despite initial sympathies for the socialist movement, courted Liberal-Radical support in emigration. It was Theodore Rothstein who, influenced by the writings of Plekhanov, first brought to the attention of British Marxists the existence of a socialist working class movement in Russia.

Rothstein's own contribution to the British labour movement has given rise to much controversy. Seen as the distributor of Moscow gold in the negotiations leading up to the formation of the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) in 1920, he has been accused of arresting the development of the native British Left and forcing it along a course hostile to its own traditions. Walter Kendall, whose The Revolutionary Movement in Britain, 1900-1921 (1969) has been the main text for a number of

historians writing on Rothstein and the formation of the CPGB,² argues that the CPGB was 'almost wholly an artificial creation which wrenched the whole course of the movement's left wing out of one direction and set it off on another.'³

Kendall by writing his book in two parts - the first analyses the Left wing movement in the British working class up to October 1917; the second deals with the formation of the CPGB - has given undue emphasis to the separation of the Russian emigres from debates taking place within the British labour movement. The fault lies partly in the fact that the second section was written first, (gaining Kendall a B.Litt. at Oxford) leading him to isolate the activities of Rothstein from those social and political forces which over a 36 year period (1884-1920), culminated in the formation of the CPGB. Kendall ignores, or at best loses sight of, the role played by Rothstein and the Russian political emigre community at large, in the internal development of Marxism in Britain. Instead he identifies this group as a foreign element preventing an essentially reformist labour movement from establishing a left-wing "ginger" group strong enough to maintain a socialist challenge within the parliamentary tradition. In order to achieve this Kendall exaggerates the ease with which Lenin was able to split already existing socialist parties, regardless of whatever developments were then taking place in the various countries where communist parties arose.⁴

Crucial to his argument is the role played by Rothstein, whose input marginalised two key figures on the left, E.C. Fairchild and John Maclean. Given such an approach it is arguable that Kendall writes his history of the origins of communism in Britain in terms of conspiracy, and not in terms of politics. He fails to see that Fairchild, an ally of Rothstein's until 1919,

changed politically in response to those members on the left who were arguing for a new form of "Soviet" democracy. Maintaining his belief in parliamentarism as the proper means of working class advance in Britain Fairchild set himself apart from those who rejected the Labour Party as a vehicle for socialism in Britain. It was this, and not the subventions from Moscow channelled through Rothstein, which brought about his 'retiral'⁵ from the British Socialist Party (BSP) in 1919.

John Maclean's relationship with Rothstein was affected by personal and political disagreements which developed over the course of the First World War. The arrest of Peter Petrov in 1915, a refugee from the 1905 Revolution and a close colleague of Maclean's, led to suspicions that 'the London gang', who had led the opposition to Hyndman's pro-war stance in the BSP were untrustworthy, among them Rothstein.⁶ Their refusal to split the BSP earlier than Easter 1916, in line with the 'Zimmerwald Manifesto', was challenged by both Maclean and Petrov in the BSP's Scottish newspaper Vanguard, supported by Trotsky's Paris-based journal Nashe Slovo. The debate in Nashe Slovo between Rothstein and Chicherin on the significance of the strike movement in Scotland for building a revolutionary movement, splitting the party and linking industrial grievances with the anti-war movement; alongside a later dispute between 'an ex-member of the Glasgow District Committee of the BSP' and Albert Inkpin, over the breakdown of the campaign to secure John Maclean's release in 1916, reinforced these suspicions. In Scotland a separate revolutionary tradition was developing before the October Revolution and Maclean's subsequent break with Gallacher, Rothstein and other London-based Marxists.

In order to highlight Rothstein's role as the instigator of a CPGB willing to do Moscow's bidding, Kendall fails to identify the unique contribution of the Russian political emigre community to the British labour

movement. These emigres encouraged British socialism to develop a wider understanding of socialist practice, which not only responded to British conditions, but was also capable of developing an international outlook. In this respect it is important to stress the fact that the pre-revolutionary Social-Democratic movement, unlike other socialist groups in Britain, always took a lively interest in the International Socialist Congresses if only because the vast majority of the parties represented in them called themselves "Social-Democratic", whereas the ILP, Labour MPs, Fabians etc. were embarrassed for that very reason. This circumstance gave the Social-Democratic Federation (SDF) an internationalist tone which the others did not possess. Even branches of the SDF sent delegates to the Congresses: Rothstein was sent by his branch in 1900, 1904 and 1907.

This thesis, therefore, examines the contribution of the Russian political emigres from the formation of the SDF through to the formation of the CPGB in August 1920 in the light that other foreign nationals living in Britain could, and did, make a contribution to the development of Marxism in Britain. It looks at the development of a Marxian socialist movement among the emigres and their polemics with the remnants of the Narodnaya Volya in emigration and their successors, the Social Revolutionaries (SRs). It chronicles Rothstein's response to developments within British society and the working class movement that were leading to calls for some form of independent political organisation on behalf of the working class. It looks at Rothstein's opposition to the Boer War and his elevation to a position of prominence within the SDF. After contesting Hyndman's refusal to continue anti-war work and his open anti-semitism, he was elected to the SDF National Executive in 1901 at the top of the poll - an event which led to Hyndman's temporary withdrawal from the party. Rothstein remained on the NEC until 1906.

His response to the 1905 Revolution led to a re-examination of previously held views on the Russian revolutionary movement. Initially supporting Plekhanov's call for a working class alliance with the liberal bourgeoisie, the abject failure of the Duma movement to win any concessions from Stolypin led him to conclude that an alliance with the peasantry would create the conditions for the overthrow of the autocracy.

Between 1906-1910 he was instrumental in forming the opposition to Hyndman's jingoism and anti-German sentiments issued in both the socialist and Tory press. Remaining true to the Stuttgart resolution on ' Militarism and International Conflicts ' he reinforced the internationalist arguments being put forward by a section of the SDF.

From 1910, Rothstein, as a result of pressures of work (he was a journalist on the Daily News and the Manchester Guardian) and family commitments, occupied a less prominent position in the SDP-BSP; although he kept up his criticisms of Hyndman in the party newspaper Justice, leadership of this movement passed to his sister-in-law, Zelda Kahan. Also a member of the Russian emigre community, Zelda, along with her brother Boris, worked closely with Rothstein in co-ordinating, through the Central Hackney branch, the opposition to Hyndman and the campaign against Britain's imperial policy and Big Navy programme.

On the outbreak of war Rothstein resigned from the BSP and joined the War Office (W.O.) as a reader of the foreign press. This work has led one historian to claim that Rothstein enjoyed a comfortable W.O. job while other emigres were suffering persecution and the threat of deportation under the Defence of the Realm Act (DORA).⁷ The protection offered by this work to Rothstein was undoubtedly instrumental in saving him from deportation. However, there is sufficient evidence to support the claim that he immediately took steps to bring

together a few close associates - H.W. and Albert Inkpin, E.C. Fairchild and Joe Fineberg - in a determined struggle to end Hyndman's control of the BSP National Executive and party organ Justice. The eventual split in the BSP in 1916 owed much to Rothstein's work behind the scenes. However, in splitting the party the leadership of the BSP passed to those grouped around Rothstein and the Central Hackney branch. This led to accusations from Scotland that the entrenched method of leadership from a small group of individuals in London was re-asserting its hold over the political wing of the revolutionary movement in Britain.

The February Revolution forced the British labour movement to reassess its position in respect of direct action to achieve an end to the war, and forced the BSP leadership to adopt a more sympathetic response to initiatives from outside their own circle. While a negotiated peace and defence of the February Revolution dominated discussion among socialists, attention was focused on the revolution's gains within a constitutional framework. With the October Revolution it was Sylvia Pankhurst who first pointed out that this was a socialist revolution, and as such altered the hitherto accepted relationship between states. Rothstein's writings on the revolution did not contradict Pankhurst's views, nor did he stand outside the majority opinion held among British Marxists. It was only with the invitation to join the Third International that disagreements over tactics began to dominate the revolutionary movement in Britain, threatening to undermine socialist unity. At this juncture Rothstein's influence lends itself to accusations that he used Comintern money to subvert the British revolutionary movement along Russian lines. This thesis argues to the contrary that Rothstein, who had been active in the British revolutionary movement since 1895, was essentially a British revolutionary socialist, fired up by the Russian Revolution, who acted within the

traditions of British Marxism.

Notes

1. Walter Kendall The Revolutionary Movement in Britain 1900 -1921. (1969) p.294.
2. See Raymond Challinor The Origins of British Bolshevism (1977) pp.225-7, 241-250; Martin Crick, The History of the Social-Democratic Federation (Keele University Press, 1994) pp.284-288; James D. Young The Rousing of the Scottish Working Class (1979) p.200.
3. Kendall op cit. p.xii.
4. ibid. p.225.
5. John Maclean 'An Open letter to Lenin' The Socialist 3 Feb. 1921.
6. Challinor op cit. p.245.
7. ibid. p.246.

A note on transliteration. This thesis adopts a standard form of transliteration based on a modified version of the US Library of Congress system. Proper names appearing in quotations from other works have retained their original transliteration.

Chapter 1. 1884 - 1897.

It was in 1885 - just eight years ago. The Conservatives were in power, and the Liberals organised an enormous mass meeting in support of the Franchise Bill. The meeting was an imposing one, . . . A long line of platforms . . . stretched in a huge curve from the Marble Arch to Hyde Park Corner. A dense crowd passed around each of the vans at which, like so many attractive magnets, stood the notabilities of Liberalism.

On the western ridge of the surging, restless human river there was another very small platform, overshadowed by a few red banners. It drew no crowd, and was but a hardly perceptible spot upon the vast expanse of the sea of heads. . . . When the great demonstration was over and the meeting broke up, the Socialists began their speeches But the crowd was so completely out of touch and sympathy with the men who stood upon the solitary van, that when John Burns used a rather disrespectful expression with reference to John Bright, the crowd wanted to silence him, as he would not be silenced they rushed towards the van, broke and tore to pieces all the banners, pulled down the obstinate speaker, and wanted to throw him in the Serpentine. . . . the crowd which attacked the platform on that occasion was as much a bona fide workmen's crowd as that which now flows to Hyde Park to the May Day demonstrations. I can say this because I saw it, having just arrived in England. This was my first experience of English political life.'

This description by Sergei Mikhailovich Kravchinskii (better known by the pseudonym Stepniak) of the arrival of socialism upon the English political stage, identified not only the growing tensions unfolding within British society; but also the nascent ideological aspirations of a Russian liberal intelligentsia, soon to be confronted by a Russian working-class in the making. If the spectacle of the banners of socialism being broken to pieces, and 'the obstinate speaker' being saved by the police from a ducking in the Serpentine had made an impact upon Stepniak, then it

was the 'attractive magnates' of the 'notabilities of liberalism' which had provided that opportunity. The overall impression was one of astonishment:

Here, in the centre of London, were hundreds and thousands of people, with banners, red flags, caps of liberty and even coffins on poles, surrounding a dozen platforms from which men were making recklessly seditious speeches, and circulating reams of tracts and leaflets, the mildest sentiments of which would have meant Siberia to the most highly privileged persons in Russia. Would the Government do nothing? Would the vast crowd, apparently the nucleus of a revolution, only buy a pennyworth of acidulated drops to give tone to its hoots for Lord Salisbury and Lord Randolph Churchill, and then go home unmolested and unconcerned?²

This apparent tolerance of British society towards political dissent, incredible to Stepniak, was to prove instrumental in shaping the views of prominent Russian emigres in the 1880's and 1890's. However, if the democratic traditions associated with British constitutionalism were to take hold of their political imagination in respect of Russia; then it was the socialists, 'a hardly perceptible spot upon the vast expanse of the sea of heads', who exercised control over their vision for the future development of British society. In his last speech in December 1895 delivered before contributors to the Labour Leader, Stepniak remarked upon 'The great advance which Socialism has made in England . . . In ten years, I may say, the face of England has been changed in this respect.'³

Over the course of these ten years great changes had indeed taken place in the world of organised labour. In both England and Russia, an understanding of the nature of socialism as an ideology dependent upon the self-activity of the labour movement was beginning to develop. The events which characterised these years bore witness to a socialist movement growing in self-confidence and stature, typified in England by the assertion of political over purely

economic forms of struggle; and in Russia by a need to harness the industrial muscle of the urban working class to the imminent political struggle with the autocracy. The two countries showed to the socialist world two very different faces. By asserting the primacy of political over purely economic forms of struggle, British socialists tended to see little or no connection between economic grievances and political activity. The response of the SDF to the 1889 Dock Strike demonstrated the extent to which British socialists tended to neglect or decry economic struggles.⁴ They remained complacent, and were in danger through their reliance upon political propaganda of becoming nothing more than a number of warring sects. In Russia, this problem had to some extent been overcome, albeit not directly by the socialists themselves, but by the energy of the strikers. Yet the very success of the strikers militated against the attempts of those working for an amalgamation of the two forms of struggle. In the aftermath of successful strikes the primacy of economic struggle enjoyed some popularity amongst the Russian working class, while the political struggle was regarded as the preserve of the bourgeoisie. The argument raged over the form that the struggle against autocracy should take. Was it to be purely a struggle for a constitution, to achieve for Russia her 1789? Or should the working class pursue an independent struggle for its own emancipation? Alliance or independence? The question had to some extent already been posed in Britain by the very creation of such organisations as the Social-Democratic Federation (SDF), and the Independent Labour Party (ILP). In Russia, owing to the great strike waves of the 1890's, and the subsequent burgeoning of revolutionary ideas, this question received more immediate attention. In Britain these events would have gone largely unnoticed had it not been for the activities of an articulate group of Russian political emigres who followed closely the unfolding of events in Russia. This chapter chronicles how the emigre community reconciled previous doctrines based

upon the socialism of the peasant commune, with changes taking place in both British and Russian society. This was very much a two-way process. An understanding of Russian socialism fed into the British labour movement, and vice versa. This interaction of ideas began in 1884 with the foundation of Britain's first avowedly Marxian socialist body, the SDF, and the arrival from Italy of Sergei Stepniak.

Sergei Stepniak personified that period of Russian history associated with individual acts of terrorism. His career as a revolutionist had been long and eventful. Born in the south of Russia on 14 July, 1852, of noble birth, he had been sent to the Aleksandrov Military Academy in Moscow and the Mikhailovskii Artillery Academy in St. Petersburg. On graduation he left the army and enrolled at the St. Petersburg Agricultural Institute. In the spring of 1872 he joined the Chaikovskii Circle, and in August 1873 took part in the "Going to the people" campaign in Tver province. In 1875 he toured Europe, and fought briefly in the Herzegovinia peasant uprising, for which he was imprisoned in Austrian Italy in 1877. It was on the 4 August 1878, following his release and return to Russia that he assassinated Adjutant-General Mezentsev, the St. Petersburg police chief. It was an attempt to revive the flagging fortunes of the Narodniki by emulating Vera Zasulich's earlier unsuccessful attempt on General Trepov's life, which had resulted in a general wave of sympathy for the terrorists. He fled Russia, living first in Switzerland and then Italy, where he wrote for the Italian newspaper Il Pungolo. He produced a series of sketches for this paper on the Russian revolutionary movement, which were published in book form in 1882 under the title La Rossia Sotterranea. The work was translated into English in 1883 as Underground Russia, and immediately received high praise from among others William Morris, H.M. Hyndman and Mark Twain. The purpose of this book, Stepniak wrote, was to 'reconcile Europe to the bloody measures of the Russian

revolutionaries, to show on the one hand their inevitability in Russian conditions, on the other to depict the terrorists as they are in reality, i.e. not as cannibals, but as human people, highly moral, having a deep aversion to violence, to which they are only forced by governmental measures.'⁵

His reputation went ahead of him with the book and in 1884 he moved to England because of the great popular success that his Underground Russia had enjoyed there, entertaining the hope of enlisting the support of Western public opinion in the fight against the Russian autocracy. In England, as stated, his first experience of political life was at the great Franchise demonstration in Hyde Park, where he met the leaders of British socialism, who included at that time, H.M.Hyndman, William Morris and George Bernard Shaw. It was this experience, Shaw maintained, which convinced Stepniak that 'the effusive rallyings round him of the little handful of toy revolutionists who called themselves "revolutionary social-democrats", Anarchists, Fellows of the new Life, and so on, . . .' would 'do his cause a great deal of harm and no good whatsoever.'⁶ Nevertheless, it was to these revolutionists that Stepniak was first attracted, giving his first lecture in 1886 to the Hammersmith Branch of the Socialist league, at Kelmscott House.⁷ This lecture was chaired by William Morris, and attended by among others Bernard Shaw. At this time, however, Stepniak was not adverse to seeking a wider audience for his views. In the same year he met the orthodox Tory M.P., W. Earl Hodgson, who after dispelling initial suspicions concerning 'the curious taste of the tea' (which Hodgson initially thought was poisoned), concluded that 'the Nihilists are aglow with the same spirit that would send the British Tories into rebellion were our fatherland suddenly to come under the absolute rule of the soulless and self-seeking caucus that lives to do the behests of Mr. Chamberlain.'⁸

However, in his first five years in England, Stepniak

remained closest to the socialists, although he was to become increasingly dissatisfied with their internal disagreements, and their inability to offer anything in the way of practical help. Particularly damaging was the schism in the SDF which led to the formation of the Socialist League in December 1884. The reasons behind this split were many, but largely concerned differences of opinion over socialist tactics and the activities of Hyndman. Accusations were made that Hyndman's position as editor of the Federation's newspaper, Justice, and as chairman of the Federation had allowed him to obtain dictatorial powers. He was pursuing what Scheu called "personlich Machtpolitik." '9

In terms of tactics, on the 'left' stood those who 'favoured social agitation, aimed, however, at a genuine revolution in the future'; while on the 'right' stood those favouring 'some sort of parliamentary action.'¹⁰ The two factions came to be associated with two personalities - with Hyndman on the 'right'; and with William Morris on the 'left'. Matters came to a head when charges were laid at Hyndman's door that he was guilty of absolutism and political opportunism. The charges carried some weight. In 1884 Hyndman had assumed control of the socialist monthly, To-Day, which had previously been edited by the historian and ally of Morris's, Belfort Bax. He had also expressed his approval of General Gordon's despatch to Khartoum to suppress the Sudanese revolt, and had recently given his support to the Possibilists in France, who in opposition to the Marxists had proposed an alliance with bourgeois political groups in order to secure immediate reform. As a result of these failings, in the eyes of the 'left', on the 23 December 1884 an executive meeting discussed a vote of no confidence in Hyndman's leadership. The meeting after adjourning for four days finally carried the motion by 10 votes to 8. The ten executive members then resigned from the Federation en masse and set up the Socialist league, launching a new socialist paper, the Commonweal.

The Commonweal was a far more attractive paper than Justice, although deemed by the SDF to be looser in its political judgement. By concentrating purely on "the propaganda" they sought to capture people for socialism on a less theoretical basis than the scientific grounds advocated by the SDF. Indeed, it is interesting to note that in the second number of Commonweal the message from foreign revolutionaries greeting the formation of the League and offering collaboration included three Russians, all of whom, Stepniak, Lavrov and Tikhomirov (the latter two in exile in France and Switzerland respectively), sought to deny, or at least thwart, the notion of capitalism's existence and relevance to Russian political development. Both Lavrov and Tikhomirov at this time were engaged in polemics with Plekhanov over the significance of capitalism to Russia, and it is not accidental that the old Narodnik, Lavrov, and the advocate of the palace coup, Tikhomirov should be invited to contribute to Commonweal, and not Plekhanov or others associated with the Emancipation of Labour Group. Plekhanov was seen by many to be forcefully arguing the case for capitalism by pointing out that it had already obtained a firm footing in Russian economic life. Although capitalism was as yet not fully developed in Russia, the creation of a marxist political party, he argued, based upon the industrial working class was the logical next step forward for the Russian revolutionaries. On the other hand, both Lavrov and Tikhomirov, while rejecting the excesses of Bakuninism, believed that the future development of Russian economic institutions could successfully by-pass the capitalist stage of development, and establish an agrarian socialism centred upon the peasantry. This they believed could be achieved by a simple propping up of the mir (peasant commune) and the further development of the kustar (small domestic industry).

However, it was to be the third Russian contributor to the Commonweal, Stepniak, who was to be far more

influential in determining the attitude of socialists towards Russia. His great literary output in these years, which included articles to The Times on education and censorship, and on 'Russian Political Prisons' in Hyndman's To-Day, enhanced the reputation of the author of Underground Russia.¹¹ But perhaps his most important work in these years as a propagandist among British socialists was his second book, Russia Under the Tsars, reviewed in the Commonweal for June 1885. This work significantly drew attention to 'the history of the mir of the Russian village, the vetches of the ancient principalities' and 'the evolution of a despotism out of free institutions.'¹² The whole tone of the book was one of looking backwards to a golden age, to a medieval period before tyranny had imposed itself on the people. 'In this idealised description of early Russia, the reader recognises Stepniak's aspirations for the future of Russia.'¹³ Such an approach served merely to reinforce the agrarian-based socialism of Lavrov and Tikhomirov, and appeal to the romanticism inherent in Morris's thought. It was evident, therefore, that Stepniak as a publicist would seek to maximise the views of his old friends among the Narodniki. This was not to be without significance. In 1882, the year before Plekhanov formed the Emancipation of Labour Group, Plekhanov had sought to merge his Marxist group - Deutsch, Zasulich, Axelrod and Ignatov - with the Narodnaya Volya. The new organisation was to publish a journal abroad entitled Vestnik Narodnoi Voli (Courier of the People's Will). Stepniak along with Lavrov and Plekhanov were to become editors. The project broke down owing to what Plekhanov saw as a lack of theoretical clarity among the Narodniki, and in particular from Stepniak. In the spring of 1882 he had voiced his fears in a letter to Lavrov:

You know my way of thinking, and I can assure you that it has not changed since I left Paris. . . we hoped and hope still to turn Narodovolism onto the right road . . . In case of failure on our side, we shall have to go into opposition again; would that

be fitting for me, as an editor of Vestnik Narodnoi Voli? Furthermore, there exists between me and Serg. Mikh. [Kravchinskii], it seems to me, a significant difference in views: he is a sort of Proudhonist, I don't understand Proudhon; our characters are not alike; he is a person who is extremely tolerant of every variant of socialist thought, I am ready to make of Capital a Procrustean bed for all the collaborators of Vestnik Narodnoi Voli.¹⁴

Yet what Plekhanov did not realise at the time of writing was Lavrov's own closeness to the views of Stepniak and Tikhomirov. Indeed, Lavrov was to turn against his old friend Plekhanov, reproaching him for choosing to fight against other revolutionaries rather than against the common enemy - autocracy. European socialists were asked to play their part in this quarrel. Commonweal, if not directly employed by, was certainly a vehicle for, the Narodniki; publishing their views and ignoring completely those of the Social-Democrats. Moreover, censure of Plekhanov came from more surprising quarters. Having based his claims for the applicability of marxism to Russia on the "Europeanisation" of that country by capitalism, Plekhanov had devised his tactics appropriately. The future political development of Russia was to be based upon two episodes of Western European history: France 1789 and Germany 1848. That is to say, a political revolution by the bourgeoisie, 1789, to be followed by tactics akin to those adopted by the German Social-Democratic Party (SPD) post 1848. Western European socialists could see little further than 1789. Engels in a letter to Vera Zasulich argued that 'Russia was approaching her 1789, . . . and it mattered not under what banner the revolution began.'¹⁵ To Engels, as to many European socialists, the Narodnaya Volya was to be the vanguard of revolution in Russia. It was ironic, however, that the self-sacrificing idealism of the Narodniki had triumphed over the minds of many west European socialists at the very time when, according to Plekhanov, they had

visibly declared their weakness. The assassination of Alexander II in March 1881, greeted enthusiastically by reformers throughout Europe was dismissed as a futile act by Plekhanov. The failure of the Narodniki without an organised popular force in the country to follow up assassination with a popular rising, demonstrated the inability of the Narodniki to move Russia forward. At a time when Plekhanov was identifying the industrial working class as a potential revolutionary force, western socialists, courted by emigre members of Narodnaya Volya, could see little further than the need for isolated terrorist acts in support of a romanticised lost past. The Commonweal, by opening its pages to the Narodnaya Volya, and ignoring the rising forces of Social-Democracy within Russia contributed to this general attitude.

That this was the prevailing attitude of the time was borne out by the disappointing coverage of the Russian revolutionary movement by Justice. Throughout the 1880's the SDF concentrated their energies on domestic affairs, and did not cultivate the political emigre community as assiduously as the Socialist League. This was undoubtedly a reflection of the SDF's parochialism when it came to the international socialist movement. As a result articles in Justice concerning the activities of the Russian revolutionary movement ignored developments taking place inside Russia, and merely reported the more sensational aspects of the Nihilist movement. The SDF in the first decade of its existence exhibited a chauvinism which served only to alienate the leading members of the Russian emigre community. Ideologically the SDF should have stood alongside Plekhanov's Emancipation of Labour Group. In practise the SDF before the formation of the Second International in 1889 remained a patchwork of conflicting ideas, that owing to Hyndman's personal animosity towards Engels and the German socialists, held aloof from continental socialism. As a result the Russian revolutionary movement stood outside Hyndman's - and

consequently the working class membership of the SDF's - immediate field of vision. The movement of the unemployed which began in London at the beginning of 1886 and culminated in 'Bloody Sunday' on the 13 November 1887, followed closely by the successful match girls' strike and the spread of New Unionism, served to reinforce this concentration on domestic affairs. It was not until the founding conference of the Second International and the immediate events leading up to it, that the international socialist movement, including the Russian revolutionary movement, came to have a noticeable impact on the internal politics of the SDF and its dealings with the Socialist League.

Two rival international conferences took place in Paris in July 1889, the Marxist Congress in the Salle Pétrelle and the Possibilist gathering in the Rue Lancry, called by the British TUC and the French Possibilists. The latter congress was intended to be non-political at the request of the British trade unionists; while the Marxist congress was to embrace the wider political concerns of the continental socialists. Somewhat surprisingly in the light of its antipathy towards trades unionism the SDF attended the Possibilist conference; although other reasons may have been apparent. According to G.D.H. Cole, Engels who supported the Socialist League in their polemics with the SDF 'had seen to it that the main part of the British representation came from this source.'¹⁶ Both congresses supported the agitation for an eight hour day and agreed to hold demonstrations or strikes on 1 May 1890 in support of their demand. The 1889 Dock Strike consolidated this shift towards direct action in favour of the Eight Hours Movement, disregarding the SDF leadership's advocacy of political over economic forms of struggle. In Paris, however, what proved to be of greater significance in respect of Russian emigre politics was the attendance at the Marxist congress of both Lavrov, representing the Narodniki, and Plekhanov representing the Marxist trend in

the Russian revolutionary movement. The Marxist Congress had the larger international participation and as a consequence the SDF found itself increasingly marginalised from the emigre socialist community in Britain. The earlier invitation to Stepniak from the Socialist League to attend the Marxist Congress caused Hyndman to question not only the credentials of the Socialist League delegates, but also to embarrass Stepniak into withdrawing from the delegation. Stepniak's name had appeared among the list of delegates to the Salle Pétrèlle Congress in the Labour Elector on the 1st of June. The announcement, however, proved premature, as Stepniak on learning of his nomination questioned his own credentials and informed Eleanor Marx of his intention to withdraw from the Congress. In a letter to her sister, Laura Lafargue in Paris, she wrote:

To Stepniak I wrote, and you need not notice any letter of his saying his name shd. be withdrawn. He only withdrew under the impression that signers of the Convocation must represent Societies. I've explained that he cd. sign in his individual capacity. Kropotkin and the Anarchists as well as the Lavroff people are against Stepniak, and he was afraid of getting us into trouble. - He has written to Vera Sazoulitch and other Russians for us.¹⁷

Stepniak's thinking was undergoing a fundamental change. He was beginning to move away from the Narodniki with its Anarchist tendencies and draw closer to the position held by Plekhanov. It was an indication of the total lack of any real ideological understanding on the part of the leaders of the SDF, that Justice, owing to the SDF's long-standing disagreement with Engels and the Socialist League, used Stepniak's reluctance to attend the Marxist Congress in Paris to attack the probity of the League. On 15 June Hyndman wrote in Justice 'that both Stepniak and W. Parnell' (the latter had been delegated to the Possibilist Congress by the London Trades Council, and the Marxist Congress by the National Labour Electoral Association) 'declare in writing that their names were appended to the

Marxist circular without their consent. . . . No doubt many other signatures were written down in the same way. What sort of honour is this for Socialists?'¹⁸ This brought forth a fierce rebuttal from Stepniak, which although sent to Hyndman, was not published in Justice. The text of the letter did appear, however, in the Labour Elector for the 22 June in which Stepniak announced that his name had been 'appended to the said circular' with his 'full consent.' He went on to declare the right of his organisation to declare its solidarity with the international socialist movement:

I think that we, the so-called Russian Nihilists, must take every opportunity of showing our solidarity with the great International Socialist movement, and I may be excused, I suppose, for refusing to admit that William Morris, Engels, Lafargue, and Bebel, with the body of the German Social-Democratic deputies, have no claim to represent a huge part of this movement.¹⁹

The same edition also carried a rebuttal from William Parnell who pointed out that his name appeared 'quite correctly amongst the list of signatures appended to the circular of invitation to the International Labour Congress at Paris emanating from the non-Possibilist French workmen.' He went on to state that he had also been nominated to attend the "Possibilist" Congress, and that he would go in order 'to bring about a fusion of the two Congresses on fair conditions.' Stepniak, on the other hand, preferred not to attend the Congress. The four Russians who did attend were Lavrov, Plekhanov, Beck and Kranz (the last from London). For Stepniak the in-fighting among the socialists had convinced him that the Russian revolutionary cause would be better served in emigration by forging contacts with the Liberal-Radicals, whose demonstration in support of the Franchise Bill he had attended in 1884.

On the 9 November 1889, three months after the foundation

of the Second International, Stepniak received a letter from Robert Spence Watson, Pres. of the National Liberal Federation, offering his assistance in publishing and disseminating pamphlets on the Russian situation, with the aim of awakening public sympathy. The two men met in London in November 1889, and conducted further meetings throughout December with sympathetic friends. The result of these meetings was the formation of the Society of Friends of Russian Freedom (SFRF), a group dominated by Liberal sympathisers, who held views in direct opposition to Stepniak's former friends among the socialists.²⁰ Indeed, British socialists seeing in Liberal-Radicalism a bigger threat to their existence than that posed by Toryism, were effectively, if not directly, snubbed. Although Stepniak continued to address socialist meetings, he now did so on a very irregular basis. The Russian emigres in 1890 were continuously and successfully wooed by what Chaikovskii referred to as 'the English tradition of moderation.'²¹

In September 1890 the SFRF tightened its organisation by setting up a general Committee of the Society consisting of 37 members, 13 of whom were also to serve on a smaller Executive Committee. The latter group consisted of such Liberal notables as W.P. Byles, J. Allanson Picton, G.H. Perris, Joshua Rowntree, and T. Fisher Unwin. The SFRF published a journal entitled Free Russia which first appeared in June 1890, and from September 1890 was issued monthly until its demise in January 1915.

Other Russian members associated with the group included N.K. Chaikovskii, who had organised in St. Petersburg the well-known Chaikovskii Circle, which Stepniak had joined in 1871. Chaikovskii emigrated to America in 1875, and came to England in May 1878. An agrarian socialist Chaikovskii had little contact with the British labour movement while resident in London.

Another prominent Russian member was Felix Volkhovskii, who had met Stepniak in the winter of 1873-4. Volkhovskii had been sentenced to life exile in Siberia at the famous

'Trial of the 193' in 1878. In Tomsk he met George Kennan who persuaded him to escape. This he accomplished by way of the Amur River, Vladivostok, and Japan in 1889. In June 1890 he arrived in London where he assumed the editorship of Free Russia. Volkhovskii, like Chaikovskii and Stepniak, remained essentially an agrarian socialist, and while in emigration developed views similar to Stepniak's: that the political revolution would precede economic emancipation.

The SFRF supported the political programme for a new Russia worked out by Stepniak in 1891. Stepniak, along with Chaikovskii and Volkhovskii, had set up, largely in harness with the SFRF the Russian Free Press Fund, which published a Russian language journal entitled Letuchie Listki. Its first publication, written by Stepniak, Chevo Nam Nuzhno, (What is to be Done) was to serve as the Fund's political creed. The general drift of the work was a call for a united attack upon the autocracy by all the opponents of Tsarism. However, in the course of this essay, he narrowed this down to include only the educated class, the intelligentsia. By so doing he rejected both the peasantry and the working class as a revolutionary force. The revolutionaries having alienated the peasantry as a result of the failure of the 'Going to the People' campaign, could no longer seriously approach the peasantry again; while to see the working class as 'the chief lever by which the autocracy can be overthrown is to abandon through theorizing any grasp of Russian realities.'²² The working class, he argued, could play no independent role owing to its relatively small size, its lack of education, and the complete want of any class-consciousness. Stepniak, who had formed a close friendship in exile with Edouard Bernstein while the latter was working out his ideas for Evolutionary Socialism, linked his belief in the intelligentsia as a revolutionary force with Bernstein's belief that class antagonisms were decreasing in Western European democracies. Thus Stepniak reached the conclusion that Russia would develop along those lines laid down by

Liberal-Radicalism in England and anticipated by Bernstein as applicable to Social-Democracy in Germany, and in opposition to Plekhanov's interpretation of Marxism. He believed that the Russian liberal and socialist intelligentsia should bury their differences and work towards the realisation of a constitution. Stepniak anticipated the argument that the liberals would join forces with the socialists only to secure political representation and would then exclude them from all political rights as had been the case in Germany in 1848. He cited the example of England, where the Liberals, while remaining bitterly opposed to socialism, conscientiously supported the rights of socialists to be heard inside Parliament and in the country:

Can it be that we are so hopelessly, so barbarously behind the times that these elementary truths, which are the ABCs of the political education of simple English shopkeepers, cab drivers and mill workers, are beyond the grasp of our liberals, the picked men of Russia.²³

To allay the fears of Russian liberals that the socialists would ignore a constitutional regime and press on for the social revolution, he cited Bernstein's, not Plekhanov's, view of German Social-Democracy post 1848:

The violent actions we are now forced to employ are only temporary measures which will give way to peaceful cultural work just as soon as the present absolutism is replaced by popular representation. We absolutely and categorically distinguish between our tactics in the political arena and in the economic. In politics we are revolutionists. But regarding the introduction of socialism we are evolutionists - gradualists on the foreign model.²⁴

Clearly, from the time of Stepniak's involvement in the differences among socialists leading to the formation of the Second International, and the publication of Chevo Nam Nuzhno, he had undergone a serious reappraisal of

previously held views. Although he did not break entirely with his former friends among English socialists - it was not in his nature to do so - he became, as far as his socialism was concerned, a gradualist. Liberal constitutionalism was to be followed by evolutionary socialism based upon conciliation as opposed to conflict, this was to be the way forward for both Russia and England. Nor to Stepniak, with one eye on Russia and the other on England was there a time more propitious for propagating these views. In the months leading up to the formation of the SFRF British public opinion had shown a marked interest in Russian affairs as indignation spread across the country over the slaughter of a group of Russian political prisoners at Yakutsk, on their way to exile in Siberia. The publication in The Times of a series of articles outlining both the unprovoked attack by soldiers and police on the exiles and the subsequent court-martial and execution of the survivors²⁵ aroused the most ardent supporter of the Russian Tsar. Gladstone, in a speech delivered at Lowestoft on 17 May felt obliged 'to refer to the brutalities practised by the Russian Government on Siberian exiles after his vigorous denunciation of the Turkish atrocities in Armenia.'²⁶ In London a demonstration in protest against 'The Russian Atrocities' was held under the auspices of the newly-created Russian Atrocities Workmen's Protest Committee with Hyndman as the main speaker. Attempts were made to organise a joint campaign by the SDF and SFRF against the treatment of Jews in Russia, but mutual recriminations prevented the two groups from working together. The SFRF as a body kept a polite distance from the socialists of the SDF prompting Justice to dub the 'middle class Radical "Friends of Free Russia" ' as 'the "Friends of Sweating" in England.'²⁷

Stepniak and the SFRF remained unmoved. Constitutionalism in Russia was gaining ground as a result of the disastrous famine of 1891-2; the socialists were no longer a force in the countryside. The liberal intelligentsia, shocked at the

prospect of millions of peasants starving to death, found themselves angered by the Russian Government's reaction in refusing to curtail grain exports. In response, the liberal intelligentsia allied themselves with the zemstvo to provide whatever relief they could. In the area of relief provision the central Government proved woefully inadequate, and as a result pressures began to mount for the government to yield to the public some measure of authority in the formulation and execution of policy. Official Russia 'was held responsible for the plight of the peasants, and in the famine crisis they [the Liberals] saw an opportunity to mount an offensive against the Tsarist government.'²⁸ Both the SFRF and the RFPF were put at the disposal of the liberal opposition.

However, while the Liberal-Radicals were consolidating their position in Britain as spokesmen for the opposition developing in Russia, new forces were coming to the fore there. Stepniak and the SFRF, owing to their estrangement from the SDF, remained largely ignorant of and reluctant to accept, the existence of a nascent labour movement in Russia. Through the auspices of the Second International, a body which the Russian emigres in Britain had largely turned their backs upon, British Socialists were made aware of the changed situation in Russia. Although there were no Russian delegates at the Brussels Congress of the Second International held in Aug. 1891, delegates there received a report from Plekhanov and Zasulich on the progress of Social-Democracy in Russia. This event reported in Free Russia as 'a message . . . that the workers were organizing in spite of their Tsar . . .' received fuller treatment in the columns of Justice.²⁹ In an article entitled 'Social-Democracy in Eastern Europe', J. Hunter Watts drew attention to Plekhanov's assertion that a reliance upon the communistic ideals of the peasantry would not save Russia from the painful experience of middle class rule, a proletariat, class antagonisms, and the class war. Citing Plekhanov, he made the point that the Government itself had

actively, since defeat in the Crimean War, cultivated a capitalist class and by so doing had also created a proletariat. Quoting Engels, that modern Socialism is the theoretical expression of the proletarian movement, and where there is no proletariat, Socialism has no basis, Plekhanov, Watts argued, had been able to identify the changed circumstances in Russia leading towards revolution:

Now an industrial proletariat has entered the field, and it will no longer be the person seated on the throne of the Czars who will be menaced, the system itself will be assailed . . .³⁰

This was a direct challenge to the attitudes held by the Russian political emigres in Britain. In 1891 Russian liberalism did not countenance an attack upon the system, but remained convinced that a constitution would be granted from above, as opposed to being taken from below. This view was reinforced with the death of Alexander III and the accession of Nicholas II to the throne in 1894. Nicholas II widely regarded as more liberal in outlook than his father was expected to introduce extensive reforms; such hopes, however, were soon shattered. In a famous speech delivered to a meeting of nobles at the beginning of 1895, Nicholas referred to the wish of the zemstvo representatives for participation in the affairs of state as "senseless dreams", and went on to pledge his unflinching support for the principle of autocracy.³¹ In Free Russia Stepniak wrote:

There is an end to all illusions and roseate hopes. The liberalism of Nicholas II was like the flower of a fern in which people obstinately believe though there were and are no tokens of its real existence; but the mystic St. John's night is over, and everyone understands and realises that it would be idle any longer to expect the enchanted flower.³²

Yet if the 'enchanted flower' of Nicholas II's supposed liberalism had turned out to be an illusion, so too had Stepniak's and the Narodniki's cherished dreams of peasant

socialism, for those populists still active in Russia had been made all too well aware that the shattered foundations of Russian rural life could no longer provide the 'roseate hopes' for a future communistic Russia. Moreover, while Stepniak in London continued to court Liberal sympathisers and to seek ways of turning the RFPF's Russian language organ, Letuchie Listki, into an exclusively Liberal enterprise, Russia's industrial proletariat, reinforced by an influx of labour from the depressed countryside was becoming increasingly embittered. As entrepreneurs took advantage of the increased town population to depress working conditions, the industrial proletariat became increasingly alienated from the political aspirations of Russia's middle classes. These events were mirrored in Britain's Russian emigre community.

In England, in this period, past differences among the socialists were being buried. Commonweal had fallen into the hands of the anarchists and William Morris, Eleanor Marx-Aveling and others rejoined the SDF in 1893. Among emigre socialists Social-Democracy was beginning to make some headway. In April 1891 the International Social-Democratic Association had been formed 'for the purpose of advocating the principles of Social-Democracy among the Jewish workers of the East End of London.'³³ The venture proved so successful that they moved to larger premises in Christian St., Whitechapel in January 1892. And in September 'two hundred . . . Jewish comrades gathered to take part in a substantial repast, spread in their Hall, at Christian Street, Whitechapel, E. . . . to celebrate the re-union in one society of two sections of Jewish workers, . . .'³⁴ Among the speakers were Eleanor Marx-Aveling who spoke in Yiddish and Stepniak who spoke in Russian. Out of this amalgamation the Whitechapel Branch of the SDF was formed, which later proved to be the recruiting ground for many sympathetic Russian Jewish emigres, among them Theodore Rothstein, Boris Kahan and Joe Fineberg, all of whom were to subsequently play a prominent part in the

British labour movement and later Anglo-Soviet relations.

However, it would be wrong to see in the Social-Democratic organisation of the Jewish working class in the 1890's clear evidence of an understanding of the changes taking place in the Russian revolutionary movement. The fact that Stepniak could address this meeting at a time when he had embraced wholeheartedly liberal constitutionalism was an indication of the confused nature of Social-Democratic thought within the emigre community; and, indeed, within the SDF at large, regarding its analysis of Russian politics. In June 1892 Justice had published extracts of the programme of the Narodnaya Volya, with the confident assertion that 'the Russian programme is somewhat similar to that of the SDF.' Offering a purely constitutional programme, it was announced in Justice that the 'advanced section' of the Narodnik were 'thoroughly socialist.'³⁵ This concentration on the purely constitutional nature of the revolutionary movement in Russia, which took no cognisance of the burgeoning strike movement in St. Petersburg, was a reflection of the SDF's advocacy of political over trade union forms of struggle. The explosion of trade union membership in the early 1890's had lent tremendous weight to the movement for working class political independence in Britain. This led the SDF into an analysis of Russian politics which could remain largely unaware of the 'economist' foundation that was underpinning the workers' movement in Russia. Hence, at this point the SDF could support the Russian Populist's agrarian socialism, which referred not to the industrial proletariat but to the 'town worker', prepared to grant their 'sympathy' and 'active support at the moment of insurrection' as allies of the liberal bourgeoisie and peasantry, and not as an organised body prepared to advance their own demands.³⁶ In many respects the SDF simply did not understand developments taking place within the international movement, which their commentary on the Russian situation exposed.

However, in 1895, following Nicholas II's "senseless dreams" speech, Stepniak began to voice doubts regarding the efficacy of the liberal bourgeoisie as agents of a constitutional revolution. In the Labour Leader on 11 May 1895 Stepniak writing on the spread of Social-Democratic ideas in Russia concluded:

The Russian Revolution is passing through a period of preparation. It does not sleep, but gathers strength. The day when the trumpet sounds, the Russian Social-Democracy will come upon the stage of history, and is sure to play one of the most important, if not the most important, part.³⁷

Stepniak was arguably on the verge of taking the SFRF away from Liberal-Radicalism towards an accommodation with Social-Democracy. This was not a new departure, a younger generation of emigres, overwhelmingly Jewish and concentrated in London's East End, had already begun to participate in the local labour movement. Stepniak's own influence on events, however, was cut short on 23 December 1895 when he was struck by a train on a level crossing and killed instantly.

With his death the SFRF and the FRPF became isolated from the new direction Russian politics was set to take. Although Volkhovskii and Chaikovskii attempted to carve out for themselves a position within the Russian revolutionary tradition by pointing to the plebian character of Narodnaya Volya; they simply could not accept the existence of a revolutionary proletariat with aims independent of those of the Liberal bourgeoisie.

The schism that was opening up in the emigre community, between the Narodnaya Volya and the Social-Democrats, came to a head in June 1896 when a general strike by St. Petersburg workers began to dominate news from Russia. The strike, which had its origins in the complaint of one group of workers who had lost wages during the coronation festivities, soon mushroomed into a general strike of St. Petersburg operatives, mainly textile workers, but

including also the tobacco and other trades. Their demands were purely economic, centring on a reduction of hours, an increase of wages, and fortnightly payment.

The strike, however, soon took on a political dimension. The action of the Government in carrying out wholesale arrests and expulsions from St. Petersburg demonstrated to the strikers that the Government was convinced that the strike was a political matter. Social-Democratic propaganda in the city increased accordingly. The role of the St. Petersburg League for the Emancipation of Labour, in assuming the leadership of the strike committees, spread the political nature of the strike. The impact of these strikes on the emigre community in Britain was decisive. The RFPF established direct links with the St. Petersburg Emancipation of Labour Group and issued an appeal for funds in the socialist press. Their support for the strike, however, rested on the assumption that Narodnaya Volya was playing a dominant role in the strike movement. Plekhanov, who was in London in July 1896 for the fourth congress of the Second International, was determined to exclude Narodnaya Volya from the international movement. He addressed delegates in terms which claimed that Social-Democracy alone was responsible for, and directed, the St. Petersburg strikes. Comrade Serebrikov, the delegate for Narodnaya Volya, represented only the remnants of a largely defunct organisation. Volkhovskii, who along with Chaikovskii and Rapoport had been rejected by the congress, wrote to the Labour Leader protesting against the actions of Plekhanov in denying the Narodnaya Volya representation on the International.³⁸ Plekhanov, he wrote, was guilty of 'introducing intolerance and partisanship' into the Russian revolutionary movement.³⁹ This, he claimed, was particularly marked by the treatment of Rapoport, who was rejected by the Congress on the grounds that his mandate bore only five signatures of a committee, acting for a whole group of Russian socialists abroad, (who call themselves Russian Socialist-Revolutionists) and who publish a fly-sheet for

workmen.⁴⁰

Plekhanov's motives, however, reflected the changed situation in Russia. His concern was to link up his Emancipation of Labour Group with the Second International in order to give added weight to Russian Social-Democracy, both in the emigration and in Russia itself. He was not prepared to make any concessions either to the agrarian socialists of the Narodnaya Volya or to the emergent SRs. He had correctly identified a shift of opinion among political activists in the emigre community, and was acting to secure their support for his Emancipation of Labour Group. This new generation of activists had rejected the traditional belief that Russia could develop its own economic institutions and by-pass the injustices inherent in western capitalism. They acknowledged the fact that Russia had undergone a partial transition to capitalism which could only intensify, and welcomed the existence of a class-conscious workers' movement. Their ideological commitment embraced the traditions of western socialism as represented by the Second International; and lay outside a specifically Russian version of 'peasant socialism' with its nativist and romantic overtones.

Foremost among these emigres was Theodore Rothstein who had arrived in Britain in 1891. Rothstein, who was born at Kovno, now Kaunas in Lithuania, on 26 February 1871, represented a new generation of Russian revolutionaries who rejected the teaching of their initial tutors from among the Narodniki, and developed a Marxist analysis of Russian society. Rothstein's father had nurtured ambitions for his son as a medical doctor, and had consequently moved his family to Poltava where Theodore attended the Gymnasium. His main interest, however, lay in applying Marxism to a study of classical literature. As a medical student he joined an illegal study group run by an exiled Narodnik, formerly a member of the 'People's Will' (Narodnaya Volya) terrorist organisation. The study circle read and discussed the works of Chernishevskii and Dobroliubov, and later the

few Marxist texts that were beginning to circulate illegally: Kommunisticheski Manifest (Communist Manifesto), Engels's Razvitie Sotsializma ot Utopii k Nauke (Development of Socialism from Utopia to Science), and parts of the first volume of Kapital (Capital). His political activities were brought to the attention of the local authorities and to avoid possible arrest Rothstein went into voluntary exile along with his family in 1891, following an anonymous tip off 'that "TR had better get out." '41 The family moved first to Germany where an older brother, Phoebus lived in Dantzig. From there, in the same year, the family moved to Leeds, where Rothstein's father, an apothecary, and Theodore's younger brother Albert ran a chemist's shop. Theodore was the only member of his family to become involved in politics and while in Leeds he acted as Hon. Sec. of the local branch of the SFRF, and worked for the RFPF as a translator. In 1893 he moved to London and began working on what was to be a Marxist history of Rome. He worked on this project for two years, studying in the British Museum; while doing so he was supported by his family. Although this work was never finished he published articles on Plato, Socrates, Alexander The Great, Julius Caesar, Demosthenes and Cicero in the Russian journal Zhizn Zamechatel'nikh Lyudei. Biograficheskaya Biblioteka. F. Pavlenkova, and he also published an article on Roman poetry under the nom de plume E.Orlov in the journal Zhizn'.⁴²

Theodore Rothstein married in 1895; his wife Anna Kahan belonged to another politically active Jewish immigrant family. Her brother Boris and sister Zelda all became members of the SDF, Theodore, Anna and Boris joining the Whitechapel Branch in 1895. In 1896 he resumed work as a translator and as a sub-editor for Free Russia. This led to employment on Campbell-Bannerman's shortlived Radical newspaper The Tribune as a "sub", and then on the Daily News from 1907; an income supplemented by occasional articles for the Manchester Guardian on international

affairs from 1911 onwards.⁴³

Rothstein was active in spreading Social-Democratic ideals among the Jewish population of London's East End. On 29 August 1896 Justice reported on the formation of a five man committee in the Whitechapel Branch, which included Rothstein and Boris Kahan, whose aim was to 'draw up a scheme of propaganda among the Jewish speaking population' of London's East End; and to report on the 'advisability of publishing a Socialist paper in Yiddish.'

In October 1896 Rothstein wrote his first article for Justice outlining a Social-Democratic philosophy which sought to establish a modus vivendi between the 'evolutionary "common-sensical" trade unionist and "practical" Fabian on the one hand, and the extreme revolutionists among the Anarchists and the French Allemanists on the other.'⁴⁴ In addressing the twin doctrines of evolution and revolution, Rothstein argued that the two doctrines were not necessarily opposed to one another but were two sides of the same equation:

. . . we, at least the Social-Democrats, have outgrown to a very great extent this crude conception of revolution being a negation of evolution . . . To our mind a revolution is as much a legitimate movement in the evolutionary process of development of an organism as that piecemeal slow, and often imperceptible change with which the idea of evolution is generally associated.⁴⁵

Rothstein's political philosophy offered a synthesis of revolutionary and evolutionary methods of social progress; confronting one of the fundamental issues facing socialists in a debate which was characteristic of late Victorian society, namely the role of voluntarism in determining men's actions. If change, whether revolutionary or evolutionary, was to be seen as an expression of the 'legitimate movement in the evolutionary process of development', then a degree of inevitability is implied in the whole 'process'. If this is accepted as scientifically proved, for example by the writings of Darwin, then what

is the role of those revolutionaries working for a 'radical transformation of society'? For Rothstein the answer came in the recognition that 'this onward movement is not wholly unimpeded.' 'To expect, then a good humoured solution of the social problem', he continued, 'is sheer naivete. Under some form or other the power the capitalist class holds in its hands with a view of controlling the march of the social evolution will have to be wrested from it by force, . . .'⁴⁶

However, having made this statement, Rothstein, like many of his contemporaries withdrew from its practical implications. It was clear that he, along with others, held to a romantic conception of the revolution. Rejecting in his article both the general strike as a weapon, and the struggle for an 8 hours' day as an objective, he argued in favour of the majority SDF view - that the day to day struggle of trade unionists was of secondary importance: '. . . a mountain cannot become pregnant with a mouse'.⁴⁷ He called instead 'for the total abolition of private property in all the means of production, exchange, &c.' The moment 'when the proletariat will rise against the capitalist class . . . will only be with a view of restructuring society on a new basis.' In the meantime, the role of the socialist is 'the work of organisation . . . the moment this is accomplished, or even only half of it, the death-knell of the bourgeoisie will resound, and the question of an 8 hours' day will disappear for ever.'⁴⁸ It was a viewpoint widely held in the SDF. The revolution was inevitable, and practical work within such bodies as the Trade Unions or the Eight Hours' League was of little intrinsic value.

However, it would be wrong to conclude from this that Rothstein, along with other members of the SDF, abstained from all practical work; although, in the main, they supported those activities which they could control. Propaganda work amongst the Jewish population was a good example of SDF activity being carried on outside the main

body of the trade union and Labour movement. The fresh eruption of the strike movement in St. Petersburg in January 1897, following the failure of the Russian Government to implement reforms promised in July, gave an added impetus to such propaganda among the Jewish population of London. Appeals were again made for financial aid to the strikers, and among those active in drumming up support were Dr. Selitrenny and D.G. White, members of the five man committee of the Whitechapel branch. Indeed, the Whitechapel Branch of the SDF played a leading role in organizing support for the strikers. On 13 February a mass meeting was held at the Aldgate Baths, where the principal speakers were Vera Zasulich and Hyndman. D.G. White, sec. of the Whitechapel Branch, was also instrumental in persuading the Twentieth Century Press to publish the 'Report of the Russian Social-Democrats to the International Congress', all proceeds to be sent to the Russian Strike Fund.⁴⁹

The meeting at Aldgate was well-attended; speeches being made by among others Eleanor Marx-Aveling and the veteran Chartist Frederick Lessner. Among the audience were representatives of the old and new generation of Russian emigres. Following accusations that the Russian revolutionary movement had been until recently an expression of middle class discontent against the Government, the two groups split into open antagonism.

In a letter to Justice on the 27 February Chaikovskii attempted to demonstrate the "proletarian" nature of the recent revolutionary movement in Russia by drawing attention to the presence of a few working men in the ranks of the Narodniki. Three weeks later Rothstein writing in Justice on 'The Revolutionary Movement', attacked Chaikovskii's reading of the situation in Russia. He pointed out that the socialism which Chaikovskii and the Narodniki represented 'was a peasant socialism - a strange hybrid, illegitimately begotten of the most progressive ideas of Western Europe by the antiquated conditions of

Russian economic life.⁵⁰ He went on to argue that the mere presence of a few working men among the Narodniki did not demonstrate the proletarian nature of narodnichestvo (populism):

Socialism, as we understand it, is the philosophy of the proletariat - that class of propertyless wage-earners which exists only in countries governed by the capitalist mode of production; and when the material conditions involving the existence of two classes, the bourgeoisie and proletariat, are not sufficiently, or not at all ripe, that philosophy has no living sense, either theoretical or practical.⁵¹

Such an unequivocal statement of socialist ideology, was symptomatic of the new thinking among the Russian emigre community in Europe. Firmly convinced of the existence of capitalism in Russia, they saw themselves and the future development of Russia, clearly within the framework of Western Social-Democracy. The older generation of emigres had proved incapable of making this transition. Letuchie Listki and the RFPF, after tentative approaches towards the Social-Democrats, finally closed on 10 August 1899, with the majority of its remaining members allying themselves with the Social Revolutionaries.⁵²

Free Russia and the SFRF, on the other hand, proved more durable, continuing publication until 1915. Indeed, in many respects, by retaining its links with British Liberals, the paper reflected the widespread opinion growing within Russia that reformers and revolutionaries should work for a broad coalition of groups, ranging from the moderate centre to the extreme left, to achieve the overthrow of Tsardom. Theodore Rothstein, who in England was to argue for the complete separation of socialism from liberalism, continued to write articles for Free Russia, and sat in an advisory capacity on the Society's Executive Committee.⁵³ In many ways this was a tribute to the strength of the Liberal-Radical tradition within British left-wing politics, and was not lost on those emigres, who still saw in British institutions a possible model for Russia's

future political development. The arguments that had been put forward by Stepniak, throughout the 1880's and 1890's still retained a strong hold over the political imagination of many. This is not to say that Rothstein and other emigres advocated a more responsive version of Liberal-constitutionalism, nor even their own version of Bernstein's "evolutionary socialism"; but rather they were to come to realise the strength of Liberal-Radicalism's hold over large sections of the organised British working class. In doing so, they saw in socialism a chance to loosen that hold, and to establish an independent working class movement based upon the ideals of European Social-Democracy. But what proved difficult was defining the institutionalised form this independence would have to take. In seeking to solve this problem they followed closely the arguments of those socialists within Russia who were either for or against an alliance with liberalism. Indeed, this was to be one of the main issues of both Russian and British left-wing politics over the next eight years. From the appearance of an organised labour movement in St. Petersburg in 1896 to the unity achieved by opposition forces in the Revolution of 1905, Russian emigres followed events in both Britain and Russia within a theoretical framework of working class independence or radical alliance. The difficulties they faced arose when both groups, in Britain and in Russia, sought to define their objectives.

Notes.

1. Justice 6 May 1893. Stepniak, who attended the demonstration in 1884, writing 9 years later, is mistaken about the year this event took place.
2. To-Morrow: A Monthly Review. No.2 (Feb.1896) pp.101-2.
3. The Labour Leader 28 Dec. 1895.
4. See Justice 3 May 1890.
5. S.Stepniak, letter to his friends in Russia written in Feb.1882. Quoted from an archival source by E.A. Taratuta in her preface to S.M. Stepniak-Kravchinskii, Rossiia pod vlast'yu tsarei (M.1965)p.10. Cited B. Hollingsworth, 'The Society of Friends of Russian Freedom: English Liberals and Russian Socialists, 1898-1917.' Oxford Slavonic Papers. Vol.3.1970,p.48.
6. To-Morrow, loc cit.
7. Pall Mall Gazette, 29 March 1886.
8. W. Earl Hodgson, A Night with a Nihilist (Cupar-Fife, 1886) p.7.
9. C. Tsuzuki, H.M.Hyndman and British Socialism (Oxford 1961) p.61.
10. The terminology is Tsuzuki's who wrote: 'The words 'right' and 'left' were not used at the time: but they afford a convenient classification for what were in reality two distinct tendencies.' Tsuzuki, op cit. p.57.
11. To-Day June and July 1884. The Times Jan.- March 1884 esp. 9 Jan., 27 Feb., 26 March., and 18 April.
12. J.W. Hulse, Revolutionists in London (Oxford 1970) p.35.
13. ibid.
14. Dela i dni, No.2 (1921), pp.90-91. Cited S.M. Baron, Plekhanov, The Father of Russian Marxism (California 1963) p.84.
15. Perepiska Marksa i Engel'sa pp.249-52. Cited Baron, op cit. p.123.
16. G.D.H. Cole, Socialist Thought. The Second International 1889-1914. p.8.
17. Eleanor Marx-Aveling to Laura Lafargue, 1 June 1889. Bottigelli Archives. Cited Yvonne Kapp, Eleanor Marx. The Crowded Years 1884-1898. p.306.
18. Justice 15 June 1896.
19. Labour Elector 22 June 1896.
20. See D.B. Saunders, 'Stepniak and the London Emigration: Letters to Robert Spence Watson (1887-1890)', Oxford Slavonic Papers new series L3 (1980).
21. Nikolai Vasil'evich Chaikovskii, ed. A.A. Titov (Paris 1929) vol.1, pp.185-6. Cited D.B. Saunders op cit. p.81.
22. S.Stepniak, Chego Nam Nuzhno in S.M. Stepniak-Kravchinskii and the National Front Against Autocracy.' Slavic Review 34 (1975) p.508.
23. ibid. Sochinenii vol.6 pp.14-15; cited Senese op cit. p.509.
24. ibid. Sochinenii vol.6 pp.16-17; cited Senese loc cit.
25. The Times 4 Jan., 11 Feb., & 28 Feb.1890.
26. Justice 24 May 1890.
27. ibid. 12 Dec. 1891.
28. Baron op cit. pp.140-1.

29. Free Russia 1 Oct. 1891.
30. Justice 19 Sept. 1891.
31. Free Russia 1 Oct. 1891.
32. ibid. NB. The 'enchanted flower' is an allusion to a widely spread popular superstition in Russia that the fern blooms on one night in the year known as Ivan Koupalo, and that whoever succeeds in discovering the flower will find a treasure, and be endowed with supernatural powers.
33. Justice 11 April 1891.
34. ibid. 10 Sept. 1892.
35. ibid. 11 June 1892.
36. ibid.
37. The Labour Leader 11 May 1895.
38. G.D.H. Cole op cit. p.23.
39. The Labour Leader 11 May 1895.
40. ibid.
41. Correspondence with Andrew Rothstein 1983-5. See also N.A. Erofeev, 'Akademik Fedor Aronovich Rotshtein' in Akademiya Nauk SSSR, Imperializm i borba rabochego klassa (Moskva 1960) pp.5-6.
42. ibid.
43. ibid. See Erofeev and Maiskii in Imperializm i borba rabochego klassa pp.10 and 55 respectively. Also W.P. Crozier to C.P. Scott letter dated 1 May (1911?). C.P. Scott Papers A/R58/1. John Ryland's University Library of Manchester. And Andrew Rothstein letter to myself dated 20 August 1991: 'My reference to my father's work is correct. He went to Fleet Street - first the DN and then the Guardian - in the evenings. Papers were smaller then. He was a fully-fledged member of the NUJ. His post was that of a special correspondent, dealing with foreign news (but not as a foreign editor).'
44. Justice 3 Oct. 1896.
- 45-48. ibid.
49. ibid. 20 Feb. 1897. See also 'Report presented by the Russian Social-Democrats to the International Congress of Socialist Workers and Trade Unions (Twentieth Century Press Lon., 1896).
50. ibid. 20 March 1897.
51. ibid.
52. Letuchie Listki 25 Dec. 1893 - 10 Aug. 1899. Research publications.. Inc., 1973. See also Senese op cit. p.520.
53. Free Russia 1 March 1897. 'Th. Rothstein has been invited to attend the meetings of the Executive Committee as an advisory member.'

Chapter 2. 1897 - 1905.

Because of the successes that attended the ending of the great St. Petersburg strikes, Russian socialism, having recently defeated the challenge from Narodnaya Volya found itself embroiled yet again in internal strife. This inner conflict, in many respects, mirrored schisms within the Western European socialist movement, in particular the conflict raging between Revisionists and orthodox Marxists in Germany and the comparable controversy in Britain between trades unionists and those socialists arguing for the primacy of political over economic forms of struggle. This conflict reflected the wider debate taking place on the Left between the opposing doctrines of reformism and revolution as a means of socialist advance.

Revisionism centred upon the writings of Eduard Bernstein, whose work Voraussetzungen des Sozialismus und die Aufgaben der Sozialdemokratie (1898), called for a drastic revision of the theoretical foundations of socialism. Translated into English in 1899 under the title Evolutionary Socialism, it sought to show that historical evolution was not bearing out Marx's predictions for the transition from capitalism to socialism. Concentration of production in industry had not advanced at any great pace, with large numbers of small enterprises continuing to exist. Instead of becoming polarised into two opposing classes society was extending the scale of social gradations, with the middle income groups growing in number faster than the extremely rich and the multitude of poor. Contrary to Marx's forecast, under capitalism the workers were gaining meaningful improvements in status and material welfare. But more importantly, for the Revisionists, the "anarchy of production", upon which orthodox Marxism centred, was being increasingly brought under control, so that economic crises occurred less frequently and were less severe. It therefore followed that on the tactical side,

socialists should adhere to the premiss of evolutionary development rather than revolution. Parliamentarism and trade unionism had achieved a measurable degree of success in bringing democracy to society, and this was working to the advantage of the working class. These, therefore, were the proper institutions of advance.

Such ideas had a disruptive impact on the European socialist movement. In Russia, 'Economism', which had made its appearance in the workers' movement in the latter months of 1897 through the clandestine periodical Rabochaya Mysl', (Workers' Thought) was soon linked with Revisionism. Following the St. Petersburg strikes, it became noticeable that within those working class circles allied to Russian socialism, economic grievances were the issues to which workers most readily responded. As a result, the majority of workers came to reject the link between the struggle for material welfare and the fight against autocracy. Accordingly, the RSDLP began to advocate the building up of strong labour organisations, while awaiting the time when political consciousness would reach down to the masses. As early as the summer of 1897 Plekhanov identified 'the predominance of a narrow group spirit,' to the detriment of the general, class, point of view, as "one of the greatest inadequacies of our contemporary Social-Democratic movement" . . . "We rebel" ', wrote Plekhanov, ' "not against agitation on an economic basis, but against those agitators who do not know how to take advantage of economic clashes of the workers with the entrepreneurs for the development of the political consciousness of the workers." ' ' For Plekhanov, the Russian workers' movement was not only in danger of following recent trends in Germany, but worse still, seemed to be succumbing to the English practice, where the absence of socialist leadership had created a proletariat incapable of going beyond the opportunism of trades unionism. However, Plekhanov, intent on exposing the shortcomings of Revisionism, had offered an analysis of British trade unionism which failed to take note of recent

changes in the British labour movement. The Engineers' Lock-Out of 1897, which had mushroomed from a strike over differentials and the eight hour day, into an attempt by employers to smash the Amalgamated Society of Engineers (ASE), was the first step in a long drawn out process whereby British trade unionism began to question the desirability of continuing a political alliance with middle class radicalism. Throughout the years 1897-1905 several controversial issues dominated British domestic and foreign affairs which seemed to offer the opportunity for some form of political action on an independent basis. Each successive area of discord - the Engineers' Lock-Out, opposition to the Boer War, Imperialism, Labour Representation and Parliamentarianism convinced the socialist element within the labour movement that the working class had to distance itself from Liberal-Radicalism if socialism was to succeed. It was as participants in this debate that the small Russian emigre community, centred around Theodore Rothstein, came to play a significant part in the development of British Marxism over the years 1897-1905.

Rothstein, who until recently had been largely involved in the politics of London's Russian emigre community, now published a critical history of the British labour movement in the Social-Democrat, emphasising the drift away from an alliance with middle class radicalism, towards opposition and independence.² Significantly, this critique borrowed from the polemics of Plekhanov against both the Economists and Revisionists. In many places the language was not only similar, but was given added emphasis by the fact that within the Russian labour movement links were being forged between progressive liberals and intellectual Marxists from the middle classes. However, in many respects, Rothstein's empathy for events unfolding in Russia led him to exaggerate the ease with which British socialists could assume the leadership of the working class which he saw as being largely a political struggle against a government divorced from the mainstream of British society, in much

the same way as Tsarism was seen to exist in Russia. In fact, Rothstein's initial analysis of British events drew heavily on a reading of continental politics and tended to ignore the extent to which the British working class had forged strong economic and political links with Liberalism. Yet, if Rothstein approached British working class history with what many of his contemporaries regarded as the "arrogance of continental socialism", it was soon tempered by his own activity inside the British socialist movement. This dichotomy between the continent and Britain was always apparent in Rothstein's writings and found expression in two moods, the one optimistic and the other cautious. Thus during the Engineers' Lock-Out of 1897 and the Boer War (1899-1902), Rothstein could maintain the optimistic belief that the moment was propitious for the socialists to assume the political leadership of the working class; whereas in later years, spent on the National Executive of the SDF (1901-1906), he counselled caution to those socialists who believed that established working class institutions could either be side-stepped or ignored in the building-up of a mass socialist organisation. Importantly, however, throughout these years, Rothstein remained an enthusiastic socialist, grappling with problems integral to the British labour movement; indeed it is interesting to note that at the end of this period the optimistic side of his nature triumphed over the cautious. The occasion was the Russian Revolution of 1905, where the polarisation of classes in Russian political and social life led him to believe that the experience of the Russian working class could be effectively translated and utilized by their British counterparts. His bold assumption on 1905 that 'for the first time . . . the proletariat has stepped out on the historical arena as an independent and class conscious power pursuing its own political and social aims,' was meant as a rallying call to British labour.⁹ This appeal was significant, highlighting the unique character of Rothstein's contribution to the British labour movement

which was as much Russian as it was British. This chapter, then, chronicles Rothstein's political career over an eight or nine year period which identifies his specific role both within the emigre community and the British socialist movement.

On 22 May, 1897 an important article had appeared in Justice from the secretary of the SDF, Harry Quelch, which attempted to overcome the widening gulf then existing between trade unionists and socialists in Britain. Throughout the 1890's the SDF's attitude towards trade unionism, following the great Dock Strike of 1889 and the subsequent growth in trade union membership, had to a large extent been determined by Hyndman's anti-union pronouncements. Hyndman and his supporters had consistently rejected trade unionism for its 'implicit recognition of capitalism' and as a distraction from Socialist agitation.⁴ Quelch, an active trade unionist, had throughout the 1890's attempted to counter the anti-union or 'impossibilist' views that had become associated with the SDF.

In May 1897 Quelch now argued that while 'there is no necessary affinity between trade unionism and socialism . . . that the place of the Social-Democrat is by the side of the trade unionist. . . The trade unions', he concluded, 'offer a splendid field for propaganda, a propaganda which can be better carried on among them by example than by precept;.. '⁵

Over the next seven months socialists fiercely debated the respective merits of these two forms of propaganda, the occasion being the lock-out of the ASE between July 1897 and January 1898. This lock-out brought to the forefront the rivalries existing between economic and political forms of struggle within the British labour movement. The socialists of the SDF, wedded to the idea of political action - which coupled a commitment to electoral politics with a vague notion of revolution - sought to win the ASE over to the notion of independent working class political action. The engineers themselves, however, believed their

dispute to be primarily one between the skilled men of the union and their employers over the maintenance of differentials, and the Eight Hour Day. By the end of the dispute, however, with the engineers defeated, it was apparent that for many skilled unionists future political action was to be a further extension of the struggle in the workplace for control over management and the maintenance of craft skills and differentials. Thus there was an inherent conservatism existing in working class politics, which relied upon sectionalism, and ignored class organisation. In these circumstances the politics of the skilled worker was drawn away from the revolutionary rhetoric of the SDF towards the more pragmatic approach of the ILP. It was indicative of the SDF's ignorance of trade union affairs, that during the lock-out, coverage of the dispute ignored the question of differentials and centred around the wider issue of the Eight Hours Movement. Yet, if the SDF drew back from antagonising the engineers directly over the advisability of mounting purely sectional, craft disputes, it did not draw back from criticising their support for industrial over political forms of struggle:

Suppose the engineers win this fight, as we seriously hope they may, it only means the partial adoption of an eight hours working day for a well-organised, highly skilled and, comparatively, well-paid body of men. It will not affect, except indirectly, the millions of workers whose want of organisation makes it impossible for them to use the same means the engineers are now adopting, and whose poverty, while it prevents them from organising, makes them an easy prey of capitalism, and condemns them to long hours and short pay. Yet the engineers' struggle has already lasted nine weeks, . . . here we have a net expenditure on the part of one society in nine weeks of £135,000. Why, for a hundred and thirty five thousand pounds, if the trade unionists so desired it, they could completely transform the House of Commons, and carry a Bill which could secure an eight hours day for all workers . . . all the loss and suffering inseparable from a strike would be avoided.⁶

It was becoming apparent that the SDF had elected to stand aloof from involvement, not only in the engineers' struggle, but in industrial disputes per se. Despite its optimism regarding political activity within the House of Commons and the possibility of using it to win social reforms under capitalism, it was clear that 'propaganda among them by precept' was maintaining its dominance over 'propaganda among them by example.' Instead of offering practical support the SDF was prepared to sit back and wait for the engineers to learn their lesson: ' . . . many a lesson as severe as that now being learned by the engineers will be enforced before the trade unions will recognise the duty and the necessity of adopting political action for class purposes . . .' Convinced of their superiority they relegated strikes 'to the pre-Socialist school of trade unionism . . .'. The Executive Council of the SDF passed the following resolution summing up their position:

We therefore urge on the Amalgamated Society of Engineers and all other labour organisations the necessity of devoting their energies and their funds to political action, to the running, returning, and maintaining as members of Parliament, and other representative bodies, those who are neither hangers on of the Tory nor the Liberal Party, but are pledged to the only possible labour programme, the international programme of the abolition of private property in the means of production and exchange.⁸

It is impossible to ignore here the enormous gulf that existed between the SDF and the ASE. While the ASE was involved in the day to day activities of overseeing strike action, the SDF had opted solely for a reliance upon moral instruction.

In December 1897, towards the end of the strike, attention had been focused on these shortcomings by Theodore Rothstein. In his first article for Justice on

purely British affairs, Rothstein pointed out that throughout the strike the Liberal-Radical bourgeoisie had offered a defence of the engineers, in marked contrast to the socialists who had failed to do so. In this respect, he emphasised the campaign by The Daily Chronicle to get 'the employers to renounce the ideas of smashing the unions, and to recognise the elementary right of Labour to an organised existence and collective policy . . .' What, he states, this pointed to, was a realisation on the part of a section of the bourgeoisie that 'trades unionism as it exists today does not only not constitute to him any danger, but what little disadvantage it still possesses is amply repaid by its repudiation of political and revolutionary action and its confining itself to a policy of peaceful compromising usually called "collective bargaining." '9 But while this may be appreciated by the liberal bourgeoisie, there is little evidence to show that the majority of British trade unionists had understood these developments:

During the last two or three decades they have shown a remarkable want of appreciation of their class position, and now on seeing so many smooth tongued and open-handed middle class men coming to their rescue they will still more deeply plunge into their stupid self-contentment, . . . They will persist as ever before in their ossified trade unionist policy, and repudiate all political action independent of the programme of either of the two bourgeois parties. Thus a great lesson which some of us have expected from the manifest inability of trade unionism to grapple with large issues will be lost, and the working man of this country, flattered by the modern Circes, will be, as heretofore, a ready prey to their masters.¹⁰

Thus for Rothstein, while the middle class "progressives" had come forward as defenders of trade unionism, the socialists had merely deplored the want of class-consciousness among trade unionists. The political lessons the strike held out to the working class were in danger of

being lost. Echoing Quelch's earlier article, Rothstein concluded that socialists within the trade union movement had to raise the dispute's political aspects:

At the coming National Conference of the trade unions many Socialists of the SDF and the ILP will undoubtedly be present, and on them devolves the duty to present our case. Let them spare no efforts to put the present fight and the attitude assumed towards it by the middle class, in their proper light. Otherwise we in England shall have to do our work over again."

However, although Rothstein had given evidence of a changing response towards the practice of trades unionism, openly calling for active involvement in trade union affairs, he had done so only from the position of a responsibility ' . . . to present our case.' It was one step back from propaganda by 'precept' towards propaganda 'among them by example'; but it still assumed that trade unionists once made aware of the political realities of their class position would renounce the practical support they had received from sections of the middle class, and experience a major shift in their political allegiance. It was a reading of trade unionism, shared with other socialists, that put the primacy of politics and political theory above the economic attachment of certain sections of the working class to sympathetic elements within the bourgeoisie. There was little evidence to suggest that either Rothstein or Quelch's call for more socialist involvement in the trade union movement had altered the general outlook of the SDF National Executive. Commenting on trade unionism just before the collapse of the strike, Justice in a front page article remarked:

Trade unionism, when it forms an aristocracy of labour, as in England, so far from helping on the general cause of the workers, heads that cause back. The old trade unionism is, in fact, nowadays a reactionary force . . . When will Englishmen learn a

little wisdom and throw their weight into politics for their own advantage?'¹²

In the light of recent worker involvement in the York by-election - an event which had followed immediately upon the collapse of the engineers' strike - it was a valid question. Here the Tories had been gaining political advantage from the fact that the Liberal candidate, Sir Charles Furness, was also a member of the Engineering Employers' Federation. Furness claiming to be the working engineer's friend, and promising a number of concessions to the engineers - 'when the election contest was over, but protesting as a man of honour, that he could not turn blackleg,'¹³ - secured the support of the Trades Council and the north eastern organiser of the ASE. Liberal support for the ASE in the area had been strong, and this was now reflected, ironically, in support for the Liberal candidate Furness. Both the ILP and the SDF opposed Furness, and for their pains had a number of their meetings smashed up by gangs of Liberal and Irish roughs. Here was an object lesson for the SDF on the historical factors linking trade unionism with Liberal-Radicalism, which for the most part, because it was misunderstood by socialists, remained largely unlearnt.

Commenting upon these events, and upon the Engineers' Lock-Out in general, Rothstein drew attention to this point when he analysed the economic factors underpinning class relationships in Britain. In an attempt to explain why it was that socialism had put down strong roots in countries less economically developed than Britain; he pointed to the leading role of the continental proletariat in securing civil and personal liberties, as opposed to what he saw as a progressive alliance between middle and working class radicals with similar objectives in Britain. However, the dominant role in this partnership had all along been assumed by middle class progressives:

. . . in England the progress which

Democracy undoubtedly makes every day is mainly due to the initiative and leadership of the middle classes, so that even such distinctly working class legislation as the Factory Acts, the abolition of the combination laws, and the legislation of the status of the trade unions has been secured by their efforts rather than by those of the proletariat, it is the latter which in the rest of Europe appears as the champion of the civil and personal rights of the people. The Continental bourgeoisie, in its fear for its property, has long since thrown overboard what little progressive ballast it had possessed in the first half of the present century, and the democratic ideals have been left to the care of the working classes,¹⁴

Rothstein's emphasis on the leading role of the English middle classes led him into a rather simplistic belief that the working class in order to develop its own sense of an independent political identity, had merely to shrug off middle class patronage and tutelage. For Rothstein, this appeared a rather simple next step, owing to a reading of British working class history which emphasised the essentially passive nature of that class's response to bourgeois dominance. To overcome passivity the working class merely had to become conscious of its own interests, and the bankruptcy of the English middle classes as a progressive force.

The outbreak of the Boer War eighteen months later in October 1899 confirmed Rothstein in this view leading him to conclude that the progressive side of Liberalism had, by its failure to unequivocally condemn the war, outlived its usefulness. The split in the Liberal Party had deepened, and had presented socialists with an opportunity for political advance. However, not all socialists were as convinced as Rothstein that the Boer War had sounded the death-knell of Liberalism; the crisis in the moral conscience of radical thinkers caused by the war was not confined to Liberal-Radicals. The Fabians, for example, were equally divided over the issue, while Blatchford's

Clarion fully supported the war. The ILP leadership opposed the war, although it 'feared the unpopularity of an anti-war stand amongst sizeable sections of the working class.'¹⁵ Rothstein's advocacy of an independent socialist party, on the other hand, organising members and sympathisers initially through anti-war work exposed the exaggerated nature of these fears, and presupposed the existence of widespread working class opposition to the war. In such circumstances, Rothstein's argument would appear over-optimistic. However, as one historian has shown, mass working class support for the Boer War was essentially a myth; the absence of mass working class opposition was seen as a result of 'the inadequacy of the organisations which attempted to build that opposition.'¹⁶

Ironically, given that Theodore Rothstein became one of the leading spokesmen for that opposition, a significant section of the SDF throughout the hostilities threatened to split the anti-war movement by voicing their opposition to the war in anti-semitic terms. In an outburst of scarcely disguised patriotism, Hyndman, in an article in Justice on 17 June 1899, shifted all responsibility for the drift to war onto the shoulders of Jewish financiers. 'Englishmen', he wrote, 'are dead against making war with the Transvaal Boers for the sake of such true-born Britons as Beit, Eckstein, Rothschild, Joel, Adler, Goldberg, Israel, Isaac, Solomon, and Co.' These sentiments were endorsed by the SDF's Executive Committee who in an appeal for anti-war demonstrators to assemble in Trafalgar Square on 9 July, did so in language which betrayed a clear anti-semitic bias:

There are plenty of common Englishmen left who are not the henchmen of Rhodes and haven't pocketed the money of Beit, or Joel, or Rothschild. To them we Social-Democrats mean to appeal, . . .¹⁷

In the months leading up to the declaration of war on 11 October, anti-semitism in Justice continued to dominate coverage of the crisis in the Transvaal. The editor of

Justice, Harry Quelch, spoke in terms of a Jewish conspiracy, maintaining 'that the gold international, the financial ring is dominated by Jews . . . the most virulent jingo organs in this and other countries are in their hands.'¹⁸ Nor did Justice hold back from indirect incitement to anti-Jewish violence:

Far be it for us to preach a "Judenhetze", but if such unscrupulous use of the power which their wealth and their control of the press gives them by the wealthy Jew financiers does not promote a reaction against them it will indeed be strange.¹⁹

Such sentiments were disturbing. A Jewish emigre, whose home had been destroyed by anti-semitic rioters in Poland, expressed the fears of many East European Jews when he spoke of the growing appeal of Zionism for politically active Jews in London:

I sometimes wonder if Dr. Nordau was not right in saying that "the Jews have no guarantee that they will enjoy peace and equality even in a Socialist regime."²⁰

In the same issue Hyndman expressed his fears for the future of a British Empire that allowed itself to be manipulated by Jewish financial intrigue. By linking the decline of the Second Empire in France with the activities of Jewish financiers, he prophesied a similar fate for the British Empire while Jews were permitted to instigate imperial wars:

. . . the war in Mexico, like the war in the Transvaal, was undertaken at the instance of Jews and stock-jobbers who had obtained control of the Emperor's entourage, and used their ill-gotten influence to bring about war, in order to give value to the now forgotten "Jecker Bonds". The Mexican war of the Second Empire was a Jew's war, and dearly did France pay for the subservience of her rulers to the power of the Semitic money-bags.²¹

Such sentiments as these, coupled with the emotive use of

the word "Judenhetze", raised the spectre in some quarters of a national anti-semitic movement in Britain. A widespread campaign against Jewish immigration in the late 1890's led to the setting up of a Royal Commission on Alien Immigration, resulting in the 1905 Aliens Act which reduced 'Aliens' most crudely to European Jews.

In such circumstances the Jewish emigre membership of the SDF became enraged by Justice's anti-semitic pronouncements on the origins of the war. Rothstein, who had previously complained about 'the unsavoury tendencies . . . of anti-semitism'²² within the SDF, spoke for many Jewish socialists - who did not resign their membership - when he spoke of the unlikelihood of 'an anti-Semitic movement . . . in this country' owing to Justice's small circulation:

Happily for the case, though unhappily for the general cause, JUSTICE is read by a comparatively small section of the community, so that a national anti-Semitic movement is not to be expected.²³

But of greater significance was Rothstein's sustained assault on Hyndman's support for the general concept of Empire. In particular, his jingoistic pride in the 'honour' of a British Empire, threatened by the dishonesty of the 'Jew-millionaire':

England is virtuous; the Cabinet is chaste; the capitalists are pure; it is only the Jew-millionaire who pollutes everything and deprives Brittania of her honour.²⁴

Hyndman's arguments were not idiosyncratic, and relied heavily on a series of articles in the Manchester Guardian from J.A. Hobson, published in the autumn of 1899. Hobson, who had been sent earlier in the year to South Africa by C.P. Scott when it seemed that war might be imminent, used his assessment of the situation in South Africa to develop a broader analysis of imperialism, publishing The War in South Africa in 1900 and Imperialism, A Study in 1902. The War in South Africa contained a chapter on 'For Whom are we Fighting?' which conceded that 'it is difficult to state the truth about our doings in South Africa without seeming

to appeal to the ignominious passion of the *Judenhetze*; Hobson, nevertheless, went on to conclude that the war was being fought, under the cloak of patriotism, in the interests of financiers among whom 'the foreign Jew must be taken as the leading type.'²⁵

Hyndman's support for the integrity of the British Empire was ironically a legacy from his radical conservative origins which owed much to Disraeli; and his belief that a Celto-Teutonic federation could lead the way into a system of world-wide socialism. The Empire would radically alter its approach to subject peoples, who would become part of a 'voluntary federation of free and self-respecting peoples,' operating outside commercial imperialism.²⁶ The intellectual justification for Hyndman's understanding of imperialism was the on-going debate in the socialist movement regarding the world-wide transition to socialism. In conditions where different rates of social and economic development among the various nations apply, concerted action had been made difficult.

The SDF, along with other socialist groups, lacked a specific theoretical analysis of imperialism before the Boer War. Bax, who had been the first to see in imperialism a major threat to socialism, argued that the search for new markets whether in the Transvaal or elsewhere, would only serve to prolong capitalism. He maintained that opponents of the Boer War should oppose capitalism per se, and not scapegoat one particular group of capitalists, while exonerating others. Together with Rothstein, Bax offered a criticism of the war which began to develop an overall critique of imperialism, directly opposed to the humane colonial policy advocated by Hyndman. 'I am pro-Boer', proclaimed Bax, because British socialists have the duty to resist 'the violence of Great Britain and international capitalism'.²⁷

Rothstein took Bax's protest a stage further, and saw in anti-war work not only a broad agitation against war and imperialism, but also the opportunity to promote socialism.

The failure of the Liberal-Radicals to orchestrate an effective anti-war movement - owing to fears of a damaging, if not fatal, split within the Liberal Party - was seized upon by Rothstein as an opportunity for real political advance by the SDF:

Now is the psychological moment for which many of us have been on the look-out for the last ten or fifteen years; now is the time to get into line with the continental Socialists whose good fortune it is to have become the sole keepers and champions of Right a quarter of a century ago. The great obstacle in our way has been forcibly and in good time removed by the war; there is no one left to take the wind out of our sails any longer: Liberalism is dead and rotting in its grave.²⁸

The following week, 14 April 1900, Rothstein was urging British Social-Democracy to cut all ties with Liberal-Radicalism. Two months later in the June 1900 edition of the Social-Democrat Rothstein repeated his argument, but in terms which chastised the SDF for what he saw as its sectarian laziness:

. . . we have been more of a sect than a party. We regarded the world with an eye,, not so much of active participators, as of "intelligent onlookers," and far from thinking to impress upon it our distinct personality, we contented ourselves with examining it from our particular standpoint. And that standpoint was especially adapted to estrange us from life.

Rothstein's analysis of the anti-war agitation, therefore, was not simply concerned with achieving a more militant campaign; it also pointed to new opportunities for the socialist movement owing to a crisis in the Liberal Party. It also, however, offered a criticism of SDF strategy that identified sectarianism as its major weakness. Not surprisingly Rothstein's arguments were immediately subject to criticism. Harry Quelch in the following months' Social-Democrat attacked Rothstein for his loose understanding of the relationship between

Liberalism and the active working class. Rothstein's argument had drawn out, quite rightly, the changed political conditions then existing in Britain, but if socialism was to become more than a continuum of the Liberal-Radical tradition, then it would need to confront the central economically based problem of Liberalism's relationship with the trade unions, irrespective of what was happening politically. Chastising Rothstein for his purely political thinking, based on an understanding of continental class developments, Quelch suggested that 'although expansionism and imperialism have shattered Liberalism, that does not prove that Liberalism or what goes by the name, has no longer any hold over the people . . .' He continued:

In most Continental countries the trade union movement having sprung out of the Socialist movement, has a definite Socialist basis; here, the trade unions, being older than the present Socialist movement, have been largely hostile; dominated as in the main they have been, and still in many cases are, by the economic ideas of the middle class.²⁹

According to Quelch, Rothstein had failed to realize that the British working class had forged strong economic links with Liberalism and did not therefore fit continental patterns. To make the accusation that the SDF was 'more of a sect than a party' meant that Rothstein was unable to appreciate the difficult conditions under which Marxists in this country laboured:

. . . it is a change to have Rothstein berating us for being too exclusive and sectarian, seeing how often and for how long we have been attacked for being too opportunist and latitudinarian . . . if we had not mingled in the actual life of society, if we had been content to round ourselves up as a doctrinaire sect, the SDF would long ago have ceased to exist.³⁰

This controversy between Rothstein and Quelch over the proper relationship between socialists and radicals, and the significance to be attached to the anti-war agitation;

coincided with the controversies over Millerandism at the Paris Congress of the Second International, and the continued affiliation of the SDF to the Labour Representation Committee (LRC). The French socialist Millerand's entry into the Cabinet of Waldeck-Rousseau as Minister of Labour raised the question whether or not it was acceptable for socialists to co-operate with middle class political bodies for specific purposes. The SDF, in voting for Karl Kautsky's compromise resolution, intensified the debate inside the British labour movement on the desirability of working class organisations forming alliances with middle class political bodies and pressure groups to secure immediate advantage. The overlapping with the Liberal-Radicals in the anti-war agitation became one area where the implications of Millerandism for the labour movement assumed an immediate significance.

Following revelations of British atrocities in South Africa, Campbell-Bannerman, the leader of the parliamentary opposition, had spoken out against the war at a monster meeting of radicals and socialists held at the Queen's Hall, Peckham on the 26 June 1901; while the future Liberal leader, Asquith, had confirmed his position as a leading Liberal politician by becoming the spokesman for the pro-War Liberal Imperialists. The anti-war agitation was in danger of being taken over by faction fighting within the Liberal Party. A.J. Benford of Peckham SDF, summed up the feeling of one section of the Federation:

I would suggest that they who call the tune should pay the piper, and that all SDF stalwarts should reserve their energy and enthusiasm for the propagation of Social-Democracy and such work as is called for by their own organisation.³¹

These sentiments were shared by Hyndman, who although a speaker at the Queen's Hall meeting, later remarked:

. . . for my part I think we have devoted quite enough attention to South Africa during the past two years, and I see nothing whatsoever to be gained for Socialism by helping the Liberals, who would not work with us in 1899 when the war could have been

prevented, to gain credit, and probably sooner or later to obtain office, by a belated agitation now.³²

Hyndman attacked those - Rothstein and Bax in particular - who confused anti-war work with pro-Boer propaganda, under the guise of anti-imperialism:

I hold, with our friend Cunninghame Graham, that this is a struggle between two burglars, . . . Some of our eager members of the SDF refuse to look at this side of the question. Feeling strongly for the Boers, they disregard the fact that the independence of the Boers, for which they clamour, necessarily involves the complete submission of the natives. Yet the Zulus would be glad, I take it, if this war between the kites and the crows ended in the disappearance of both.³³

Hyndman's influence on the party was sufficient to win over the SDF Executive, who passed a resolution in July to the effect that further anti-war agitation was 'a waste of time and money.' There were three dissentient voices, two of whom were new to the Executive - Rothstein and G. Saunders Jacobs, - and Bax.

In order to expose the hypocrisy of the Liberals and crystallise public opinion, which Rothstein argued was in favour of Boer independence, the SDF had needed to remain within the anti-war agitation. By doing so they would have 'crushed the last breath of life' out of the Liberals 'and occupied the vacant place' left by their departure from political life. Failure to do so had merely helped 'the Liberals to a new - however short, however miserable - lease of life.'³⁴

On the question of the Zulus, Rothstein expressed amazement that the British could ever be seen as adopting a pro-Zulu position, 'and that to such a degree as to justify the suppression of the national existence of two peoples!'³⁵ Bax was more scathing:

Really, when one hears the native trotted out as a stalking-horse for keeping the wicked and ruthless Boer under the tutelage of the "after all" so decent and beneficent

Briton, one's gorge rises to the extent that it is difficult to keep to parliamentary language.³⁶

Bax, a firm supporter of Boer independence was uncompromising in his support for a tactical alliance with the Liberals:

As for the "knot" of Liberals against whom Hyndman, imputes base motives of party advantage, I would gladly under the circumstances co-operate with a "knot" of devils, hot from below, in the interest of Boer independence.³⁷

Hyndman, obviously upset by the tone of the debate, called upon Bax to 'withdraw this unworthy letter', which he dismissed as 'a tirade of hysterical misrepresentation . . .'³⁸

However, the situation inside the SDF had changed dramatically over the two weeks between Hyndman securing a majority on the Executive against further agitational work with the Liberals, and Bax's letter. Rothstein who was rather curt in admonishing Hyndman for his reply to Bax, had recently risen to a position in the Federation where he could effectively close the discussion. Underneath Hyndman's letter appeared the following notice:

Th. Rothstein writes: As comrade Hyndman has thought fit to force the discussion into personal channels, that discussion may now be regarded as closed . . .³⁹

Rothstein's intervention in effectively closing the debate was an indication not only of his growing personal stature within the SDF, but also of a growing awareness that groups who were not professedly Marxist, could not be ignored; a significant number of members were in agreement with Rothstein that such organisations held out useful opportunities for propaganda and practical work. As a result, Rothstein at the Annual Conference of the SDF on 4 and 5 August, 1901 was re-elected to the National Executive at the head of the poll with 51 votes, one better than Quelch with 50. In effect he had become a leading

opposition figure to Hyndman within the Federation, a contributory factor in Hyndman's announcement released immediately prior to the conference that he intended to resign from the National Executive. Although Hyndman gave as his reasons the absence of 'class consciousness' and 'class antagonism' among English workers,⁴⁰ the spread of Rothstein's influence was a contributory factor as he made clear in a letter to Gaylord Wilshire:

. . . I have felt for some time past that I should like to offer criticism upon our proceedings from a more independent standpoint. Thus, a very able, enthusiastic and honest foreigner who does not fully understand the English language, or, of course, English affairs, has just been elected by the delegates at our Annual Conference at the head of the poll for the Executive Council of the SDF. If I had been elected at the same time, I should have been disinclined, perhaps, to comment on what seems to me a most absurd blunder.⁴¹

Hyndman quoted Max Beer, the foreign editor of the German socialist newspaper Vorwaerts, in support of his contention 'that it was almost impossible for a foreigner to understand English and English politics, that he (Beer) himself had been obliged to reconstruct entirely his views of our country within the last two or three years, and was not sure he understood it now.'⁴²

However, the reasons for Beer's lack of confidence when it came to offering an analysis of British left-wing politics had less to do with his nationality, than with recent events at the SDF Annual Conference. Here the heterogeneous nature of the party had been exposed alongside the seemingly irreconcilable nature of the differences among British socialists. Matters had come to a head at the Annual Conference in 1901 when the role of the SDF in non-socialist bodies was again subjected to intense scrutiny. One section of the party, largely based in Scotland - the "impossibilists" - moved a resolution condemning those members who had voted for the Kautsky resolution at Paris. Although the resolution was rejected

it was obvious that those who tabled the motion were launching an attack on the SDF leadership, particularly Hyndman and Quelch. Thus, while both men faced criticism from Bax and Rothstein over their attitude towards the Liberals and the Boer War; they also, ironically, invited criticism from the left of the party for continuing to support the Kautsky resolution, which in fact offered the intellectual justification for Rothstein and Bax's policy of working closely with the Liberals for a specific aim.

Having been defeated on the question of the Kautsky resolution, the impossibilists then turned their attention to the question of the role to be played by socialist trade unionists in the mainly non-socialist trade union movement. The impossibilists wanted to withdraw completely from the present 'fakir-ridden' trade unions and set up their own Social-Democratic trade unions. This was anathema to Quelch and the 'orthodox-Marxists' who wanted to work within existing trade unions and to convert them to socialism.⁴³ Because of their need to convince existing trade unionists, however, both groups wanted to keep their Social-Democracy free from entangling political alliances, whether over the Boer War or Lib-Lab support for trade unionists in an industrial dispute. This led them to draw a sharp distinction between political and economic forms of struggle; and it explains their opposition to those like Rothstein who were arguing for a convergence of the two, both during the Engineers' Lock-Out and the Boer War. Quelch, in fact, in attempting to placate the industrial wing of the movement at the conference, gave ample evidence of the confused thinking then prevalent in the SDF. The decision to withdraw from the LRC less than 18 months after its founding congress, while placating the industrial unionist or "impossibilist" opposition in the SDF, completely contradicted his argument in favour of working within existing trade unions. For it was the decision of trade unionists to participate in the LRC that was largely responsible for the SDF's affiliation to that body in 1900.

It was their acceptance of the need for independent political representation, that had persuaded the SDF that whatever faults the trade unions might have, they were class organisations, capable of political activity based upon the class struggle. In reality, however, the failure of the trade unions to affiliate to the new body in any great numbers persuaded Quelch that continued affiliation to the LRC would only antagonise the unions further. Of its two MPs, Keir Hardie and Richard Bell of the Railway Servants, Bell remained firmly within the Lib-Lab camp, and undermined arguments that the LRC was an independent body. The LRC's rejection of a Socialist objective further convinced Quelch that the Committee was indistinguishable from earlier attempts at Labour electoral associations. One historian, however, puts the decision to withdraw from the LRC firmly within the context of the SDF's internal politics:

Even more important at this stage were internal developments within the Social-Democratic Federation. The decision to withdraw from the LRC reflected a further eruption of the 'reform versus revolution' debate which had been waged inside the party since its formation, and the most significant factor influencing the vote was the spectre of schism raised by the so-called 'impossibilist' revolt.⁴⁴

That Quelch failed to understand the contradiction underpinning his argument became apparent during the debate on political independence and the trade unions, that followed the conference. The adverse House of Lords ruling on Taff Vale in the month before the SDF conference gave added weight to renewed calls for independent working class representation. Rothstein was one of the main contributors to this debate, arguing for a synthesis of economic and political forms of organisation. He opened the debate with an article critical of Quelch's belief that the economic and political aspects of the labour movement could remain separate post Taff Vale:

The moral of all this is obvious. Not only has the necessity of political action as the natural complement of the economic been suddenly thrust upon the unwilling trade unionists, but, what is more important, the necessity of political action on independent lines.⁴⁵

Rothstein, however, was not solely concerned with the arguments put forward at the conference by Harry Quelch. The refusal of the impossibilists to countenance any form of alliance - political or economic - with non-socialist organisations, caused Rothstein to accuse the Scottish-based rebels of perpetuating 'the abnormal relations' then existing between trade unionism and socialism. The Taff Vale judgement, he argued, had provided an opportunity to 'accelerate the birth and the development of the class idea in the mind of the trade unionists.' To neglect the trade unions at this juncture and berate them for their lack of socialism would only alienate them, and divorce the SDF from the unorganised working class:

But in what position shall we find ourselves if the unholy Scottish current - I do not say, makes headway - but simply survives long enough to serve the trade unions as an example and a warning of what the Socialist attitude is towards them? Will it not prove a far greater obstacle to the spread of Socialism in the masses than the very ignorance hitherto characteristic of the trade unions?⁴⁶

Two weeks later Rothstein was criticised by J. Robertson of the Edinburgh SDF for failing to understand the motives of those Scottish members participating in the impossibilist revolt. Rothstein's overall assessment of the trade union drift into politics may have been perfectly correct, but to organise politically within the existing trade union movement would only prove counterproductive. Rothstein, he argued, was mistaken if he thought that it was possible to 'accelerate the birth and the development

of the class idea in the mind of the trade unionists.' The correct method of socialist advance was to encourage the development of socialist trade unions amongst the unorganised working class, and by means of them reform the existing trade union movement:

. . . many do not see eye to eye with Rothstein in regard to "boring from within", in bolstering up the present fakir-ridden trade unions; but it does not necessarily follow from that that they are opposed to organisation of the working class in the economic field . . . We must attempt the organisation of the disorganised working class in Socialist trade unions, and by means of them attempt to reform and bring over to us the other trade unions.⁴⁷

Rothstein did not immediately reply to Robertson's criticisms, although in an article comparing German and English trades unionism,⁴⁸ he showed that there was a certain amount of common ground between his views and those of Robertson. There was certainly agreement on the need to abandon aristocratic exclusiveness as a prerequisite for trade union political advance, in accord with Robertson's call for the 'organisation of the disorganised working class.' However, Rothstein was adamant that socialists had to work within existing trade union structures. The tactics advocated by Robertson could not be applied to the adverse conditions defining Britain in the early twentieth century, of which the aggressive class legislation that had followed Taff Vale was simply a harbinger of things to come. In a changed world order, where increased German and American competition had challenged Britain's world economic supremacy, Britain had been backed into a corner from where a reactionary and aggressive world role was the only remaining option. This reactionary stance had been increasingly reflected in her domestic politics. Consequently, the possibilities for socialist propaganda were improving as reaction became more widespread. It was within existing working class structures that socialism was

making most headway and proving the most receptive to new ideas. To set-up separate trade unions, within or in opposition to the wider labour movement, would make little impression on the new, post-Taff Vale sense of grievance:

The British capitalist classes are no longer in that happy position when the whole industrial and commercial world was theirs and they were making money as fast as they could. . . what wonder if the capitalist classes in this country feel now somewhat chary in meeting the workers half-way, . . . No wonder also if, as a consequence of this tightening up of the capitalist purse, the English trade unions feel their career checked and, not having anything to fall back upon, stagnate. They have reached the limit beyond which they cannot under the present circumstances go, and henceforth progress is only possible - real progress, not mere stability, which can be secured by a general federation and by an abandonment of aristocratic exclusiveness - by political action.⁴⁹

This outlook was increasingly coming to be shared by many within the British labour movement. The issue was no longer whether the trade unions would come to accept the need for independent action, as it had been during the 1897 Engineers' Lock-Out, but what form this political action should take. The situation facing Social-Democrats was summed up by A.A. Watts, a member of the SDF Executive and supporter of the SDF rejoining the LRC, when he remarked that if labour representation is 'not consciously Social-Democratic', then it is 'merely an appanage of one of the two political parties.'⁵⁰ Confusion on this issue seemed to be paralysing the SDF in its dealings with the wider labour movement in respect of labour representation. In the following week's issue of Justice, J.Kent, of Central West Ham SDF, agreeing with the bulk of Watts's argument pointed out that the SDF had yet to put forward a clear and definite policy towards political action and trades unionism; workers could only be confused:

I think we should define that policy at once, and make all trade union officials, as well as rank and file, toe the line. We should make a rule to the effect that no member of the SDF shall take any action on behalf of a candidate who is not running as a definitely avowed Socialist, independently of all other parties.⁵¹

Kent's statement, however, reflected just how little progress the SDF had made on this potentially divisive question of labour representation. At the SDF Annual Conference in 1902 Kent's branch had moved the following ammendment to the resolution on SDF involvement in trade union candidatures: ' "no member of the SDF acting as a delegate upon a trades council or other body taking electoral action should participate in such action if the candidate or candidates put forward or supported do not run in accordance with the General Policy of the SDF." '⁵² In rejecting North West Ham's call for a party policy on trade union candidatures, the SDF displayed its lack of political confidence on a national level, and called instead for greater elasticity in response to local conditions. Not wanting to alienate the unions, while remaining reluctant to engage them in a meaningful alliance, the conference accepted that no definite policy should be formulated other than a call for 'the cultivation of a good feeling between the Socialist Party and trade unions . . . but (the SDF) will not join with them in any electoral committees which will commit the branch to the support of any but Socialist candidates.'⁵³

The debate was in danger of becoming increasingly barren, with the Left's argument in favour of withdrawal from the non-socialist political activity of the trade unions being counterbalanced by the Right's advocacy of involvement. Significantly, it was Rothstein, whose standing in the party had continued to increase since his election to the National Executive, who brought the two strands of opinion together. In summarising the debate Rothstein charted a middle course through what he termed the 'Scylla of

boneless opportunism and the Charybdis of ossified impossibilism.' To avoid disaster at the hands of either faction, Rothstein argued, socialists must support trade union candidatures on all labour matters; but on political questions, they must reserve their right to act according to their socialist convictions:

Socialists MAY run as trade union candidates, and consequently are entitled to our support, if they openly and explicitly, before both the electors and those who bring them forward, reserve to themselves the right to act on all general political questions according to their Socialist convictions.⁵⁴

While this was aimed at reconciling the opportunists with a policy that did not dismiss trade union candidatures out of hand; the impossibilists were still disinclined to accept the view that existing trade unions could put forward candidates who would remain unflinchingly socialist. To reassure them of the socialist purpose of future trade union candidatures, therefore, Rothstein reiterated his opinion that the reactionary policies of the British ruling class - an aggressive imperial policy linked with adverse trade union laws - would force the trade unions to take 'independent political action - and that this action, by the very logic of the situation, will gradually become more and more class action till eventually it becomes Socialist.'⁵⁵ The external factors which had made possible the progressive political alliance between trade unionists and middle class reformers in an earlier period, no longer applied to class relations in twentieth century Britain. This fact alone, Rothstein argued, represented 'the decisive refutation of the impossibilist attitude towards the trade unionist candidatures. but that,' he continued, 'does not mean that the SDF should lend trade unionists of Liberal or Tory persuasion, their support:

Not being able to support him and not feeling myself justified in opposing him, I can only preserve a more or less benevolent neutrality. Hence the second

principle which, in my opinion, ought to govern our attitude towards the trade union candidatures:

In all cases where the trade union candidate does not declare his intention to act on all questions beyond his election programme as a Socialist, Socialists must remain neutral.⁵⁶

Rothstein was therefore, in many respects, not unsympathetic to the objections raised by the impossibilists; nor to the grievances outlined by the opportunists. But his attempt to steer a middle course between reform and impossibilism, while instrumental in formulating a national policy on trade union candidatures, did little to overcome the theoretical and practical impasse that was stifling the SDF. Membership had fallen away sharply since 1897, and both wings of the party were anxious to overcome the paralysis gripping the party. Socialist unity was put forward by many on the Right as an alternative to continued decline. The ILP were seen to be facing a similar fall in membership.

However, while there was a growing consensus between those on the Centre-Right opposed to Hyndman and the Centre-Left of the SDF represented by Rothstein, the impossibilists rejected all attempts at unity with the non-Marxist ILP. Opinion inside the party shifted in the Left's favour when the ILP dismissed the SDF as a nonentity, 'out to revive its own ebbing existence by engrafting itself upon the ILP.'⁵⁷ 'Such a negative response' it has been argued 'produced a temporary reaction within SDF ranks.'⁵⁸ Rothstein, who had voted in favour of unity at the SDF's 1902 Annual Conference - 'not . . . in the belief that it has any chance of being realised under the circumstances but, rather, by way of asserting the principle' - remarked that 'in the light of recent developments' he would 'act differently':

The simple reason is that, in the light of recent developments, I am scarcely able to make myself believe that there are in this country two Socialist parties which require to be fused.⁵⁹

Accusing the ILP of 'rank opportunism - opportunism of principle as distinguished from that of tactics' - Rothstein saved his obloquy for the activities of Keir Hardie at a recent Newcastle meeting of the LRC. At this meeting, Rothstein stated, Hardie had 'propounded the principle that the movement must be non-political.' He went on to censure Hardie for his activities at the February Guildhall meeting called to set up the National Unemployed Committee, where as Chairman he had ignored SDF members wanting to speak. 'Mr. Keir Hardie,' Rothstein concluded, 'is fast becoming a "responsible statesman" who does not wish to give undue offence by obtruding everywhere his socialism; . . . ' That this was not a new development led Rothstein to ask why relations between the ILP leadership and its membership had not become strained. Many ILP members had always been attracted by the hope of Socialist Unity, at the heart of which lay the goal of some sort of link with the SDF. Earlier discussion on fusion in the 1890's had been undermined by the ILP's National Administrative Council (NAC). If, as some ILP members now claimed, they were in all essentials socialists, then it was their duty to resign from the ILP and join the SDF:

The erratic ways of Mr. Keir Hardie and his satellites do not merely date from yesterday, and if the ILP is really a Socialist party, their ways should have proved by now a sufficiently strong strain upon the loyalty of the members to break it down. If it does not if these gentlemen are allowed to go on as before, then really I, for one, must assume that the party endorses their actions and that, consequently, as I said at the beginning, there are no two Socialist parties in England, which it is in the interests of the cause, desirable to see fused into one, but only one, the SDF, which must and shall remain alone.⁶⁰

The question of unity, however, was far from being settled. In Justice for 21 March, 1903, on the eve of the ILP and SDF Annual Conferences, the Peckham and Dulwich,

and Rochdale branches of the SDF called for renewed efforts to be made towards conciliation with a view to both conferences effecting fusion. Their call, however, was not supported by the leaders of either organisation. While the SDF sought a conference of delegates from the different Socialist organisations to oversee the formation of a new, non-Labourist, political party, the ILP sought unity within the LRC, a body that the SDF had already withdrawn from. The ILP's uncritical support for the LRC, meant that fusion with the Marxist SDF was never a serious option. The SDF Annual Conference, was also adamant in its rejection of unity with the non-Marxist ILP, while expressing a will to continue working for Socialist unity. They later issued a Manifesto on Labour Representation based on Conference policy which unmistakably bore witness to Rothstein's influence.

The ending of unity talks with the ILP, however, did little to alter the situation within the SDF regarding the grievances of the impossibilists. George Yates, a prominent Scottish critic of SDF policy, poured scorn on the compromising attitude of the SDF, particularly in the areas of educational reform and welfare provision. He, along with a majority of the SDF Scottish District Council, had increasingly moved away from the parliamentarianism of the SDF and embraced the ideas of Daniel De Leon and the American Socialist Labour Party. Differences between the two groups were aggravated by the publication of a monthly newspaper, The Socialist, by the SDF Scottish District Council in August 1902, thereby effectively acting as a party within a party. The policies and outlook of The Socialist were at once at variance with those of Justice. As a result, its editor George Yates, found himself arraigned at the 1903 SDF Annual Conference on three accounts: for obstructing left unity, for failing to sell Justice, and thirdly, for writing an editorial in The Socialist which accused the SDF of 'a distinct tendency to alter the centre of their former revolutionary attitude

over to opportunistic tactics of the worst kind.'⁶¹ As a result, Yates and his supporters were expelled from the Federation. Later at meetings held on 15 and 31 April 1903, they won over the remainder of the Scottish District Council who disaffiliated from the SDF in preparation for an inaugural conference of a new party to be held on 7 June 1903. This new party, anxious to avoid SDF accusations of slavishly following De Leon's American SLP, debated what was to be its new name. Yet its ideological origins had unmistakably come from that direction, and it was impossible to avoid association with that body: ' "It doesn't matter what you call yourself" ', James Connolly declared, ' "you'll be dubbed the SLP anyway." And SLP we became.'⁶²

While Rothstein had played a significant role in the debates leading up to the SLP's secession from the SDF, Russian and Jewish affairs also demanded a considerable amount of attention and energy. In November 1901 Rothstein's former SDF branch - Whitechapel - and the Karl Marx Reading Association amalgamated to form the East London (Jewish) Branch of the SDF (EL(J)B), in order to more effectively combat the anti-alien agitation among the working class of London's East End, and recent attacks in Parliament upon the right of asylum. Boris Kahan moved a resolution at the 1903 Annual Conference of the SDF condemning the 'anti-alien agitation,' as 'a veiled attack upon the right of asylum'; calling for opposition to all attempts at 'restrictive legislation against alien immigration should such be proposed.'⁶³ The resolution was carried unanimously. Social-Democracy was increasingly being seen by London's Jewish working class population as the natural political home for Jewish immigrants, despite the recent gains made by Zionist propaganda during the Boer War. At an 'East End May Day Demonstration,' Justice reported, between three and six thousand people, 'in a violent downpour of rain' marched behind four brass bands - 'two provided by various Jewish trade unions, and two by

the East London Jewish branch of the SDF, accompanied by banners and bannerets.' Between 8,000 Yiddish and 2,000 English leaflets were distributed.⁶⁶

The strength of the Jewish socialist movement was illustrated by the protest meetings organised throughout Britain following reports of the massacre of Jews in the Russian town of Kishiniev during May 1903. Reports of the massacre appeared in Justice on 16 May laying the blame squarely at the door of the autocracy. Russian Social-Democracy, the article concluded, as a revolutionary force dedicated to the overthrow of the autocracy, was the only political organisation open to Russian Jewry which could effectively put an end to such atrocities. However, in reality, the role of both British and Russian Liberalism, had never been totally discarded as a potential source of support for Russian Jews. The alliance between British Liberalism and Russian Socialism developed by Stepniak in the 1890's, was still a potent force in Radical and Socialist circles opposed to the Tsarist autocracy. On 19 May J.F. Green and Rothstein, both members of the Liberal-Radical dominated Society of Friends of Russian Freedom (SFRF) and the National Executive of the SDF, were appointed to a national committee set-up to organise protest meetings against the Tsarist autocracy, for their complicity in the Kishiniev massacres.

Interest in Russian affairs even before Kishiniev was high; although there was much confusion about the composition of the Russian revolutionary movement, and a willingness among some older members of the SDF to view the SRs as sympathetically as the RSDLP. Between April 1902 and May 1903 Lenin worked in London printing Iskra in the East End, where there were several small printing shops possessing Russian type. On arrival in London Lenin met with Harry Quelch and arranged to work on Iskra at the premises of the Twentieth Century Press. Iskra had its own compositor, Blumenfield, who was sent over by the paper's editorial board as 'a reliable Socialist . . .' to do the

setting. 'The formes, when ready, were brought to Clerkenwell Green and put on a flat-bed machine, on which the proofs were run off for Lenin to read.'⁶⁵ While in London Lenin established a number of useful contacts among the emigre community, foremost among them Rothstein⁶⁶ who were to later prove an invaluable source of information on the British labour movement. Lenin and Krupskaya maintained their friendship with the Rothsteins down to Lenin's death in 1924. Lenin's contacts in London, however, apart from Quelch were predominantly Russian. He addressed three meetings in Whitechapel where on one occasion he lectured in Russian on the programme and tactics of the SRs, provoking a fierce debate with some of their leaders. At a further meeting organised by the EL(J)B, he spoke alongside the German veteran socialist Frederic Lessner, and A.S. Headingley. Headingley, an ardent supporter of the SRs, was a curious choice of speaker for the SDF. Lenin also addressed a "Continental Meeting" held at the 1903 May Day rally in Alexandra Park. English speakers included Ben Tillett, Hyndman and Hunter Watts (all of the SDF) and Keir Hardie (of the ILP). Lenin left London at the beginning of May, when (despite his vote to the contrary) the editorial board of Iskra decided to move to Geneva.⁶⁷

Lenin left London just as the protest movement against the Tsar's complicity in the pogrom at Kishiniev got underway. The role of the EL(J)B, which had been in close contact with Lenin, was to prove crucial to the movement's success. At a time when the rabbis and Synagogues were trying to dampen down Jewish fears by suggesting that the pogroms were a direct result of Jewish participation in Russian revolutionary propaganda, the EL(J)B played a leading role in disseminating Social-Democratic ideals amongst London's Jewish population. Rothstein pointed to the similarities existing between the Zionists and the Russian Government, who were issuing the same statements that 'political impertinence and insubordination' were responsible for the massacres:

. . . and that unless they desist from revolutionary propaganda, the same vengeance on the Jews in general will be repeated elsewhere.'⁶⁸

The EL(J)B was also instrumental in combatting SR propaganda amongst East end Jews. The assassination of the Governor of Oufa during an industrial dispute in July 1903 brought to the surface disagreements among the Russian emigre community in London, which spilt over into the columns of Justice. The publication of a document in Justice by the SRs justifying individual acts of terrorism, "Manifesto of the Russian Socialists", without any accompanying declaration of Social-Democratic policy, led to accusations that the SDF had not merely misrepresented the socialist movement in Russia, but also published uncritically the theories of those whom the Russian Social-Democrats were, in fact, fighting. Eliah Levin, Secretary of the EL(J)B, chastised Justice for its theoretical solipsism, and accused the paper of having 'placed the organ of militant Social-Democracy in this country in a very awkward position towards a sister party of another country, that of the Social-Democratic Labour Party of Russia, . . .' Dismissing the SRs as 'a petty bourgeois revolutionary party with Socialist phraseology,'⁶⁹ Levin argued that their policy of individual acts of terrorism made it difficult for Social-Democrats to maintain their political organisation among the masses. The increased police activity which followed terrorist attacks broke up worker organisations. G. Beck, a prominent member of the EL(J)B and a member of the Bund, admonished Justice for failing to make plain to English socialists that 'Social-Democracy in Russia stands on precisely the same theoretical basis as Social-Democracy in England.'⁷⁰

Support for the SRs in the British labour movement came from A.S. Headingley. A stretcher-bearer during the Paris Commune, he was attracted to what he saw as the more militant and violent elements in the Russian revolutionary movement. He welcomed the appearance of a new Paris-based

bi-monthly official organ of the SRs, La Tribune Russe, with an article in Justice describing the SRs as 'one of the most important manifestations of the spread of Socialism' in Russia. The journal was edited by E. Roubanovich, a close friend of Headingley's, and an ex-member of the Narodnaya Volya. Headingley's article unconditionally supported the SR's policy of assassination, holding it above the propaganda work of the Social-Democrats:

Both parties are disciples of Karl Marx, both recognise the inevitable existence of the class war, and both teach the necessity of socialising the means of production and exchange. But the Social-Democrats are more doctrinaire and seem more anxious to teach Socialism than to strike at the Government. In fact, they do not attempt to hit out at all, they only strive to propagate their doctrines. The Socialist Revolutionary Party seems to me to be less theoretical and more political. They believe in action; and, as the Government treats them with violence, they treat the Government in the same manner.⁷¹

The following week Rothstein expressed his 'amazement' on reading Headingley's article, and quoted the recent resolution passed at the Second Congress of the RSDLP, accusing the SRs of undermining the formation of an independent workers' political party; and 'endeavouring . . . to keep them in the state of a politically-formless mass, only fit to be used as an instrument by the Liberal bourgeoisie.'⁷²

Headingley's reply invoked the authority of the First International to show that Lavrov, the intellectual inspiration behind the SRs, an ex-Comunard and opponent of Russian Blanquism had learnt "practical Socialism" from the French workman Varlin, a member of the International, and disciple of Marx. ' "Where on earth did" comrade Rothstein "obtain his wonderful information from," ' (the quotation marks alluded to the earlier article from Rothstein critical of Headingley) 'when he wrote to you, comrade

editor, to try and make believe that the Socialist Revolutionary Party of Russia were not Socialists?' He accused the Russian Social-Democrats of introducing 'that narrow doctrinaire and disputatious tendency into the modern Socialist movement which wrecked the old International.'⁷³

This dispute between the SRs and the RSDLP was as much generational as it was ideological. Headingley and Roubanovich remained intellectually under the emotional sway of the Paris Commune, which both men argued could easily be made applicable to Russian conditions. Paradoxically, however, it was the class war in the countryside which they regarded as the instrument of revolutionary change in Russia; while in France, it had been the failure of the French peasantry to support the urban insurrection in Paris which had contributed to the Commune's defeat. Rothstein made this point when he emphasised that the SRs ignored the fact that the revolution everywhere was being made by the town proletariat, despite the fact that agriculture was 'a more important industry in Russia than manufacture.'⁷⁴

This debate between the SRs and the RSDLP took place against the backdrop of the Russo-Japanese War and the controversy over the consequences for European societies of Japanese capitalist development, and the prospects for socialism in both Russia and Japan. Four distinct arguments emerged in British Social-Democracy, all dependent on a view of Russian society which accepted the organised working class movement, as opposed to the peasantry, as the dominating force in the Russian revolutionary movement. The first of these arguments was put forward by J.B. Askew who, in the month before the outbreak of the war, prophesied a decline in Russia's world position and role in Europe as a result of the growing external threat from Japan in Asia. This fact, coupled with the existence of a strong revolutionary working class movement, would eventually 'render the Russian autocracy . . . politically harmless as far as other nations are concerned.'⁷⁵

Askew's articles were directed against the more pessimistic outlook of the Russian socialist Dr. Parvus, who at the time was living in exile in Germany and working for the journal Welt-Politik. He argued that a Russian victory against Japan would leave her free to 'do what she liked in Asia,' and to therefore, threaten English interests in the Far East. If Russia were to then defeat England, she would rule undisputed in Europe.⁷⁶ Askew believed that Parvus tended to exaggerate the real power of tsarism, and shared with other emigres a distorted view of Russia's foreign policy owing to their reading of world politics through the prism of the revolutionary struggle against Tsarism.

A second view was put by Rothstein, who questioned Askew's implied contention that the outcome of the war would not affect the long-term struggle of the proletariat. A victory for Japan, he argued, and the subsequent growth of Japanese capitalism were essential prerequisites for the development of modern socialism in the Far East. Her victory over Russia in war, would be a progressive act as opposed to the reactionary outcome that would follow a Russian victory and the collapse of capitalist development in Japan. The views of the Russian Social-Democracy were that Russia would face general collapse following war mobilisation, win or lose. The Russian state system was seen to be rotten to the core with corruption, it was believed that a great war would overload the State machinery and lead to formal financial bankruptcy:

Permanent and complete efficiency is only attainable under a Democracy, whilst absolutism, being by its very nature compelled to rely upon an irresponsible bureaucracy, can only breed corruption and fraud. . . We may be pretty certain that if the Crimean War brought about the abolition of Serfdom the coming Russo-Japanese war will bring in its train the abolition of autocracy itself.⁷⁷

He believed that the longer the war lasted, the greater were Russia's chances of victory. But a long drawn out

campaign would merely exhaust the financial and economic resources of the country and upset the Governmental machinery to such an extent that the Tsar would be faced with no other choice but to convoke a constitutional assembly. A short war, on the other hand, would result in Japan 'giving Russia a few smart blows', dislocating 'her military and financial organisations and making 'further action on the part of Russia impossible':

In that case the effect will be still greater, and autocracy may very easily tumble down the steps of the throne immediately.⁷⁸

A third argument was put by Hyndman who followed the line of reasoning being developed by Dr. Parvus in Berlin, concluding that Russia was 'the great supporter of all movements against the people throughout Europe.' Hyndman also agreed with Rothstein that a Japanese victory would be a more progressive act than a Russian triumph. However, his argument ignored the marxist interpretation of capitalist development in Japan developed by Rothstein; and, instead extolled the virtues of imperial expansion for a youthful capitalist economy, whose culture was progressive in a European sense. Japan, he argued, was in possession of 'old-fashioned patriotism in its noblest form . . . It is scarcely too much to say,' he continued, 'that the influence of Japanese art and thought on Europe has been very great and wholly beneficial, while she herself is so far keeping pace with Europe, in peace as well as in war, that we have already a Social-Democratic Party in that far-off land.'⁷⁹ Hyndman's views were those of many "progressives" in British politics, who while seeing Russia as the biggest obstacle to democratic progress in Europe, tended to ignore the annexationist realities of Japanese economic development in the Far East. Indeed, so prevalent was this ignorance of Japanese foreign policy that argument tended to centre upon the rights and wrongs of "a just war." Hyndman, a firm believer in this concept, simply ignored the policy of the Second International on

militarism and war, and accused fellow Socialists who had spoken out against the war, 'of overdoing this peace-at-any-price business.' In language which betrayed the extent of Hyndman's willingness to resort to arms in support of justified imperial expansion, he spoke of war being 'at times a duty. A nation in order to obtain a full outlet for its own economic development may be compelled to make war against an oppressing nation.'⁸⁰

This stood in marked contrast to the policy statement issued by the International Socialist Bureau (ISB) on the imminence of open Russo-Japanese hostilities. This had called upon the Socialists of all countries . . . to prevent any extension of the war, and to do their best to see that their respective countries, so far from participating, shall endeavour to re-establish peace and maintain it.'⁸¹

This statement constituted the basis of the fourth point of view within British Social-Democracy on the war, and was widely supported within the British labour movement. Bax was unsparing in his dismissal of Hyndman as an imperialist who while remaining in the Social-Democratic movement was incapable of offering a marxist critique of imperialism: 'What does he mean by it being the duty of a nation "to make war in order to obtain a full outlet for its own economic development"? If this means anything, it looks like an apology for wars to obtain markets for surplus produce, which is not precisely a doctrine commonly held to be consistent with Social-Democracy.' Commenting upon the two imperialisms of Japan and Russia, Bax preferred to keep both on an equal footing, describing the war as 'Arcades ambo, both the Arcadians wishing to grab the swag of Manchuria or Korea or as much of China as they could get.'⁸²

As the war progressed, however, Hyndman became more and more convinced that the war had a specific role to play in human development:

The horrors of peace, I say again and again,
are worse than the horrors of war. And this

war, terrible as it is, looks like solving more than one social problem and relieving mankind from more than one infernal domination. I have not the slightest objection to seeing evil done that good may come. In fact, that has been the history of human progress.⁸³

There was a thin dividing line between Hyndman's support for the concept of "a just war", and the idea of rightful imperialist expansion. And while Hyndman could make such statements as the above, which stood out against the policy of the Second International, he was never completely at variance with Congress decisions on militarism and imperialism, owing to their weak denunciation of colonialism and colonial wars. At the 1904 Amsterdam Congress of the Second International, a resolution had been adopted, moved by S.G. Hobson of the Fabian Society and seconded by Dadhabhai Naoroji, President of the Indian National Congress, that drew a distinction between 'conquering colonisation under the capitalist regime of to-day', and 'the right of the inhabitants of civilised countries to settle in regions where the people are in lower stages of development, . . .'⁸⁴

The Congress set up a Commission on Colonial Policy under the Chairmanship of the Dutch president of the Congress, Van Kuhl; its report condemned 'the policy of capitalist colonial expansion and the subjection and oppression of native races' and isolated British Imperial policy for particular censure, owing to the exclusive nature of Britain's proposed system of Empire: 'The Chamberlain plan, if successful, would shut off a quarter of the world from the rest;' Socialists, therefore, had a duty to oppose all Imperialist and protectionist measures.⁸⁵

However, despite earlier working class opposition to the Boer War, British Imperialism, with its twin policies of welfare reform and protectionism, threatened to undermine support for the policy of the Second International. Debate on Britain's relative economic decline, compared to Germany and America's rapid growth, inadvertently pointed to an

increasingly inward-looking society withdrawing behind the protective barrier provided by its imperial policy. The British working class, it was argued, would, as a consequence, be protected from the worst excesses caused by Britain's declining economy.

Rothstein, in a series of articles in Justice between 29 August and 10 October 1903, pointed out how British society failed to modernise its production process because of the insular nature of the British economy. These articles, entitled 'The Decline of British Industry its Causes and Remedy,' were later published in pamphlet form and translated into German and Russian.⁸⁶ Written in response to a series of articles in The Times, which blamed the restrictive practices of trade unions for Britain's economic decline; Rothstein's articles argued that Britain's weakened competitive position was a direct result of poor managerial practise, a 'contempt for scientific thought' and an outdated organisation of production. The failure of British capitalism to modernise, he argued, would be accompanied by a reactionary foreign and domestic policy.

Rothstein developed these views into an overall critique of British Imperialism in the Russian legal Marxist journal Pravda in 1904. In an article entitled, 'Chto Takoe Imperializm?' (What is Imperialism?) published in the month preceeding the Amsterdam Congress, Rothstein referred to Imperialism as the zeitgeist of contemporary English society, penetrating all aspects - political, scientific, economic and literary - of English life. It was seen as a response to increased German competition, and the growing threat of German economic dominance in Europe. Its supporters believed it represented the triumph of Protectionism over Free Trade, whereby Great Britain would imitate the workings of the Zollverein in the colonial sphere of her activity. As such it constituted the revival of the English state as the dominant force in the British colonial system, allowing the Empire to act as 'a defensive

and offensive union against the rest of the world.' Racial theories came to the fore, where the Empire was seen as essential in consolidating the English race into one political unit:

. . . that partial patriotism must blossom into a more general empire-based patriotism. The German state founded under the hegemony of Prussia as one national empire and political organism, by virtue of its mass, its compactness and its co-ordinated functions, has rendered itself a first class weapon in the industrial struggle. If England followed Germany's recent example and repudiated *laisser-faire* both in the colonies and in the political and economic fields, and formed under the hegemony of Great Britain a similar Empire, the force, which they would have developed, would guarantee for the Anglo-Saxon race the perpetual economic dictatorship of the entire world.⁸⁷

In this form Imperialism posed a serious threat both to British democracy and the security of Europe as a whole. As a result, Rothstein argued in a further article in Pravda, the bourgeoisie would increasingly encroach upon the rights of the working class, giving rise to a more militant and independent workers' movement. A Liberal Government, dominated by an industrial bourgeoisie newly converted to Liberal-Imperialism would render traditional Lib-Labism increasingly unworkable; and workers would realise that legislative power would have to be taken into its own hands:

The working class of England has been educated in the historical atmosphere of Liberalism and now, is suddenly confronted with new facts . . . (it has to) disentangle itself from the influence of its historical traditions and create itself anew . . . after the endeavours of a whole century, the foundation stone has finally been laid, and from now on the building will grow slowly, but without a stop.⁸⁸

The outbreak of the 1905 Russian Revolution convinced Rothstein that the twentieth century would witness the

triumph of the proletariat in Europe; both as an independent political force and as the creator of a new society. The Russian Revolution, he argued, while having its origins in the economic grievances of the working class had developed into a socialistic challenge to the autocratic-capitalistic system of Russia:

. . . it was not the Socialists who started the present movement. But life is a still better teacher than propaganda, and what did not reach the workers from the outside has now sprung up in their minds spontaneously. Now the Socialists have come to the top, and the movement conscious of its aim, will not subside until it has realised that aim. The days of autocracy are now numbered. Whether it suppresses the outbreak in St. Petersburg or not, the movement will spread to all the industrial centres of Russia, and then autocracy is lost . . .⁸⁹

The alliance between Liberal-Radicals and Socialists in Britain, however, was still very much in evidence at this time despite Rothstein's optimistic forecasts of working class political independence and growing middle class reaction. 'A Great Public meeting' was held at the Queen's Hall, Langham Place, W. on the 1 February, organised by the SFRF and the SDF in support of the Russian Revolution; among the speakers was Pethick Lawrence, editor of the Liberal daily Echo. Other speakers included Isabella Ford of the ILP and George Bernard Shaw for the Fabian Society.

However, the SDF organised similar meetings in a number of British cities independent of the SFRF. In Glasgow, for example, two mass meetings were held, one in George Square on the 28 January and the other in St. Enoch Square on the 29th, both were chaired by John Maclean.

The SDF also worked alongside other Left-wing groups. The London Group of the RSDLP and the "Verein Worker" of the Bund were particularly active among London's Jewish population. At a meeting in Whitechapel on the 29 January, attended by over 3,000 people speeches were delivered in English, German, Russian and Yiddish; Hyndman attended as delegate for the SDF. Rothstein's own involvement with the

Bund and the EL(J)B had increased significantly since the appearance of a Yiddish Social-Democratic newspaper, Die Neue Zeit, in March 1904. Die Neue Zeit edited by Rothstein, had an immediate impact on the Jewish working class in Britain, and was welcomed by among others, Karl Kautsky, who spoke of the Jews acting as 'a sort of yeast' in the British labour movement:

The Jewish proletariat possesses that which the English lacks. Nothing can be so beneficial as the intermingling of the qualities of both - the union of the Anglo-Saxon vigour and love of freedom with the speculative and critical power of the Jews. If the Jewish proletarians in England should develop a strong Socialist movement they will work, not only for themselves but also for the whole of the proletariat movement for which, indeed, they will become a sort of a yeast.⁹⁰

The Jewish working class was undoubtedly active in spreading information on the 1905 Russian Revolution. On 29 July the Foreign Committee of the Bund based in Geneva, published an account of the Jewish Self-Defence Committees inside Russia, and their defence of the Jewish population from Government inspired pogroms. It issued an appeal for funds, and established a Committee in London to organise collections. "The Bund's Self-Defence Fund: London Committee" was formed with the Countess of Warwick as president, and J.F. Green as treasurer. Justice advertised a house-to-house collection in the East End of London, and other districts. The collection in the East End amassed £40.

However, outside the proletarian auspices of the Bund, there was growing evidence of an emergent Liberal movement intent on seizing control of the revolution. Factional disputes within Russian Social-Democracy threatened to open the door either to a palace coup, or to a constitutional movement based on the 'professional, industrial and gentry classes.' Rothstein writing in Justice on 8 July, drew attention to the growing importance and 'social influence'

of liberalism in Russia; while Social-Democracy failed to set on course a 'distinct and organised class movement':

. . . the town proletariat, owing to the fratricidal war within the Social-Democratic camp wastes its efforts in partial outbreaks and ill-organised strikes. Yet even there the forces of opposition against autocracy gather strength every day. For good and for evil a Liberal bourgeois movement has grown up all over Russia proper, which embraces the whole of the professional, industrial and gentry classes - in fact the educated and the capitalist classes - and is proving more formidable every day. No doubt its whole strength - we mean the real, physical strength - lies in the revolutionary restlessness of the masses, which Social-Democracy has failed to crystallise into a distinct and organised class movement, but the very fact, together with the social influence it naturally enjoys, places Liberalism at the present moment in the forefront of the so-called opposition parties.⁹¹

However, Rothstein was adamant that the Russian Revolution would not follow the pattern laid down by previous European revolutions. In a series of articles for Justice entitled 'Russia in Revolutionary Throes' published between 22 July and 9 December 1905, he identified the Russian proletariat as a progressive class pursuing its own 'political and social aims' in opposition to an increasingly radicalised Russian middle class, operating within a Liberal framework opposed to an autocratic system of Government, (as had been the case in the Revolutions of 1848), but as a Socialist proletariat with its own political creed. These articles, which were published in pamphlet form in 1907,⁹² gave a detailed account of how the Russian proletariat refused to accept the leadership of the Zemstvo movement. Drawing upon his own reading of English history he pointed to the similarities between the Russian Constitutionalists and 'the English Whigs of the thirties - the "base, brutal, bloody" Whigs - who by means of the masses had cowed the Tories and took all power to themselves.'⁹³ The Russian working class in 1905, he

averted, was not going to allow a closure of their proletarian revolution,' - the first of its kind in human history - and consequently all accepted standards of judgement must in application to it prove wrong.'⁹⁴

It was a statement of the independent class nature of Russian political and social life, which owed much to Rothstein's understanding of British society. That the British working class had over this period 1897-1905 developed its own independent political and social outlook, convinced Rothstein of the inevitability of the class struggle determining political developments in both Britain and Russia. Nowhere was this seen to be more evident than in the need to develop an independent working class view of foreign policy, alongside the needs of the domestic class struggle.

Notes

1. Baron, Plekhanov (California 1963) p.92.
2. The Social-Democrat March and April (1898).
3. Th. Rothstein, The Russian Revolution (Lon.1907) p.16.
4. Martin Crick, The History of the Social-Democratic Federation (Keele University press 1994) p.71.
5. Justice 22 May 1897.
6. ibid. 11 Sept.1897.
7. ibid.
8. ibid. 13 Nov.1897.
9. ibid. 18 Dec.1897.
10. ibid.
11. ibid.
12. ibid. 8 Jan.1898. (Justice's emphasis)
13. ibid. 22 Jan.1898.
14. The Social-Democrat March (1898). (Rothstein's emphasis)
15. Crick op cit. p.161.
16. R.Price, An Imperial War and the British Working Class (1972) p.15.
17. Justice 1 July 1899.
18. ibid. 9 Sept. 1899.
19. ibid. 30 Sept. 1899.
20. ibid. 7 Oct. 1899.
21. ibid.
22. ibid. 9 July 1898.
23. ibid. 21 Oct. 1899.
24. ibid.
25. J.A. Hobson The War in South Africa (1900) p.189. See also the discussion in Colin Holmes Anti-Semitism in British Society, 1876 - 1939 (1979) pp.66-70.
26. Crick, op cit. p.164.
27. Justice 28 Oct. 1899.
28. ibid. 7 April 1900.
29. The Social-Democrat July (1900).
30. ibid.
31. Justice 29 June 1901.
32. ibid. 20 July 1901.
33. ibid.
34. ibid. 27 July 1901.
35. ibid.
36. ibid. 3 Aug. 1901.
37. ibid.
38. ibid. 10 Aug.1901.
39. ibid. 17 Aug.1901.
40. SDF Conference Report 4 & 5 Aug.1901.
41. The Challenge 11 Sept. 1901.
42. ibid.
43. V. Rabinovitch, 'British Marxist Socialism and Trade Unionism: The Attitudes, Experiences and Activities of the Social-Democratic Federation 1884-1901.', Unpublished D.Phil Sussex, 1977. Rabinovitch uses the term 'orthodox-Marxist' to describe the group around Quelch. Cited Crick op cit. p.73.
44. Crick op cit. p.97.

45. Justice 17 Aug. 1901. (Rothstein's emphasis)
46. ibid. 21 Sept. 1901.
47. ibid. 5 Oct. 1901.
48. ibid. 28 June 1902.
49. ibid.
50. ibid. 5 July 1902.
51. ibid. 12 July 1902 (Kent's emphasis)
52. SDF Conference Report 1902 See also Justice 19 July 1902.
53. ibid.; and Justice 2 Aug. 1902.
54. Justice 30 Aug. 1902. (Rothstein's emphasis)
55. ibid.
56. ibid. (Rothstein's emphasis)
57. ILP News April 1902, cited Crick op cit. p.222.
58. Crick op cit. p.223.
59. Justice 7 March 1903. (Rothstein's emphasis)
60. ibid. (Rothstein's emphasis)
61. SDF Conference Report 1903.
62. Tom Bell Pioneering Days (1941) pp.40-41.
63. SDF Conference Report 1903; See also Justice 18 April 1903.
64. Justice 9 May 1903.
65. Andrew Rothstein, Lenin in Britain (Communist Party Pamphlet 1970)
66. Vladimir Il'ich Lenin, Biograficheskaya Khronika, Tom.1 1870-1905 p.388; I.M. Maiskii, 'Vstrechi s F.A. Rotshteinom v Dorevolyutsionnie Vremena' in Imperializm i borba rabochego klassa (M.1960)
67. A.Rothstein op cit. pp.14-15.
68. Justice 20 June 1903.
69. ibid., 4 & 11 July 1903.
70. ibid. 18 July 1903.
71. ibid. 13 Feb. 1904.
72. ibid. 20 Feb. 1904.
73. ibid. 27 Feb. 1904.
74. ibid. 5 March 1904.
75. ibid. 23 Jan. 1904.
76. ibid.
77. The Social-Democrat Feb. 1904.
78. ibid.
79. Justice 13 Feb. 1904.
80. ibid. 20 Feb. 1904.
81. See Justice 27 Feb. 1904.
82. ibid.
83. ibid. 29 Oct. 1904.
84. ibid. 27 Aug. 1904.
85. ibid.
86. The Decline of British Industry: Its Cause and Remedy (1903); 'Upadok angliiskoi promiishlennosti' Pravda 1904, Nos.11 & 12 (Nov. and Dec.); Der Niedergang der Britischen Industrie.' Neue Zeit 1903-4, Jg.22.Bd.1, No.7, S.210-217.
87. Pravda July 1904.
88. ibid. Oct. 1904.
89. Justice 28 Jan. 1905.

90.ibid. 23 April 1904.

91.ibid. 8 July 1905. (Rothstein's emphasis)

92.Th. Rothstein, The Russian Revolution (1907).

93.Justice 29 July 1905.

94.ibid. 4 Nov. 1905.

Chapter 3. 1905 - 1910.

This chapter examines the role of Rothstein and other emigres between the defeat of the Russian Revolution in December 1905 and July 1910, when a motion censuring Hyndman for his overall endorsement of British foreign policy and the Government's armaments programme, moved by the Central Hackney Branch, became the main focus of an anti-Hyndmanite opposition in the SDP.¹ It focuses on four main areas: Rothstein's analysis of the 1905 Revolution; increased police surveillance of the emigre community in the wake of the Anglo-Russian Convention of August 1907 and the formation of the Triple Entente; the debate on Imperialism and the threat of war; and the Left's response to the Naval Arms race.

Russian affairs and Anglo-German rivalry dominated the outlook of Rothstein and other prominent emigres in the wake of the 1905 Revolution. The brutal suppression of the Moscow insurrection in December had all but ended the hopes of the revolutionaries. Rothstein's sense of disappointment was strong, but his analysis of the revolution was never despondent. Towards the end of 1905, he had embarked on a new journalistic venture, producing a pocket sized annual for Socialists, examining the events of the previous year. The Socialist Annual was cheaply priced at 1d and was warmly received by Socialists: 'This is a small annual exceedingly well-edited. It ought to be read not only by socialists but also by millionaires, . . .' wrote A.E. Fletcher in the Clarion newspaper.²

Rothstein's first article for the Annual concentrated on Russian affairs outlining the political and social characteristics of the Russian Revolution, which were leading to its impasse and eventual decline. Rothstein identified three main reasons for the collapse of the revolution: a weak and ineffectual Russian bourgeoisie; a strong proletariat, conscious of its own self-interests and unwilling to come forward as mere pawns in any

constitutional end game; and thirdly, the failure of the two Parliamentary Powers, Britain and France, to support the Russian Liberals owing to their desire to establish a formal agreement with Russia, in the wake of the Moroccan crisis of 1905.

The pusillanimity of the bourgeoisie, Rothstein argued, left them incapable of leading the revolution; while the proletariat would not lead a revolution for undefined constitutional goals:

The Russian bourgeoisie, as a late comer, is far too weak to venture on a single-handed combat with the autocracy; on the other hand the Russian proletariat, also a late comer, is far too conscious of its own class interests to be lured into a revolution in the capacity of a mere auxiliary.³

The resultant stalemate threatened to isolate the revolution even further by denying the bourgeoisie potential overseas support. If Russian Liberalism, in fear of the proletariat, wanted to close the revolution altogether, then the world bourgeoisie had no alternative but to concur, and turn towards the Tsarist regime to secure their interests. While serving to strengthen autocracy and weaken the Liberals, these events could not however, extinguish the flame of revolution:

This fundamental feature of the Russian revolution (i.e. the strength of the proletariat) explains many things. It explains, on the one hand, why Russian Liberalism is so anxious to put a stop to it by hook or by crook, and on the other hand, why it finds so little sympathy with the bourgeoisie all the world over. But the revolution takes no stock of them. Its flame is growing in extent and fierceness, and the moment is not far off when autocracy and the monarchy and the dynasty itself will be burned by it into ashes.⁴

These arguments were put more cogently in Justice on 28 April 1906, in an article on 'The Situation in Russia' to commemorate the First of May. In this article Rothstein commented upon the growing understanding between the

European Liberal bourgeoisie and autocratic Russia:

The Russian Government says it (the revolution) is suppressed, the Russian Liberals say ditto; and the foreign capitalists act upon these assurances and lay their heavy stakes on the Czardom.

Rothstein, however, was confident that the strengthening of the forces of autocracy would not retard the development, nor alter the proletarian character, of the revolution - 'great social forces once unlocked, cannot be put down by police and Military means . . . there can be at present in Russia no half-way between Autocracy and a democratic republic, . . all concessions that Autocracy may make are bound to prove illusory unless they are used as a fresh jumping-ground for further revolutionary action.' The Liberals have refused to acknowledge these facts: 'Glad of the opportunity which the Manifesto of October 30 gave . . ' they have called a ' "Halt" ' to the revolution. Unable to make common cause with the proletariat, they have embarked upon a course of events that will deliver the Duma to the Autocracy:

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. It is simply ridiculous to think that the people who would not assist the revolution when it was in full swing will turn into Mirabeaus and make it, when in their opinion, it is dead. What they will do will be to try to find a ground for a common agreement with the Czardom; and as the Czardom will simply ignore them, they will yield more and more, till even the most moderate of their demands will vanish into the limbo of all election promises.⁵

Rothstein's analysis of the situation was borne out by the facts. Internationally, the revolution outside of the Socialist movement was isolated, and to all intents and purposes, moribund. The exigencies of British and French foreign policy, with its over-riding fear of Germany, had actively sought out the Russian alliance, depriving the Russian constitutionalists of any effective Governmental

support from the two "Parliamentarian" Great Powers. The creation of the Duma was as much a deferential bow towards British Liberalism and French Radical opinion, as it was towards the Russian Liberals. Britain's proposed entente cordiale with Russia, meant that Grey maintained an unpopular pro-Muscovite policy in the face of naked repression in Russia. Furthermore, the British move towards Russia had the unwelcome effect of heightening Anglo-German rivalry and accelerating the naval arms race.

On the 18 June 1906, these issues were raised in Parliament when Keir Hardie and Will Thorne subjected the Foreign Secretary to an uncomfortable examination over the proposed visit of the British Fleet to Kronstadt. Thorne framed his questions in such a manner as to suggest that the sending of the Fleet not only condoned Russian Government atrocities, but was also intended to prepare the ground for an Anglo-Russian agreement. He demanded to know '... what was the object of sending a fleet to Kronstadt, and if the Secretary of State was aware that a boy of 14 and a girl of 18 had been publicly executed at Riga.'⁶

Justice reporting on Keir Hardie's questions drew attention to the pogroms as part of Russian official policy. It also commented favourably on Hardie's demand that the Liberal Government 'take action to influence the Russian Government to stop these outrages.'⁷ Massacres continued, and on the 23 June, Rothstein, writing in Justice spoke of the Bielowostok massacres as an attempt to quash the rising tide of revolutionary feeling, by diverting the rage of the people into other channels. The immediate cause of these outrages had been the May elections to the Duma which had proved to be an overwhelming demonstration against the Government. (While the Social-Democrats had not stood for election, the Constitutional Democrats had swept the board.) With 'ill-concealed contempt,' the Government now threatened the six week old Duma with dissolution.⁸

Popular indignation over the proposed sending of the

British Fleet to Kronstadt, coupled with an attack upon the atrocities carried out by the Tsarist regime in the wake of the revolution, was used by the Socialists to embarrass the Liberal Party into declaring against any proposed agreement with autocratic Russia:

Sir Evans Gordon . . . whom we rejoice to say we rarely agree with, hit the nail full on the head with our hammer when he enforced Thorne's point that if we cut off political relations with Servia because two crowned princes were done to death, still more ought we to boycott Russia for wholesale massacres of Jews . . . '9

Sir Edward Grey's embarrassment, however, was saved by the precipitate action of the Tsar, who by dissolving the Duma, robbed the Liberal Party of its cloak of respectability in dealing with the Russian autocracy. Without the screen of Parliamentary democracy, Tsardom could not openly court the Liberal Governments of Britain and France. "La Duma est morte", announced Campbell-Bannerman, the Liberal P.M. to Parliament on 26 July, "Vive La Duma!", which prompted Justice to announce that: 'Even Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman must now feel grateful for our agitation which saved his Government from the eternal disgrace of sending the British Fleet to do homage to the brutal and blood-stained despotism of the Czar.'¹⁰

The dissolution of the Duma in August 1906 led Rothstein to reassess the social composition of the Russian revolutionary movement. Writing on 'The Next Problem of the Russian Revolution', he drew attention to the new importance of the peasantry in confronting the autocracy. The fact that the occasion for the ending of the Duma was its stated intention to assist the peasants with land, meant that their blighted hopes would merely serve to revolutionise the whole peasant mass, who would seize the initiative from the proletariat. The peasantry, however, were by no means an homogeneous mass. There were those who lived 'amidst the remnants of the ancient village community' and who were 'still swayed by the ideals of

communal ownership in land; others on the contrary' had 'become typical peasant proprietors with all the individualistic tendencies characteristic of such a class; others again are already full-blown agricultural proletarians whose interests are opposed to those of the other two sections; . . . They all want land, but want it under different forms and on different terms. . . This will make the revolution a bourgeois revolution, but at the same time guarantee its success! The proletariat not wanting to withhold the prize of land from the peasantry will be in the vanguard. But henceforth it will have to subordinate its own demands to those of its powerful allies and conform its action both in point of time and of tactics to the peasantry.'

This was a curious statement in the light of Rothstein's previous polemics both with the Narodnaya Volya in the 1890's and more recently with the SRs in 1903. His apparent support for the peasantry as the chief beneficiary of a revolution led by the proletariat, seemed to contradict earlier statements welcoming the arrival of the Russian proletariat as a political force in 1897. In many respects these comments reflected the confusion of thought prevailing in the RSDLP regarding the social composition of the 1905 Revolution. Both factions - the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks - struggled to make sense of a revolution that had not merely threatened the existence of the autocracy without their direct intervention; but had also exposed the gulf between town and country in a manner which threatened the future success of any predominantly urban insurrection. Of the three major interpreters of the 1905 Revolution - Plekhanov, Lenin and Trotsky - only Trotsky identified the proletariat as the immediate victors in any future Russian revolution.¹² Plekhanov and Lenin both accepted the historical necessity of a bourgeois revolution as a prelude to proletarian revolution in Russia. However, while Plekhanov rejected the peasantry as a potential ally in the proletarian struggle with autocracy - preferring instead an

immediate alliance with the liberal bourgeoisie;¹³ Lenin, alongside Trotsky, saw the peasantry as indispensable to any future assault on the autocracy. However, both men had opposed views on the future direction of the Russian Revolution. By the middle of 1905 Lenin had begun to see the contradiction in the Bolshevik position on the role of the revolutionary peasantry and called, (primarily in the work Two Tactics of Social Democracy in the Democratic Revolution), for an alliance between workers and peasants against both the state and the bourgeoisie.¹⁴ But, as one historian has pointed out, Lenin 'continued to view the future within a traditional framework: the new alliance was a tactical alternative; as for the aim, a democratic, bourgeois republic, it remained unaffected. Moreover, if he had resolved one contradiction, he had introduced another, more serious one: how could two classes, the peasantry and the proletariat, make the revolution of a third, the bourgeoisie, particularly when the spearhead of this alliance, the workers, were said to be implacable enemies of the capitalist system?'¹⁵ For Rothstein this contradiction was overcome by the proletariat making the bourgeois revolution and freeing the peasantry from the remnants of feudalism; thereby creating the conditions for capitalism in the countryside. With the subsequent spread of the class struggle to the peasantry Rothstein believed that the conditions would be created for a successful proletarian revolution in the future. He, along with Lenin, remained unconvinced by Trotsky's arguments, and the Russian emigre Parvus's speculations, that Russia was on the brink of a proletarian, not a bourgeois revolution, that would bring a workers' government to power.¹⁶ For this reason Rothstein began to see the Duma as the legitimate expression of dissent in Russia. Its dissolution had coincided with the exhaustion of the revolution. What had been a year of continuous strikes and nervous tension ended in a state of physical collapse; henceforth, opposition in Russia would rely increasingly on constitutional forms of

protest - seeking to influence and educate public opinion through a newly-promised State Duma to be convened in February 1907.

Rothstein had previously dismissed the Duma as a vehicle whereby the Liberals would deliver the revolution to the autocracy; on its demise, he expressed his disappointment, and clearly saw in the Duma's agrarian policy the hope that body could exist as a progressive, reforming institution, capable of moving forward the cause of the revolution - hence its dissolution.

Rothstein transferred this new found respect for the Duma in Russia to British parliamentary conditions, leading him to reassess the role of the British Labour Party as a potentially combative organisation in Parliament, no longer purely reformist in character. In an article entitled, 'Parliamentarianism and the Working Class', he commented upon the proposed resolution of the Labour Party for Parliamentary representatives to become independent of Conference decisions. His objection to this proposal was couched in language which drew its understanding from his analysis of the Russian Duma. The aforementioned resolution of the Parliamentary Labour Party, he argued, would be nothing less than the 'opportunist . . . betrayal of the working class' brought forward 'under the pretext that a Member of Parliament is, in the first instance, responsible to his constituents.' This Rothstein argued, was a misguided notion; if a constituent returned a given candidate, then he has expressed his solidarity with that MP's programme and party, and not with an individual. To grant MPs freedom for their actions and independence for their decisions, then political expediency would almost certainly encourage alliances with Liberal-Radical parties:

Nothing could be more characteristic of the spirit which animates certain shining lights of the Labour Party than the endeavour which is to be made at the Belfast Conference to render the Parliamentary representatives of the party independent of Conference resolutions. Those who have watched the recent developments on the Continent know

that such independence is the standing demand of the opportunist sections in all Socialist parties, and constitutes but the first step in the gradual betrayal of the working class.¹⁷

While no doubt Rothstein had in mind Millerandism in France, he sought to challenge these tactics by applying the role of the RSDLP in the new Duma to British parliamentary conditions. Rothstein's starting-point had been the irreconcilable antagonism between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, this had to be built upon, both inside and outside of Parliament. Parliament on its own could neither revolutionise nor organise the forces of the proletariat, but it could serve as an instrument whereby the antagonism between the two groups could be fully exposed, enabling the proletariat to 'organise itself for the complete political and economic dispossession of the bourgeoisie.'¹⁸ This, Rothstein felt, was the proper function of the Labour Party and Parliamentarism for the British working class. On the other hand, to pursue the tactics advocated by its leaders would be to merely oversee the Party's disintegration as a class organisation.

Rothstein was not out of step with majority opinion within the SDF. In an editorial published in Justice on 3 February, the SDF published a vindication of its decision to leave the LRC, giving as its reason the LRC's refusal 'to give a Socialist character to the object and policy of the Party.

The important question for the Conference is not the personal opinions of the delegates, but what shall be the end and aims of the Party, and what shall the Parliamentary group stand for and advocate . . . The Party Conference has emphatically declared that it is not a Socialist party. The function of Socialist organisations, therefore, is still to remain outside, . . .¹⁹

This decision by the SDF crystallised Rothstein's views concerning both the British and Russian Socialists in their respective Parliaments. On 9 March the election results to the Second Duma were discussed by Rothstein in Justice. It

was made clear, that it was the 'determined views' and the 'determined action' of the Social-Democrats which had proved successful, and not the prevaricating tactics of the Liberal Constitutional-Democrats:

What distinguishes the results of the present elections from those of the first is the grand victory of the Socialists, or, as it is euphemistically called, the Extreme Left, over the Liberals or the Centre parties. . . . a fact which changes the popular verdict . . . from one of no confidence to that of active hostility.²⁰

The significance of such a 'popular verdict' lay in the fact that the peasantry formed the bulk of the electorate, and yet outside the town proletariat and party intellectuals there were virtually no Socialists in Russia. In order to account for the peasants voting against the Constitutional-Democrats in such numbers, observers had to look at the changed attitudes towards the Duma itself, which was no longer seen as an instrument to overcome the autocracy and bureaucracy by legislative means, but as an instrument of war. That the peasantry had made this intellectual leap was no less significant than the notion that the proletarian revolution of 1905 was 'the first of its kind in human history:

This is an enormous step in advance, considering that it has chiefly been made by the peasantry, and it constitutes almost as important a landmark in the development of the Russian revolution as the first entrance on the revolutionary stage of the town proletariat.²¹

This was an interesting statement, pointing as it did towards an emerging alliance between the Social-Democrats and other parties of the Extreme Left, who drew the bulk of their support from the peasantry - the Revolutionary Socialists, Toil Group and Socialist-Populists. There were 127 Extreme Left deputies, of whom 62 were Social-Democrats, 34 Revolutionary Socialists, 24 from the Toil Group and 7 Socialist-Populists. Yet the tactics of the Social-Democrats in the new Duma were by no means clear on

this point. The Bolsheviks within the RSDLP sought an active alliance with the peasantry; while the Mensheviks continued to argue the case for an alliance with the Liberal bourgeoisie. In an article published in Justice on the 30 March, Rothstein discussed the merits of the two conflicting groups, and largely favoured the Menshevik over the Bolshevik. This seemed to contradict earlier statements, both as to the proletariat pursuing its own political and social aims independent of the Russian bourgeoisie, and in respect of his identification of the peasantry as the most powerful ally of the proletariat - the latter needing to 'conform its action both in point of time and of tactics to that of the peasantry.'²²

Seven months later he was writing in support of Plekhanov and Axelrod's contention, that a more constructive alliance could be formed with the Liberal bourgeoisie:

-the Lenin section say: the proletariat has to go hand in hand with the revolutionary peasantry and fight the treacherous bourgeoisie. This sounds very plausible and very revolutionary, since the proletariat, together with the peasantry, would probably be able to bring the revolution to a victorious issue, even without the assistance of the bourgeoisie.

. . . in our opinion the other section of the Russian Social-Democracy - that under Plekhanov - is nearer to the truth . . . it argues: In the interests of the preservation and further development of the class-consciousness of the proletariat, it is as detrimental - nay, more detrimental - to go hand in hand with the parties of the peasants than with those of the Liberal bourgeoisie, since in the first case the proletariat, thanks to the Socialist garb assumed by the peasant parties, the Labour men and the Revolutionary Socialists, may easily be misled into thinking that all "Socialists" are alike, and be dragged thereby into the quagmire of petty bourgeois Radicalism, while in the latter case no one, thanks to the glaring differences, will confuse our identity, and fall into the mistake of thinking that we and the C-Ds are alike.²³

This was a clear statement in support of Plekhanov and Axelrod; yet on the eve of the Fifth RSDLP Conference, to be held in London in May, the activities of the Cadets in the first three months of the Second Duma had led Rothstein to re-examine the value of the proposed alliance with the Constitutional Democrats. In an article entitled 'The Russian Duma and the Liberal Treachery', Rothstein suggested the underlying motive for Stolypin's convocation of the Second Duma was to entice the Constitutional-Democrats into an eventual betrayal of that body. In order to secure loans from Britain and France Stolypin had found it necessary to accept the Duma. Once that body was in place he manouevered the Cadets on to the defensive; where they appeared 'thankful' for the Duma to be 'allowed to exist at all, even as it is.' Stolypin's purpose had been to secure the Budget; in order to do so he had threatened the Cadets with a dissolution of the Duma if they failed to pass the necessary legislation. The Cadets were on the horns of a dilemma - in order to secure the Duma's existence, they had to support Stolypin; in supporting Stolypin they would discredit not only themselves, but also the Duma in the eyes of the nation. Their problem was further compounded by the knowledge, that with a successful budget, Stolypin would in all likelihood dissolve the Duma and pursue unfettered the counter-revolution. The question of the correct alliance to be struck up by the proletariat, was, therefore, completely open for debate at the forthcoming 5th Conference of the RSDLP.²⁴

The 350 delegates who gathered in London in May 1907 were split between the "Majority" (Bosheviks) and the "Minority" (Mensheviks), who supported the different factions of Lenin and Plekhanov. The nature of the split was explained to British Social-Democrats in the columns of Justice by Eliah Levin, secretary of the East London (Jewish) Branch of the SDF. He offered no particular censure of either group, but instead concentrated on the problems facing a party which was working to bring about a capitalist state, while

remaining duty bound to fight for its overthrow. He concluded by pointing to the weaknesses of both sections of the RSDLP and how each, through 'constant criticism' of one another's arguments proved 'instrumental in keeping both wings from going too far.'²⁵

The Congress of the RSDLP which opened on 13 May and closed on 1 June, was plagued by the activities of British detectives and Russian agents of the Okhrana. On their return to Russia, and their respective emigre communities across Europe, the delegates faced very different conditions to those existing when the Congress first convened. The Duma had again been dismissed and the Social-Democratic deputies arrested. Commenting on these events in Justice on 22 June 1907, Rothstein again addressed the complex question of the peasant or bourgeois alliance, shifting his position to that of the Bolsheviks. This time, he concluded, that the autocracy's refusal to countenance any challenge to its actions, even when assured of its own existence, meant that Social-Democracy had no other alternative than to form an alliance with the peasantry:

. . . autocracy, even when assured of its existence, cannot bear the presence alongside of it of national representatives who criticise and try to control its actions and its measures. To the masses of the peasantry who are steeped in political ignorance and are incapable of tracing the economic and social evils from which they suffer to their political roots, this demonstration of what, to us Social-Democrats, is an elementary truth cannot but convey a valuable lesson and show the necessity of drawing nearer to the revolutionary peasantry.²⁶

In response to the suppression of the Second Duma a protest demonstration was organised in London for 14 July. Justice carried an appeal for demonstrators from J. F. Green, Secretary of the SFRF, and announced the protest to be over the prospective Russian loan, 'the dismissal of the Duma, the massacres of Jews, the devastation of the Caucasus and the Baltic Provinces, and the prison tortures

in Riga.'²⁷ Justice published its own appeal, and called for volunteers to distribute handbills and to help in the sale of a penny pamphlet by Rothstein on the present situation in Russia. Rothstein's pamphlet traced the history of the Russian Revolution from its origins in the village community's assertion of peasant-socialism through to the dissolution of the Second Duma. The proletariat was seen as the instigator of the revolution, pursuing aims diametrically opposed to those of the middle classes:

It is the first time that the proletariat has stepped out on the historical arena as an independent and class-conscious power pursuing its own political and social aims, and not, as in previous European revolutions, as the food for powder or, at best, as the ally of the middle classes.²⁸

The Trafalgar Square demonstration was violently broken up, giving rise to accusations that Scotland Yard was acting on orders issued by the Foreign office, who in turn, were doing the bidding of St.Petersburg. The violence followed the arrest of Jack Williams, who suggested 'that the audience should form up and march from the Square to the Foreign Office. He asked them if they had pluck enough to go there. . . he did not wish to surprise the police, and hoped they would go in a perfectly orderly manner.'²⁹

Hyndman and Williams led the procession, which was peaceful up until its arrival at Whitehall, where Williams was informed they could not enter Downing Street. Williams then mounted what Justice referred to as 'a small parapet of the Foreign Office for the purpose of speaking and putting the resolution. . .' and was promptly arrested and manhandled, provoking the crowd into an assault on the police to secure his release.

The fighting continued for a short while, with a section of the procession managing to break away, and make its way down Whitehall. Williams jumped onto a passing omnibus and made his escape.

There were two disconcerting conclusions to the proceedings. The first was the arrival of 'an additional

body of police' (who) 'had evidently been specially sent for.' The second was the arrest of two foreigners - one a Russian and the other a German - 'both working in the tailoring industry and absolute strangers to each other.' The Liberal publisher, T. Fisher Unwin, provided them with bail.

The arrests led to accusations that the police and the Home Office were acting in complicity with the Russian Government. The police had seized a number of demonstrators at Whitehall, including known leaders in the agitation, yet '. . . the only persons who were actually arrested and taken to the station were two foreigners . . .' Both men were subsequently fined on a technical offence.. The reason for their arrest, as well as for the police disturbance, appeared clear to Justice:

The object of the Russian autocracy, and of its agents in this country, to whose orders the British government appears to be entirely subservient, would be to make out that the demonstration was not representative of the people of London, but consisted of a dangerous and riotous mob of Russian and other refugees.

It was actually stated in court that the demonstration was made up largely of foreigners; although, as a matter of fact, these, on the urgent representations of the organising committee, who wished to make it a distinctly English demonstration, were conspicuous by their absence.³⁰

Justice also commented on the appearance of a new body of police at Whitehall, who seemed to be carrying out 'definite orders to stir up a riot.':

There is no doubt that had matters been left in the hands of Inspector Jarvis, the whole affair would have passed off without any disturbance. It was the irruption of a new body of police, who acted as though they had been instructed to create disorder at any cost, which caused all the mischief.³¹

These events at Whitehall were seen to be part of a wider attack upon the Russian emigre community in Britain during the negotiations leading to the Anglo-Russian Agreement. In April, a Glasgow member of the SDF, had been charged with

storing cartridges and explosives, with intent to supply arms to the Russian Revolutionaries, in what became known as 'The Edinburgh "Cartridge" mystery. The accused faced two charges, one of possessing '15,000 cartridges under such circumstances as to give rise to a reasonable suspicion that he did not have them for a lawful object, contrary to Section 4 of the Explosive Substance Act, 1883;' and secondly, of keeping in 'an unauthorised place, 15,000 cartridges containing 85 lbs of gunpowder or other explosive substance, contrary to Sections 5 and 39 of the Explosives Act.' At this time it was not illegal to import or export arms or ammunition, and the accused, J. F. Reid, was acquitted on the first charge. It was, however, illegal to store arms on unlicensed premises, or to the public danger. Although it had been proved that the cartridges had been 'charged with a nitre compound', and, therefore, 'would only explode when put into a gun and fired off,' Reid was found guilty on the second charge. He was fined ~~£~~ 10s. Justice felt this to be a severe punishment for what had been a technical offence, and argued that the law had been stretched in order to obtain a conviction. 'There can be no reason whatever for this action unless it be a desire to curry favour with the Russian despotism.'³²

This court case - followed by events at Whitehall, the Russophile policy of the Foreign Secretary, and the shadowing of Russian Social-Democrats by Scotland Yard detectives - led British socialists to conclude that specific instructions had been issued to deal with any protest from Russian emigres during the negotiations leading to the Anglo-Russian Convention.³³

This Convention, devised to settle disputes between the two Powers in Asia, had effectively divided the region into two main spheres of influence:

We are told [wrote Justice] just after Parliament has risen, that the Treaty has been signed, and are vouchsafed a little information about the partition of Persia, the independence of Afghanistan, the security of India . . . we are informed . .

. that the relations between the two countries are "excellent", and that no difficulties will arise either in relation to the Balkans, Asia Minor, or the railway to Baghdad. The two greatest European Powers in Asia have . . . come to terms on their respective areas of spoliation . . . ³⁴

Criticism of the Anglo-Russian Treaty reflected both the recent debates on colonial policy and militarism at the Stuttgart Congress of the Second International; and the unpopularity of the Russian alliance among Liberal-Radical MPs opposed to Grey's policy of isolating Germany. At Stuttgart the colonial system had been condemned for 'increasing the danger of international complications and war, thus making heavier the financial burdens for navy and army.'³⁵ The Anglo-Russian Treaty came increasingly to be seen by both Radical and Socialist critics of Imperialism in this context. The resolution condemning militarism moved by the German Social-Democrat August Bebel had echoed the Liberal-Radical critique of Imperialism developed by J.A. Hobson at the close of the Boer War:

Wars between capitalistic States are, as a rule, the consequence of their competition in the world's market, for every State is eager not only to preserve its markets, but also to conquer new ones, principally by the subjugation of foreign nations and the confiscation of their lands.³⁶

At this point the Liberal-Radical and Socialist analysis of Imperialism converged. However, while Bebel's resolution had as its central core Hobson's assertion that wars arose mainly out of imperialist rivalries, he remained unhelpful when it came to developing the tactics by which Imperialist wars could be prevented. It was Lenin, along with Rosa Luxemburg, who moved the final resolution on the duty of socialists facing the threat, or the actual outbreak, of war:

If a war threatens to break out, it is a duty of the working class in the country affected, . . . to make every effort to prevent the war by all means which seem to them the most appropriate . . .

Should war none the less break out, it

is their duty to intervene in order to bring it promptly to an end, . . . and precipitate the fall of capitalist domination.³⁷

As G.D.H. Cole pointed out, 'the parties of the International were formally pledged not merely to do their best to prevent war, but also, should it occur, to do their best to bring about the fall of capitalism.' In adopting this resolution the International had committed itself 'to a great deal more than it was really prepared to do.'³⁸ Nevertheless, the resolution had been warmly endorsed by the Congress, and had given the impression of unanimity among delegates. Rothstein, who had attended the Congress as a Branch delegate, remarked favourably upon the changed nature of the Second International:

Since the extinction of the old International the International Socialist movement has been proceeding in national sections, bound to each other by sentiments of solidarity and mutual help, but withal separate, independent, and distinct. At Stuttgart, however, . . . we had a real working congress which did presume to prescribe to the national parties represented what they should demand and how they should act in their respective countries. In other words, instead of confining itself to the functions of mere deliberation the Congress has usurped the powers of an International Socialist Parliament, treating the national sections as sort of semi-autonomous branches of an indivisible party.'³⁹

However, while Rothstein drew attention to an unprecedented unity of purpose displayed by the 'New International', in reality, there was less unanimity at the Congress, than Rothstein would have readers of Justice believe. Not all Socialists were willing to temper their pronouncements, or dovetail their activities to fit the prescriptions of the Second International. This had become apparent in Britain soon after the Congress in an article from Hyndman criticising the Kaiser in terms which held him and Germany responsible for the "reaction" spreading across

Europe and threatening the peace. Going against the tone of the Stuttgart resolution on Militarism, Hyndman examined the policies of the most powerful monarchs in Europe, concluding that Edward VII was correct to conclude an Alliance with the Tsar, owing to the reactionary policies of Imperial Germany:

. . . the Czar, after all, is not nowadays such a very formidable enemy to progress. The Russian revolution has only just begun. The Romanoff dynasty is manifestly doomed. And Nicholas himself, with all his turpitude, counts personally for so little that the Terrorists don't think him worth assassinating; . . .40

In effect, Hyndman was abandoning recent criticism of the Anglo-Russian Treaty, and voicing his support for an alliance system designed to contain German ambitions. By doing so, he expressed his disagreement with the Stuttgart resolution on Militarism and Anti-Militarism. In Justice Rothstein criticised Hyndman for his rejection of Stuttgart, and set in motion an anti-Hyndmanite movement which eventually led to his withdrawal from the Party in 1916. While agreeing with Hyndman's analysis of the Kaiser's foreign policy, he felt that Hyndman was playing the jingo's game, 'by fanning still more the embers of prejudice and enmity which exist in this country against Germany and in thus preparing the ground for a "popular" war with Germany.' Hyndman had chosen to play down the 'warlike' aspects of King Edward's "pacific diplomacy" ' by ignoring its ultimate aim - 'the isolation of Germany'. While Hyndman had argued that this policy was necessary much 'in the same way as a cage is necessary to render a wild beast innocuous,' to encircle a wild beast may cause it to strike:

But does he not see that this policy of fencing round a first class Power may - and most surely will - one day bring Germany to exasperation and prompt her to make an attempt to break through the magic ring? Surely he cannot expect a proud and, let us grant, conceited Government to submit tamely to the fate of gradual extinction of power

and influence, as if it were a defenceless animal thrown into the lethal chamber."⁴¹

There was an added danger, again ignored by Hyndman, of those now encircling Germany deliberately picking a quarrel in order to serve their own interests. Rothstein drove home this point by drawing attention to the Moroccan crisis and the role of Delcasse in provoking Germany. 'It would thus seem,' argued Rothstein, 'that the boot may sometimes happen to be on the other leg, and that we have to watch other Powers just as carefully as Germany.' Evoking the spirit of the Stuttgart resolution, Rothstein spoke of the duty of Socialists 'to combat the warlike tendencies and appetites in our own country', while never being 'so simple-minded as to regard the policy of our own Government as one dictated solely by motives of self-defence.'⁴²

In response, Hyndman merely repudiated the authority of the International and argued that Britain was bound by certain Treaty obligations to guarantee the independence of Belgium, Holland and Switzerland. 'The independence of those small States can only be preserved, under conditions which may arise almost at any moment, by force of arms.'⁴³

International relations and foreign policy now became a major area of contention. British diplomacy appeared to be actively engaged in putting together a coalition with Russia and France against the Central German Powers. This had brought the threat of war closer, and had split the SDP between opponents and supporters of British foreign policy. Hyndman supported the Franco-Russian alliance, describing German foreign policy as traditionally bellicose, thwarted only by 'an irresistible combination' of forces being formed against her.⁴⁴ He published articles in both Justice and the Clarion denouncing German ambitions, and accusing the Kaiser of embarking upon a 'Teutonic world mission' with the conquest of England as the ultimate goal. He was supported by among others Harry Quelch and H.W. Lee, 'who as editor of Justice and party secretary respectively held the whole life of the party in their hands.'⁴⁵

Leading spokesmen for the opposition were J.B. Askew, the English correspondent of Vorwaerts then living in Berlin, Theodore Rothstein, E.C. Fairchild and Zelda Kahan, all of whom were members of the Central Hackney branch. 'The main thrust of their argument,' one historian writes, 'was that Hyndman was betraying the principles of Socialism, . . . encouraging jingoism in his own country,' and 'colluding with the British government in deluding the people as to the true facts of the situation.'⁴⁶

A fourth argument was raised by J.B. Askew who in an article to Justice during the 1908-9 Bosnia-Herzegovina annexationist crisis, pointed out that while German Socialists were confronting their own Government over Bosnia, the pronouncements of Hyndman were making it very difficult for them to continue that opposition. The German Press was constantly alluding to the fact that prominent English socialists were supporting the foreign policy aims of their Government:

We render the work of Socialism only the more difficult in Germany if we make it appear that the work of the Socialist movement is only anti-German and not anti-capitalist.⁴⁷

Rothstein supported these arguments, and invoked the authority of the International to show that the working class could prevent war, either by using its strength to bring a halt to hostilities, or if not, 'upset . . . the whole of the blessed capitalist order.'⁴⁸ Nobody, Rothstein argued, disputed the fact that war with Germany was a possibility, but if Hyndman was to accept that an understanding with Germany was perfectly feasible, then he would also have to acknowledge German fears of a pre-emptive strike against her fleet, thereby rendering protection of her mercantile fleet impossible. 'Prussia', he continued, 'is not the only predatory Power on earth; . . . all the Powers of the present day are of a like nature; . . . all of them, but above all England herself, have attained to their present territorial limits by

"deliberately aggressive wars," . . . What good is there in pointing to Prussia as if she were the only sinner?' While it was true 'that the coal-carrying capacity of Germany's latest vessels' were 'small', and was, therefore, 'due to aggressive intentions against England', then, 'Germany did, indeed, prepare for war with England'; the question remained, however, whether or not England was preparing for war with Germany? Rothstein did not see Germany as the aggressor and consequently dismissed Hyndman's arguments as fundamentally flawed:

As a matter of history, it is England which is primarily responsible for the present tension between the two countries, in that she, out of fear for the further commercial expansion of Germany, has systematically been hindering her in her efforts to acquire colonies and financial markets.'⁴⁹

England's obstructive tactics - in China, and in the markets of the Ottoman Empire - were compounded by her activities in North Africa, where she had shared out Morocco and Egypt with France. As a result, 'Kaiser William' (had) 'decided that nothing but the sword will ever guarantee him the freedom of necessary - as he understands it - expansion. How, then, can one take upon himself to represent Germany as the aggressive wolf and England as the innocent lamb driven to self-defence? Is it not a complete perversion of the real facts of the situation? . . . There must be no war. Let England cease obstructing Germany as she has ceased obstructing France. Let there be no further provocation by a policy of penning her in. Let there be peace or there will be a revolution!'⁵⁰

Throughout 1908 the naval arms race, which had been increasing in intensity since 1906, came to occupy a central position in British politics. A back-bench rebellion of Liberal-Radical MPs in 1908 had succeeded in reducing the estimates for naval expenditure by £400,000. A large scale propaganda campaign to force a restoration of these cuts was got underway by the Tory press. They found unlikely allies in Hyndman and Quelch, who alongside

Blatchford and other influential figures in the Labour movement, repeated Tory claims that Germany was preparing 'to attain supremacy on sea as well as on land.'⁵¹

Rothstein, disputed this claim and produced figures to show that Britain had, in fact, exceeded the two-Power standard that determined British naval construction:

	Battleships	Armoured Cruisers
England	57	34
Germany	22	8
United States	25	13
France	21	19
Japan	11	11 ⁵²

To emphasise this point, Rothstein quoted Mr. Brassey, 'that even if England were not to construct a single ship between now and the end of 1911, she would still possess a supremacy over Germany in the proportion of 52 to 30.' In respect of naval construction Britain spent almost twice as much as Germany, obtaining a tonnage far in excess of those obtained by her rival. To ignore these facts played into the hands of the Navy League and their organs in the Press, who were engaged in conducting their 'nefarious agitation against . . . Germany.'⁵³

Matters came to a head in 1909 when Asquith's attempt to compromise with the Navy league and the Tory Party with his four-plus four formula, led to a Tory campaign for the immediate laying down of eight battleships. The jingo nature of the campaign, playing on fears of invasion, whipped up a great deal of anti-foreigner feeling and working class support for an increased naval building programme. The Tory Party's slogan of "We Want Eight and We Won't Wait" obscured what Rothstein referred to as 'bourgeois party manoeuvres.' In order to contest the Liberal Party's policy of social reform, and drive the Liberal Free Traders into financial bankruptcy, the Tory Party demanded an increase in armaments. 'It was very shrewdly calculated,' Rothstein pointed out, 'that if most of the money available on the present system of taxation were spent on armaments, nothing would be left for the

social reforms to which the Liberal Party stands pledged, and the Tories would then come to power swimmingly with a mandate to "broaden the basis of taxation." Naturally the cry raised was, "The Empire is in danger!" and as Germany was the only country which was building a large fleet, Germany was pointed out as the quarter from which that danger threatened.⁵⁴

Rothstein's analysis exposed not only the divisions between the Liberal and Conservative Parties, but also the gulf existing between the Liberal Government and Radicals within their own Party regarding Anglo-German relations. The Radicals who made up an important section of Asquith's Cabinet, in order to gain a reduction in the naval budget, had consistently argued the case for an agreement with Germany. Asquith's 'four plus four' compromise (while the opposition in his own party was demanding 2 or 3 battleships) had, in Rothstein's opinion, ceded the argument to the Conservative Party. To head off opposition within his own Cabinet, Asquith had been forced to claim that naval superiority was in jeopardy, thereby playing into the hands of the Tory opposition. In an attempt to scupper Tory plans Asquith had to retract his former statements on naval superiority and to argue that the British Fleet was not threatened at all by 'the speed of German construction.' Such statements, Rothstein argued, gave the Tory Party a resounding coup and 'provided' them 'with an excellent "patriotic" election-cry.' These facts were well known, yet the persuasive jingoistic tone of the Tory propaganda, had been enough to satisfy Hyndman and others that Asquith and McKenna were driven by fear of German 'Weltpolitik', and not by party political manoeuvrings. Hyndman, and the editorial columns of Justice, had made 'much capital' from the '"revelations" of Asquith and McKenna in order to have again a "dig" at the "Prussianised Germany."' ⁵⁵

Accusations of "socialist jingoism" were levelled against Hyndman and the editor of Justice, leading to an

acrimonious exchange between the two sides, which the conciliatory tone of Zelda Kahan could do little to abate:

We are far from certain about Blatchford, but we know perfectly well that neither Hyndman nor those responsible for the front page notes in "Justice" are jingoes; but the point is that their utterances can only lend themselves to a jingoistic interpretation, and the "Justice" poster - "The German Menace" - gives but the same end.⁵⁶

Support for Kahan's position came from J.B. Askew, who writing from Berlin, was more forceful in his criticism of Justice's editorial policy and Hyndman:

Dear Comrade - You protest against the accusation of jingoism and so does Hyndman, but your protest does not alter the fact that your present position, were you only logical, would be that of the jingoes. . . .

But what can we do to restrain the German Government? Surely we ought to do our best to restrain the fury of our English jingoes, not to encourage them. Otherwise we only compromise our German friends. Their opposition to the German Government policy becomes then, in the eyes of their countrymen, that of a mere ally of the British jingoes. And we - we are compelled to grant every penny that the Government may demand in defence of the Englishman's home.⁵⁷

'Criticism of Hyndman reached a crescendo in 1909, culminating in a resolution from the Central Hackney branch, of which Rothstein, Kahan and Fairchild were all members, urging the SDF Executive to dissociate the party from his statements.'⁵⁸ A number of letters supporting the Central Hackney branch were printed in Justice the following week; causing the Executive to moderate its line. Quelch replied that 'the only means available to us at the present time for averting war is . . . political action, with a view of bringing pressure to bear upon our own Government to pursue a line of policy calculated to preserve the peace.'⁵⁹

However, while Justice was prepared to modify its position regarding British foreign policy and the alleged German threat, relations within the SDP continued to

deteriorate. The bitter feelings engendered in the country by the Tory party's 'Big Navy' campaign, also found expression in anti-alien sentiment. A number of articles appeared in The Times and other newspapers, remarking on the immigrant status of the majority of the Government's critics - "largely aliens in blood and sentiment, and not Englishmen at all." '60 Hyndman rounded on his critics accordingly accusing them of underestimating the value of the British Navy in safeguarding the Right of Asylum:

What astounds me more than anything else is that foreigners, who owe the fact that they have not long since been "shortened" or "lengthened" to the Right of Asylum and the refusal of extradition which England accords to them, should join in this contemptible pacifist cry that under no circumstances must English Social-Democrats declare in favour of resistance to militarist Germany . . . Why was it that the delegates of the Russian Revolutionary Party gathered here instead of anywhere else not very long ago? Because they are one and all safeguarded by the guns of the British fleet as well as by the laws of the British people. If that fleet ever ceases to hold control of the narrow seas the Right of Asylum is gone from that moment as an effective assurance against the demands of the despots.⁶¹

Aware of the irony of the situation, where the British Government was to maintain the Right of Asylum by offering resistance to militarist Germany while concluding an alliance with Tsarist Russia, Hyndman dismissed the Anglo-Russian Agreement as having 'no elements of permanence in it.'⁶² Refuting arguments that the Anglo-Russian Alliance, coupled with the Entente Cordiale, had as their purpose the encirclement of Germany, Hyndman spoke of Russia as at best an ineffectual counterpoise to German 'Weltpolitik'. Any alliance with such a despotism he agreed outraged 'all the canons of international morality.'⁶³

The controversy over Germany and the build-up of the British Navy died down in face of this renewed criticism of the Anglo-Russian Alliance. The impending visit of the Tsar to Cowes, due to take place at the end of July, led to a

more conciliatory tone towards Germany in Justice editorials, and a more sceptical response to the value of the Russian alliance:

We hold that an alliance with France and Russia avowedly against Germany, would excuse, if not justify, the pretensions and war preparations of Germany, while it would afford absolutely no sort of safeguard against German aggression. In a crisis Russia might be expected to stand by Germany and leave England in the lurch, as she did quite recently in the East, while it would be idle to expect France to risk a war with Germany for the sake of England. The true policy for England, therefore, in our opinion, is to abandon such provocative alliances, act strictly on the defensive, and come to terms with Germany in regard to the question of naval armaments.⁶⁴

While no doubt this change of attitude towards Germany was strongly influenced by the Central Hackney branch's resolution censuring Hyndman's anti-German statements, it was also evidence of a growing realisation among socialists that the Anglo-Russian Alliance threatened the stability of Europe. A third factor influencing attitudes towards the Russian alliance was the aggressive purpose it had been put to in Persia. A constitutional rebellion in Teheran had led to fears for the safety of foreign residents and had given rise to calls for Russian military intervention. Such action, it was argued, would not have been possible without the open support of Sir Edward Grey and the British Foreign Office.

The part played by Russian emigres, in keeping both radical and socialist opinion informed of the true nature of the Russian alliance, was an important contribution to the anti-imperialist movement in Britain. One such emigre was Peter Petrov, a member of the RSDLP, who had played an active part in the 1905 Revolution. Petrov had been twice wounded in the fighting, and had been exiled to Siberia in 1906. On his escape from exile he went to Geneva before seeking asylum in Britain in 1907. He was 23 years old when he arrived in Scotland, staying with John Maclean in

Glasgow for several months before moving to London, where he joined the Kentish Town branch of the SDF.⁶⁵ On the 24 July and 7 August 1909 he published two articles in Justice critical of the role played by the Anglo-Russian Alliance in Persia. Here he drew attention to the manner in which British and Russian finance capital had secured a foothold in the Persian economy, arresting the social and economic development of the country and overthrowing the constitutional movement.

Petrov's articles provided an interesting insight into the colonial policy of both governments under the Anglo-Russian Agreement, and came to form part of a wider critique of imperialism among the emigre community. Rothstein, who had been active in the Egyptian nationalist movement since 1907 had been working on a daily newspaper The Egyptian Standard, published in Paris, London and Cairo. This was a joint radical-socialist venture run by the ex-diplomatist Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, and other contributors included Keir Hardie and H.N. Brailsford. Blunt noted in his diary:

Rothstein came to see me, the new London correspondent of the "Egyptian Standard". That paper seems likely now to make its way. Brailsford who was also here this afternoon has suggested to Mustapha the issue of a weekly edition as no one can spare the time for a foreign daily paper.⁶⁶

On 14 September 1909 Rothstein addressed the 'Second Egyptian National Congress' held in Geneva on "The Fortunes of the Constitutional Movement in Egypt," where he drew conclusions similar to those expressed by Petrov regarding Persia. Rothstein reported on these proceedings in Justice on 9 October stating that the overwhelming support for the nationalist movement in Egypt, had now overridden the purely constitutional desire for political reform. British opposition to reform had convinced the majority of Egyptians that reform would never take place without the removal of the British.

Following the assassination of Boutross Pasha and the

execution of his assassin Wardani in 1910, Rothstein's analysis of the Egyptian reform movement, appeared to be being borne out by events. A wave of anti-British rioting swept the country in the first half of the year, leading Rothstein to locate the Egyptian Question within the context of the European system of alliances. If the British Government responded to the Egyptian crisis by despatching troops to the region, then it would face the common censure of the European Powers, but in particular, Germany and Austria. Britain had no mandate from Europe condoning her occupation. She was allowed to remain in Egypt solely at the discretion of the European Powers, as long as she didn't infringe the substantial rights of those Powers by seeking to annex or appropriate any exclusive advantage. Nor could she make any alteration in the status quo without the consent of Europe. To send troops to Egypt would raise not only a diplomatic row with Turkey, who in face of the illegal occupation of her autonomous province by foreign troops, would have no other choice but to demand the withdrawal of those troops and the occupation of Egypt by her own. In making such demands, Turkey would be confident of the support of Germany and Austria, and Britain would be left with no alternative but to fight or to surrender. Faced with such an alternative Britain could not afford to risk military repression in Egypt. To despatch troops at this point 'would,' Rothstein argued, 'inevitably clash with the standing and equal rights of Europe, and either on that account or by themselves raise the question of her stay there!' 'The illegal occupation of Egypt was destabilising international relations and threatening the European "balance of power."' 67

On 6 July 1910 Hyndman wrote a letter to the Conservative Morning Post outlining his views on Anglo-German relations, and repeating claims that Germany was preparing for war against England. Ignoring the European implications of British colonial policy he focused his attention solely on the threat to Britain in the North Sea and the Channel.

Consequently, Britain was portrayed as the innocent party in Anglo-German relations, and no allowance was made for the provocative nature of British diplomacy in Persia or Egypt. He subsequently attacked the Labour Party's 'turn-the-cheek-to-the-smiter-pacifism', and in particular their refusal to sanction further expenditure on the Fleet. The Navy, Hyndman asserted, was vital to England's food supply; a defensive necessity for England and little more than a luxury for Germany. Britain's political liberties, including the Right of Asylum, he argued, were guaranteed by the navy.

This article provoked a wave of protest from members of the SDP opposed not only to Hyndman's views but also to the fact that he should choose The Morning Post to publish them, creating the impression that the SDP as a body supported the construction of a "Big Navy." Once again the Central Hackney branch, co-ordinated by Zelda Kahan, took the lead. On the 30 July a Central Hackney resolution calling on Justice to dissociate itself from Hyndman's anti-German policy and his recent statements made in the capitalist press appeared in Justice:

"This meeting of the Central Hackney branch calls upon the Executive Council publicly to dissociate the SDP from the anti-German policy of comrade Hyndman and from his demands for further expenditure on the Navy. It further urges the E.C. to call upon Hyndman to desist from these utterances, both in "Justice" and particularly the capitalist press, since his views on this subject are contrary to the spirit and policy of the SDP."⁶⁸

This resolution had been discussed at a full meeting of the SDP Executive a week before publication, on the 24 July. Although it was not adopted, it became a focal point for the opposition movement to Hyndman and the editorial board of Justice. On 6 August, a number of letters appeared in Justice critical of Hyndman's stand. J.B. Askew led the charge, calling for a 'sharp repudiation on the part of the English Socialist party of Hyndman's letters to The Morning

Post and Justice. They had broken, he argued, all the 'principles of International Socialism, at least as understood and practised by the Socialist parties in the various countries.' While the German Socialists had continued to challenge their Government over naval armaments; Hyndman had employed these arguments to support English chauvinism. He can, Askew concluded, expect 'a more than unpleasant quarter of an hour at the International Congress.'

William B. Morgan, continued in a similar vein, suggesting that Hyndman should follow the dictates of the ISB, which had clearly set forth the policy to be adopted by Socialists in their respective countries. To support his argument, he also, as secretary of the North Islington branch sent in the resolution of Central Hackney, stating that it had also been passed by his own branch.

Hyndman responded by writing in the following week's Justice that branch resolutions could not settle the 'matter of advisability, or otherwise, of this nation possessing a sufficiently strong Navy . . .' In defence of his letter to The Morning Post, he stated that he had written to that 'journal . . . because on this point of the need for a strong Navy, I agree with the "Morning Post." ' He would, therefore, defend that article 'on the platform as well as in print,' irrespective of 'abuse and misrepresentation.' Alluding to Askew's remarks on 'an unpleasant quarter of an hour' at Copenhagen, Hyndman doubted whether he would 'be able to afford the time necessary for so long an absence at such an awkward period of the year.'⁴⁹

Other London branches sent in messages of support for the Central Hackney resolution. On the 13 August Enfield, Brixton and Whitechapel registered their approval for the action taken by Central Hackney. Further resolutions dissociating themselves from Hyndman's naval policy were received from Bethnal Green, St. George's and Finsbury and Camberwell branches. The following month, September,

Hammersmith, Mile End and Walthamstow added their voices to the growing chorus of disapproval of Hyndman's "anti-German policy." On 17 September, Pollokshaws branch of the SDP emerged as the centre of a well-organised anti-Hyndmanite movement in Scotland. Grouped around the personalities of John Maclean and James MacDougall, Pollokshaws branch was to form the basis of a Left opposition to both Hyndman and Central Hackney during the First World War, seeking to commit the Party to an unequivocal endorsement of the Zimmerwald Manifesto.

Opposition to Hyndman had intensified in the two months prior to the Copenhagen Congress of the ISB in September. Following Hyndman's Morning Post article, Justice, in the face of strong opposition, had continued to denounce the German Government; insisting that Germany alone was to blame for the naval arms race. Quoting from an article in Vorwaerts, Justice claimed German Social-Democracy had 'endorsed all that we or Hyndman have said as to the German menace.'⁷⁰

The Vorwaerts article had concentrated on the stalemate reached in the fleet limitation talks between the British and German Governments, concluding that Germany was to blame for the impasse that had settled upon the talks. The German Government by refusing to lay down annually only three warships, had thrown away an opportunity to slow down the naval arms race. Their inability to negotiate the protection of German commerce by securing the abolition of the right of seizure of private merchandise in naval warfare, had betrayed the real nature of German naval construction. By opting to build her own extensive fleet to protect her merchant shipping, Germany had shown that she was 'not building a fleet for defensive purposes. Her aims are imperial.'⁷¹

Justice endorsed these sentiments as proof of Germany's aggressive world policy; while, at the same time 'reserving the right to demur to the abolition of the right of capture of merchant vessels in naval warfare.'⁷² A fortnight later

Rothstein accused Justice of being selective in its treatment of Vorwaerts, and asked the editor why he had not made fuller use of the opinion expressed by their editor on 13 July, to the effect that Hyndman's Morning Post article was more damaging to the Socialist movement than Blatchford's jingoistic pronouncements in The Clarion.⁷³ Although Hyndman had declared his views to be entirely personal Vorwaerts was adamant that such views went further and put Hyndman outside the domain of every and any Socialist Party. Similar sentiments were expressed by the Dutch marxists whose paper the Tribune, called upon English socialists to dissociate themselves from Hyndman's views:

The Marxist Hyndman, just like Blatchford, continues to put forward increased demands for the British navy which is directed against Germany. The SDP is not responsible for these antics of its leader, but it will none the less be compelled to repudiate them with greater energy than it has done before.⁷⁴

Opposition to Hyndman in the SDP increased accordingly. Specifically, issue was taken with Hyndman over the right of capture of private property at sea, and over the preservation of the Right of Asylum in Britain. Rothstein's article had asked why, if war was not a game of chess should Britain feel compelled to 'stop at the right of piracy on the high seas? Why not go back to dum-dum bullets, to the bombardment of hospitals, the shooting of prisoners and the sacking of cities . . .' A similar opinion was expressed by J. Fredk. Green, who in a letter to Justice asked whether a defence of the capture of private property at sea did not prepare the ground for 'a return to the most savage practices of olden times . . .'⁷⁵ Justice retorted: 'The immunity of non-combatants in war time does not extend to their property on land. Why, then, should exception be made in favour of similar property on sea?'⁷⁶

E.C. Fairchild poured scorn on Hyndman's view that the Right of Asylum was guaranteed by the British navy. On the

contrary, he argued, that Right had been menaced by the increased armaments and naval building then dominating British and European power politics; the Right of Asylum, was safeguarded by public opinion, while the predominance of imperialism and the concomitant growth of militarism and naval expenditure threatened those democratic liberties which had hitherto protected the Right of Asylum. Consequently, the SDP needed a clearly defined policy on Imperialism. There was no use in denouncing Imperialism 'at public meetings . . . and then (voting) with Imperialists for the maintenance and increase of those very instruments by which Imperialism reigns whenever it dominates public affairs.' The correct policy which had been adopted by 'all other Socialist parties, since Stuttgart, has been to oppose and vote against all supplies set aside for war and preparations for war.'⁷⁷

J.B. Askew added further weight to the opposition when he too reproached Hyndman for having breached 'the principles of International Socialism.' Within the guidelines laid down at Stuttgart, it was the proper duty of British Socialists to leave to the German party and workers the task of 'checking the aggressive tendencies of the German Government . . . We shall have our hands full enough to check English jingoism.' In supporting the Central Hackney resolution, he called for British Socialists to repudiate Hyndman at the forthcoming International Congress, 'and clear the English party of the stigma of Jingoism and Chauvinism.'⁷⁸

Hyndman was stung by the widespread criticism of his leadership aroused by the Central Hackney resolution. In the September issue of the SDP News the Executive censured the branch for a breach of party convention, and for not informing them of their intention to circularise the London branches. To counteract the loss of support in London the Executive called a conference of London members, 'so that an expression might be given to various points of view.' At the subsequent meeting only three speakers out of the ten -

Zelda Kahan, E.C. Fairchild and J.F. Green had openly criticised Hyndman in the columns of Justice.

The matter, however, was not resolved until the party conference of 1911, when the question of anti-German sentiment within the SDP came to have a direct influence on the question of Socialist Unity. In 1911 the question of unity played a central role in party dynamics. Hyndman, as one historian has pointed out, 'hoped to use the unity campaign as a diversion from the party's internal problems;' while the 'dissidents' hoped to gain in strength 'and mount a further challenge to the Hyndmanites.'⁷⁹ The years 1911 - 1914 witnessed a growing challenge to the older statesmen of the socialist movement, not only in the SDF but also in the ILP, both of which were influenced by the growing strength of Syndicalism in the wider labour movement.

Notes

1. In 1908 as a result of an increase in membership following a significant shift towards Socialist Unity the SDF became the Social-Democratic Party (SDP). In 1912 the name was changed once again to the British Socialist Party (BSP).
2. Justice 6 Jan. 1906.
3. Socialist Annual 1906.
4. ibid.
5. Justice 28 April 1906.
6. Hansard 18 June 1906. 4th Series Vol. 158.
7. Justice 23 June 1906.
8. ibid.
9. ibid. 30 June 1906.
10. Hansard 26 July 1906. 4th Series Vol.6 Justice 28 July 1906.
11. Justice 18 Aug. 1906.
12. Trotsky 1905 (New York 1972). See also Trotsky's article 'Politichkie pisma', Iskra, no. 93, 17 March 1905.
13. See S. Baron Plekhanov (California 1963).
14. The English version of this work is in Lenin, Selected Works (3 Vols., Moscow 1963) pp.485-597.
15. Baruch, Knei-Paz The Social and Political Thought of Leon Trotsky. (Oxford 1979) pp.29-30.
16. For a full account of Parvus's life see Z.A.B. Zeman and W.B. Scharlau, The Merchant of Revolution (1965). See also Heinz Schurer, 'Alexander Helphand-Parvus: Russian Revolutionary and German Patriot', The Russian Review (Oct. 1959), pp.313-31; Trotsky, 'Parvus' in Nashe Slovo 14 Feb. 1915.
17. Justice Jan. 1906.
18. ibid.
19. ibid. 3 Feb. 1907.
20. ibid. 9 March 1907.
21. ibid.
22. See ibid. 18 Aug. 1906.
23. ibid. 30 March 1907. For Axelrod see Abraham Ascher, Pavel Axelrod and the Development of Menshevism (Oxford 1973)
24. Justice 20 April 1907.
25. ibid. 15 June 1907.
26. ibid. 22 June 1907.
27. ibid. 6 July 1907.
28. Th. Rothstein, The Russian Revolution (1907) p.16.
29. Justice 20 July 1907.
30. ibid.
31. ibid.
32. ibid.
33. See the Daily News 1 - 7 June 1907 for police surveillance of Russian delegates to the Fifth Congress of the RSDLP, H.O.45, H.O.144 and MEPO 2 files are surprisingly quiet on this issue.
34. Justice 7 Sept. 1907.
35. Report of the Stuttgart Congress of the Second

International; Militarism and International
Conflicts (1907).

36. ibid.
37. G.D.H. Cole, Socialist Thought. The Second International 1889-1914 Part 1. (1956) p.69.
38. ibid p.75.
39. Justice 7 Sept. 1907.
40. ibid.
41. ibid. 14 Sept. 1907.
42. ibid.
43. ibid. 21 Sept. 1907.
44. ibid. 14 March 1908.
45. Walter Kendall, The Revolutionary Movement in Britain 1900-1921 (1969) p.53.
46. Martin Crick, The History of the Social-Democratic Federation (Keele University Press, 1994) p.232.
47. Justice 5 Sept. 1908.
49. ibid.
50. ibid. (Rothstein's emphasis)
51. ibid. 3 Oct. 1908.
52. ibid. 10 Oct. 1908.
53. ibid. (Rothstein's emphasis)
54. ibid. 3 April 1909.
55. ibid.
56. ibid. 17 April 1909.
57. ibid. 24 April 1909.
58. Crick loc cit.
59. Justice 15 May 1909.
60. The Times especially 29 March-3 April; See also Justice 3 April 1909.
61. Justice 29 May 1909.
62. ibid.
63. ibid. 26 June 1909.
64. ibid. 17 July 1909.
65. J. Smyth and M. Rodgers, 'Peter Petroff and the Socialist Movement in Britain, 1907-1918', in John Slatter (ed.) From The Other Shore. Russian Political Emigrants in Britain, 1880-1917. (1984) p.101.
66. Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, My Diaries Vol.2. 1900-1914. (1920) p.167. Entry for 15 March 1907.
67. Justice 18 June 1910. See also Th. Rothstein Egypt's Ruin (1910).
68. ibid. 30 July 1910.
69. ibid. 13 Aug. 1910.
70. ibid.
71. ibid.
72. ibid.
73. ibid. 27 Aug. 1910.
74. ibid.
75. ibid.
76. ibid.
77. ibid.
78. ibid.
79. Crick op cit. p.234.

Chapter 4. 1911 -1914.

This chapter examines the years 1911-1914, and looks at the opposition to Hyndman over militarism and naval expenditure. It also examines the arguments that were put forward to link industrial with political action, and to achieve the long sought after goal of socialist unity. The role of the SDP/BSP over these years led to widespread criticism that the party was conducting its affairs in an increasingly undemocratic fashion. These years, were characterised both in the industrial and political arenas, by a growing dissatisfaction with the orthodox leadership of the labour movement. Hyndman and Quelch faced increasing opposition in the SDP both for their anti-German views and for their outright rejection of syndicalism; while, the leadership of the ILP was continually criticised for their 'suicidal revisionist policy . . . bartering the soul of a great cause for the off chance of an occasional bare bone.'¹

The activities of the Labour Party proved to be even more disconcerting, resulting in many trade unionists questioning the value of political activity altogether. After 1910 the reduced parliamentary majority of the Liberal Party had left the Liberals dependent on Labour Party support. Rather than turn this to their advantage, the Labour MPs, not wanting to bring 'down the Liberals in a crash which would probably have cost them their own seats, seemed to lose independence altogether.'² According to the Webbs this 'failure of the Parliamentary Labour Party between 1910 and 1914 to strike the imagination of the trade union world led to a certain reaction against political action as such and to a growing doubt among the active spirits as to the value of a Labour Party which did not succeed in taking vigorous independent action, . . .'³

The subsequent spread of syndicalism led to growing demands from a significant section of the rank and file, in both wings of the movement, for a synthesis of industrial

and political action. The role of the emigres in this process was critical in combatting the anti-democratic tendencies of the leadership of the British socialist movement; which sought both to limit the effect of syndicalism on the organised working class, and, in the case of Hyndman and the SDP, control the convergence of the two wings of the labour movement. Three emigres were particularly prominent in this campaign against Hyndman: Rothstein, Zelda Kahan and Petrov. However, the emigres themselves were not immune from charges of anti-democratic activity. Zelda Kahan's election to the National Executive in 1912 led her to define her role on the Executive as giving a lead to the party, even if this meant overthrowing conference decisions; while Petrov argued that the SDP should adopt a political programme binding on all members.

Rothstein's contribution, on the other hand, stood outside direct involvement in the party's internal affairs. From 1906, following his decision not to stand for re-election to the National Executive, Rothstein's activities came to be increasingly dominated by his political journalism. His commitments continued to grow between 1910 and 1914, when alongside his paid work as a sub-editor for the Daily News and as a Manchester Guardian correspondent, he worked as the London correspondent for a number of foreign socialist papers. These included Neue Zeit, the more extreme left-wing Leipziger Volkszeitung, and from 1912 the American International Socialist Review and the Bolshevik daily paper Pravda. Articles from Rothstein also appeared in the New York Call and the International Echo. From 1906-1914 he edited the Socialist Annual, and until its formal closure on 9 April 1913, he continued to write for The Egyptian Standard.[^]

Rothstein had three children: Andrew (1898), Eugene (1902) and Natalia (1904) to whom, according to Andrew Rothstein, he devoted a considerable amount of time. For these reasons any assessment of Rothstein's contribution to the years 1910 - 1914 relies primarily on articles written

by him for Justice, in support of the wider campaign against Hyndman's leadership.

These years, paradoxically in respect of the overwhelming desire for Socialist Unity, were characterised by internal strife. There were two main areas of contention: the role to be played by syndicalism and direct action in the workers' movement, and the opposition of the internationalists towards the nationalism of Hyndman and the 'old guard.'

The drive towards Socialist Unity had got underway in 1909 with Victor Grayson's campaign in the Clarion for a more Socialist policy from the Labour Party. Grayson's campaign coincided with a similar campaign within the ILP for Socialist over Labourite principles; as a consequence a substantial section of the ILP found itself drawn more and more towards the position of the SDP regarding the Labour Party. In 1910 the so-called 'Green Manifesto', Let Us Reform The Labour Party was issued by four members of the National Administrative Council (NAC) calling on the party in Parliament to vote on the merits of each question and not on the basis of support for the Liberals. The signatories all lost their place on the NAC at the ILP conference in the following year, and had to look elsewhere for their political berth. The SDP was encouraged by these developments and having also revived its campaign for Socialist Unity in 1910, reissued their appeal for unity the following year. They were pre-empted, however, by Grayson who had launched his own appeal in the Clarion earlier in the year for the formation of the British Socialist Party.

Both Grayson and the SDP were influenced by the growing spirit of industrial militancy which had begun to dominate industrial relations in 1911. The first moves towards Socialist Unity were initially sympathetic towards syndicalism and industrial unionism. In December of that year the BSP issued a 'Manifesto to Railway Workers' which called on the railway workers to unite with the miners,

transport workers, and seamen, 'to act all together and simultaneously;' which Martin Crick, has pointed out 'seemed to suggest an awakening to the realities of the industrial situation and a move towards the syndicalist idea of a general strike.'⁵

As the inaugural conference of the BSP approached, however, 'the Hyndmanites redoubled their efforts to discredit the syndicalists by raising the spectre of earlier splits in the movement.'⁶ Syndicalism was dismissed as 'A recrudescence of that parasitical Anarchism which infected the Socialist movement in this country some twenty years ago.'⁷ E.C. Fairchild, already prominent in the internationalist opposition to Hyndman, sided with the syndicalists, calling for the synthesis of political and industrial action: 'Let the strike and the vote, the industrial combination and the political party, be as the right arm and the left arm of the human body.'⁸

At the first Conference of the BSP held in Manchester over the weekend of May 25-27th 1912 the executive issued a resolution which sought to reach a compromise between the two conflicting viewpoints. The motion welcomed 'the growing discontent . . . among . . . the working class, as evidenced by the recent strikes of seamen, transport workers, railwaymen, miners and others.' It went on to approve 'the amalgamation, or federation, of existing trade unions and the strengthening of these bodies in every possible way in order to fit themselves more thoroughly for the administration of production in the socialist community.' On political activity it described 'The main function of the Socialist Party' as 'the organisation of an independent political party of the working class, aiming at the conquest of political power by that class, as the political expression of the working class movement, and as a means to its final emancipation.' To avoid misunderstanding, it added, 'the political and industrial organisations of the working class must be complementary to each other.'⁹

When Leonard Hall, however, moved an amendment to reduce 'the organisation of an independent political party of the working class' to being only 'one of the main functions of the Socialist Party', he was immediately attacked by Hyndman and Quelch. Quelch arguing that the organisation of industrial activity was the responsibility of the TUC; while the main task of the Socialist Party was 'to organise the working class politically, . . .' ¹⁰

Although Hall's motion was defeated by 100 votes to 46, the amount of vocal support he received from the conference floor, coupled with the fact that he came second in the ballot for the National Executive, gave an indication of the strength of support the syndicalists could claim. Throughout the remainder of the year controversy between the two sides continued. The debate became increasingly acrimonious with Justice denouncing syndicalism as a rejection of the class war, an effort 'to belittle, hamper and thwart the political organisation and action of the working class.' ¹¹

Support for the Syndicalists came from Theodore Rothstein, who Crick claims, was the 'only' correspondent who 'seemed able to apply a clear revolutionary perspective to the dispute.' ¹² The 'old guard', who had earlier rejected the relevance of the great Russian strike wave of 1905 to Britain, failed to see, the opportunities provided by the present strike movement in Britain for raising class consciousness:

Never mind [wrote Rothstein] that we are a political party and that our object is to fight on behalf of the working class politically; by lending our assistance to the working class in its economic fight, by agitating on behalf of its demands, by attacking its enemies wherever they may be found, we shall be helping to widen the area and deepen the contents of the class war . . . The time is ripe for such new methods of Socialist agitation - they are, indeed imperatively demanded by the needs of the time. ¹³

Rothstein's views, however, had little direct influence

on events. In October the Executive released a Manifesto on 'Political Action and Direct Action' which jettisoned all hopes of any conciliatory tone being adopted by the Executive. The Syndicalists were relegated 'to a lower stage of economic development and working class organisation', on the grounds that they threatened to return the unions to their no politics policy of the second half of the nineteenth century. Socialists who had previously been advised to join trade unions in order to raise the political consciousness of the working class, now found their leaders erring on the side of caution. The success of direct action in agitating the working class had led to fears that Socialists might be corrupted. The BSP cautioned its trade union members from being drawn into sectional disputes 'accompanied by rattening, sabotage, etc., as a definite programme opposed to political action.'¹⁴ To do so, would be to head back the Social Revolution and defeat Socialist aims. Leonard Hall, along with Russell Smart and Conrad Noel, dissociated themselves from the Manifesto, claiming that they had not signed the document and that it had been altered without their knowledge. Hall and Smart resigned from the Executive shortly afterwards and Hall soon left the BSP altogether. They were followed by a number of their supporters, including many unattached Socialists from the Clarion, who had joined the BSP along with Grayson. By the end of 1912, therefore, the BSP, launched earlier in the year to achieve Socialist unity, had succeeded in alienating and losing a considerable section of its initial supporters.

These events coincided with the potentially more damaging split within the party over Hyndman's renewed calls for increased naval armaments, and his renewed warnings of the German "menace." The growing opposition to Hyndman, led by Rothstein and Zelda Kahan, was indicative of a wider malaise in the party stemming from Hyndman's leadership. At the 1911 SDP conference Zelda Kahan had moved a resolution calling for 'the organisation, its Executive, organ, and

individual members to combat, with their utmost energy, the demands for additional armaments . . . and to demand from the Government, . . . the abandonment of all Colonial and financial aggression, and the cessation of any provocative or obstructive policy in its relation with the powers.'¹⁵ This resolution undoubtedly bore the hallmark of a series of articles from Rothstein on 'The German "Menace" ' which had appeared in Justice between 28 January and 15 April 1911. These articles initially directed against Hyndman's letter to the Conservative Morning Post the previous July, had as their main objective the winning of support for the Central Hackney resolution at the forthcoming Easter Conference.¹⁶ Their underlying theme was Britain's cynical manipulation of the European balance of power in support of her dominant world position. Rothstein argued that Britain was unashamedly using the question of her guarantees to the smaller nationalities as a pretext for further British diplomatic moves against Germany. It was Britain, he argued, not Germany, who was responsible for ruthless acts of aggression all over the world:

It would seem . . . in view of the fate of Morocco bartered away to France, of Northern Persia bartered away to Russia, of the Comoro islands permitted to be annexed last year by France, of the South Orkney Islands grabbed by Britain herself at the same time, and last, but not least, of the intrigues now going on with a view to a protectorate in the Persian Gulf and South Eastern Arabia - it would seem, I say, in face of these facts, that comrade Hyndman might with more consistency have appealed, if not to Germany, at least to the peoples of this country to stop the aggressions of the British Government all over the world.¹⁷

The British Empire, Rothstein maintained, was far from a satiated beast, requiring only peace and leisure for digestion. Imperialism was inextricably linked with the capitalist system. It was no more feasible for the British Empire to stop and rest content with what it had got, than it would be for a capitalist undertaking, having reached a

certain degree of prosperity, to cease the expansion of production:

There is as little finality in Empire building - that is, in grabbing new territories and in subjugating new nationalities and races - as in the capitalist process of production, of which it is itself but a counterpart.¹⁹

For this reason, Rothstein argued, Britain had a far worse record against the weaker nationalities than any other Power. In order to stave off criticism and to gain the support of the masses, the British ruling class 'had begun their anti-German campaign. Yet the German threat, he maintained, 'is a mere figment of the imagination; . . . any danger to the peace of Europe emanates from England herself.'¹⁹

The British response to the Balkan Crisis of 1908-9 was put forward, in a later article, as proof of the aggressive nature of British foreign policy. The annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina, while technically an aggressive act, had not threatened the status quo of Europe; yet the British Foreign Office and Press continued to fuel anti-German prejudices by suggesting that Russia had been forced to step back from supporting Serbia during the crisis from fear of a German declaration of war.²⁰ In a further article Rothstein went further, and suggested that Britain was actively seeking an armed conflict with Germany, with the aim of crushing an economic rival. The campaign against Germany waged by the British press had, he said, ' . . . one, and only one purpose -to justify such an increase of armaments as would enable this country one day to attack and to crush her economic rival.'²¹

In his concluding article Rothstein accused Britain of pursuing a foreign policy more suited to the close of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries, than the opening decade of the twentieth. The object of British foreign policy had been to form and to lead a coalition of continental Powers against revolutionary and

Napoleonic France. The European situation, however, had changed significantly since then. France under Napoleon had threatened not only the commercial supremacy of England, but also the political and social order of Europe; consequently, it had been a relatively simple task to mobilise all the reactionary forces of Europe against revolutionary France. This situation did not apply to present-day Germany, who, despite archaic political forms, was still 'the most progressive capitalist country in Europe; and so far from there being any economic and social antagonisms between her and the rest of the Continent, the most intimate financial and commercial co-operation . . . was seen to exist among them. Britain, Rothstein argued, was in real danger of becoming isolated from the continental Powers, who, in the absence of any political conflict among themselves ('. . . as there . . . can . . . be none between capitalist Governments as we know them, whether republican or monarchist . . .') would come to identify Britain and her policy towards her main economic rival as the biggest threat to world peace:

It is, therefore, clear that in the absence of all antagonism between Germany and other continental Powers; . . . in fact, of the closest commercial and financial co-operation between the capitalists of the different countries, England's endeavours to stir up a hatred of Germany and a coalition against her is foredoomed to failure. . . . And what is still more important is, as I have said, that any further pursuit of this policy on the part of England is bound to result in a coalition against her, since not only the Governments, but even the peoples, are beginning to understand that the menace to the world's peace is England, and that all the heavy naval armaments of recent years have been imposed upon them by the British "menace".²²

This isolation from the continental Powers, Rothstein argued, had serious implications for the Socialist movement in Britain. The willingness of Hyndman and others to support the Government's demand for increased naval

expenditure effectively put British Social-Democracy outside the mainstream of the international Socialist movement. The growing isolation of British politics from the continent was becoming fixed.

These articles, along with Hyndman's campaign for a big navy, focused on the wider debate in the SDP on armaments expenditure, that had been dominating the party press since the beginning of 1911. The SDP hoped now to end the impasse and force a resolution of this issue at their forthcoming Annual Conference. It was clear from the wording of the resolution on Armaments and Foreign Policy, that Rothstein's articles were intended to win over support for the Central Hackney resolution put forward by Zelda Kahan.

In response, Quelch moved an amendment at the conference designed to defeat the Central Hackney motion and urge support for the notion of self-defence. He argued that the 'resolution of Central Hackney did not go far enough - they should propose the abolition of armaments'. But, he continued, 'If they believed in national autonomy they must have national defence -and that defence must be adequate or it was useless. . . . Upon our naval supremacy depended our existence as a nation.'²³

The amendment received an equal vote for and against on a show of hands, but on being submitted to a branch vote was carried by 47 votes to 33. This, however, according to Zelda Kahan, did not reflect the true mood of the party. Although the vote in favour of the amendment had been used to demonstrate the strength of the Hyndmanite's position, the organisation of the conference had more or less prevented any serious debate taking place. In a letter to Justice the following week Zelda Kahan gave three reasons why she could not accept the majority decision of the conference. Firstly, while Hyndman had been allowed up to half an hour to respond to her resolution, and Quelch a further twenty minutes, nobody from amongst her supporters had been allowed to speak in favour of the original resolution. Secondly, the Executive had contravened party

rules by not circulating the amendment among the branches prior to the conference. And thirdly, the amendment had been introduced to the conference in such a way as to make the original resolution appear as a vote of no confidence in the Executive. 'This', Kahan argued, 'probably explained at least some of the votes cast in favour of the amendment as well as the abstentions.' If the Executive, she continued, had been serious in their desire to gauge opinion within the Party as regards armaments, then they would have put the Central Hackney resolution to the vote. As it was, the Party still had the right to decide where it stood:

As it is, I maintain that the party has not been given a fair opportunity of definitely stating its opinion on this matter. Those of us who think the matter of great importance, and who value the standing of our Party both at home and abroad, cannot allow things to rest as they are. We must insist on the Party declaring one way or the other at the earliest possible opportunity.²⁴

That same week Herbert Burrows and J.F. Green resigned from the Party over the adoption by Conference of the Executive's amendment. Rothstein writing in Die Neue Zeit on the resignations, summed up the problems facing the minority. To resign en masse would be to deprive those members of any further Socialist activity. The ILP, as perhaps the only alternative, had become little more than 'a confused Liberal opportunist hotch-potch (and could) no longer be regarded as a Socialist organisation.'²⁵ The only means of advance, he argued, was to remain in the party and work for a reversal of the decision at the next Annual Conference.

An opportunity soon presented itself to attack the Hyndmanites and win support for the minority position. The despatch of the German gunboat Panther to Agadir on 26 June 1911 brought international relations to a new crisis point. At a moment when the danger of war between Germany and Britain was a distinct possibility, Justice condemned

Germany's action out of hand:

'German interests scarcely suffice to provide the orthodox pretext for intervention . . . This move . . . is . . . a development of her settled Naval policy.'²⁶

The following week two letters appeared in Justice critical of the anti-German views of its Editor. W.P Coates attacked the paper for its blatant disregard of the International's policy on Imperialism, and Rothstein laid accusations that the Anglo-French entente had been guilty of war-mongering over Morocco.

The International, W.P. Coates argued, had clearly stated that it was the duty of Socialists to combat jingoism in their respective countries, and not single out a particular Imperialism for censure:

We are opposed to Imperialism of any kind, German, English, French, or any other; but German Imperialism is neither worse nor better than French Imperialism; then why should Germany, more than any other country, be everlastingly singled out for attack in an English Socialist paper.²⁷

Rothstein was more forthright, making it clear that French Imperialism did not invite the same degree of criticism as that directed against Germany:

The tearing up of an international treaty by France and her brutal attempt to subjugate a small and independent people - this for the second time within five years - is termed by you an "untoward and ill-advised adventure", with which, of course, you are not "greatly concerned." What, however, is "of much more concern to you is the conviction" (where did you get it from?) that Germany, by sending a gunboat to Agadir, is only pushing her "settled" Naval policy.²⁸

According to Rothstein, British diplomacy had been prepared to use the Moroccan crisis to confront Germany and take Europe to the brink of war. Writing the following month on Lloyd George's Mansion House speech, he remarked that it was only 'the energetic protest . . . of the French

Government . . . and . . . the cool attitude of the German diplomacy' which prevented war in 1911. What was of particular concern was the failure of any effective opposition to come forward and challenge the British Government's hawkish diplomacy. This, Rothstein argued, was a dangerous precedent. The British Government had brought the world to the brink of war four times in the last six years, and was again menacing the world's peace: 'It is England, and England alone, which is the chief menace to the world's peace at present; without any effective opposition England could be plunged into a war within the space of twenty-four hours without anybody offering the slightest resistance to the promoters of the calamity.'²⁹

The object of the new BSP, Rothstein urged, should be the grouping of all the dissident socialist forces together in a co-ordinated campaign against the foreign policy of Grey, under the umbrella of anti-imperialism. According to Zelda Kahan, in her Russian language essay on Rothstein written after his death in 1953, he then brought together the opponents of increased armaments expenditure. Lacking oratorical skills himself, he made arrangements to confront the social-patriots at the first Annual Conference of the BSP under her guidance.³⁰

The debate on armaments was introduced by Quelch whose paper on 'Socialism and Patriotism,' urged on delegates the need for a citizen army and a bigger navy. After an acrimonious debate -in which Quelch was accused of dividing the Party - the motion was approved by 83 votes to 65. This fact, along with the composition of the first National Executive, was an indication of the growing antagonism towards Hyndman and his supporters in the Party. Although Quelch had topped the poll in the elections to the National Executive, Leonard Hall, who had argued the case for Syndicalism at the Conference followed only two votes behind. Of the nine man Executive only three - Quelch, Irving and Fisher - represented the old Hyndmanite wing of the SDP; while Hall and his co-signatory of the Green

Manifesto, Russell Smart, along with E.C Fairchild and Zelda Kahan formed an effective opposition. The remaining two members Ben Tillett and Conrad Noel were closer to these than to the Hyndmanites.³¹

These divisions came to a head in December when a resolution dissociating the Executive from the propaganda for increased naval expenditure, was moved by Zelda Kahan. It was passed by a majority of one, and caused Fisher to offer his resignation from the Executive Committee. He gave as his reasons the absence of Noel and Tillett from the meeting, and the neglect of any attempt to ascertain their votes on such a crucial issue; nor, had any attempt been made to consult the party membership on such an important and potentially divisive question.³²

In a letter to Justice defending her actions, Kahan wrote that to consult absent members from Executive meetings had never been standard practice, and it, therefore, simply hadn't occurred to her. On the question of consulting the membership, however, Kahan exposed herself to further criticism. The Executive, she argued, was there to give 'members a lead on important questions of the day, and Anglo-German relations and the ever-increasing expenditure on armaments was certainly one of the most important of these.'³³ As a result, some branches began to complain of the lack of democracy in the party, and the apparent ease with which the National Executive could overturn Conference decisions.³⁴

Fisher's original letter, however, had attached a more sinister intention to Kahan's actions, expressing fears 'that the general public might equate the BRITISH Socialist Party (Fisher's emphasis) with treason.' The party was following a policy 'largely inspired by comrades alien in blood and race . . .'

The following week a letter appeared complaining of 'alien Socialists' receiving 'more than their fair share of the columns of 'Justice', while it was doubted that 'Miss Kahan had the interests of this country at heart in this

German menace business; every action, every word, of hers breathes hatred of Britain and everything that is British - except its hospitality.'³⁵

Kahan, increasingly irritated by the nature of these attacks upon her, pointed out to her critics that the resolution was 'simply a reaffirmation of the international Socialist position on the subject.'³⁶ The 'old guard', however, past masters of political intrigue, were soon to regain control of the Executive, and overturn Kahan's resolution on armaments. At an Executive meeting on 15 February 1913, in circumstances similar to those in which Kahan's resolution had been passed, the Hyndmanites suspended her resolution by a majority of 3 to 2. Only five members were present when the vote was taken; Hall, Tillet and Noel were absent, while Fairchild did not turn up until after the vote was decided.

An indication of the 'old Guard's capacity for intrigue was the reappearance of Victor Fisher, who, on the grounds that his resignation had not yet been considered, had been personally invited by the Chairman and granted full voting rights. With the vote split between Quelch and Irving on the one side, and Kahan and Smart on the other, Fisher's vote determined the outcome. 'Technically correct, I suppose', commented Zelda Kahan, 'but it seems to me a somewhat curious proceeding.'³⁷

Furious, she resigned from the Executive, and threatened to resign from the party altogether if the matter was either shelved or decided in Hyndman's favour at the forthcoming Annual Conference. Accepting that this would 'seriously damage' unity within the BSP, she cited the policy of the international Social-Democracy on the question of armaments; arguing that those who supported the International would have no alternative but to resign from a party advocating increased expenditure on armaments, or permitting its Chairman and most prominent figure the freedom to do so. For the sake of party unity she gave notice of her willingness 'to drop the whole subject

providing Hyndman and those who think with him pledge themselves to do likewise. I think that the majority of those who think with me on the Armaments question will agree with this policy.'³⁸

The way was open, therefore, for a compromise resolution to be adopted at the Annual Conference in 1913. The disputed Kahan resolution was dropped for a resolution proposed by F. Sedgwick, soon to be the party treasurer, which sought to change the issue from a socialist declaration against militarism, into one of freedom of conscience:

That, as the British Socialist Party is a party of freedom, members are free to hold any opinions they like on subjects apart from socialism, and any member expressing his or her views on such a subject as armaments does so as a private individual and in no way pledges the party to such views.³⁹

Petrov, now delegate for Kentish Town, 'opposed the resolution on the ground that it was totally inadequate. It was not the question of the right of the individual, but of the view of the Party. Socialism was a question of solidarity; but where was the solidarity when the advocacy of armaments increased the chances of war?'⁴⁰

Delegate after delegate rose to oppose Hyndman's views on the navy, although the mood remained conciliatory rather than defiant. F.L. Kehrhahn (Marxian Club), while condemning Hyndman's views on armaments, remarked that 'first and foremost they must have Socialist Unity.' 'He hoped that Hyndman would drop all agitation for an increase of armaments as things were.' Zelda Kahan's speech was even more conciliatory; she 'spoke with great feeling of what Hyndman had done for the Socialist movement . . . She knew he was no Imperialist and no jingo, but his views on armaments made people here and abroad think that he was, and was putting the BSP entirely outside the International.'

Hyndman, realising the strength of the opposition

compromised. For the sake of unity he agreed 'to hold his own view, and not to enter upon a discussion of the question or to raise it in any way that might upset the Party.' Sedgwick's resolution was withdrawn and the following resolution from Hampstead Branch was carried with nine dissentients:

That this Conference congratulates our French and German comrades on their vigorous opposition to the increase of armaments in their respective countries, and pledges the British Socialist Party, as an integral part of the International Socialist Party, bound by the resolutions on war of Stuttgart and Basle, 1912, to pursue the same policy in Great Britain, with the object of checking the growth of all forms of militarism.⁴¹

As a gesture of unity and reconciliation, Kahan and Hyndman shook hands, and the issue was effectively "shelved" for a year; resurfacing later as part of the struggle over the democratic control of Justice. In the meantime, the victory of the internationalists at the 1913 Conference, proved to be nothing more than what Kendall described as 'a formal one.'⁴² At the elections to the National Executive Kahan was defeated by Quelch and Moore Bell in a contest for the London seats; while Hall, Smart and Conrad Noel did not stand for re-election. 'The new executive', Kendall rightly points out, 'was without internationalist representation.'⁴³ However, a more favourable assessment of the internationalist's position, has been argued by Crick:

The result of the armaments debate was inconclusive but, in the long term significant. . . The 1913 Conference marked the first victory for the opposition and the beginning of a radical shift in policy for the BSP, presaging the eventual defeat of the Hyndmanite wing, which seceded in 1916 over the very same issue.⁴⁴

The armament's debate, however, was not the only focus of anti-Hyndmanite feeling at the Conference. Apart from the events leading to the departure from the BSP of Hall and Smart later in the year, opposition also focused upon the

role of the party. Petrov, repeating his earlier contention that the party should determine policy on such issues as armaments, carried a motion calling on delegates to 'lay before the public a consistent definite policy on every important question.'⁴⁵ It was vital, he argued, that the party should have a programme to put before the workers for without one they would achieve nothing. 'It was useless', he wrote, to wait for the majority to become Socialists before anything was done. They would not become Socialists unless something was done.'⁴⁶

Petrov, although defeated on this issue, was supported by John Maclean, who a year later at the 1914 Conference called on all candidates of the party to run on 'the same official election address.'⁴⁷ In seconding the resolution, Petrov advocated the election of a small committee from the conference delegates to frame an election address. Speaking against the resolution Dan Irving outlined the traditionally accepted view in the party that candidates had to be independent and free to run their own election campaigns:

. . . a common programme, so far as national matters were concerned, was one thing, but an election address was a different thing altogether. A candidate's election address must be a personal appeal from the candidate to the particular electors whose votes he was seeking . . . the party should have a programme but it should consist of only two or three main items, the realisation of which would further the realisation of the Socialist ideal. But a programme was not an election address.⁴⁸

Although Irving's resolution was carried by a large majority, the Maclean-Petrov resolution gave further evidence of a growing dissatisfaction with Hyndman's leadership amongst the rank and file. A further indication of that discontent was the resolution moved by Maclean and Petrov concerning the ownership of Justice. Following the death of Harry Quelch on 17 September 1913, the editorial policy of the paper had been determined by the major

shareholders, who were largely synonymous with the 'old guard' grouped around Hyndman. Maclean proposed at the 1914 Conference that the party should assume control of the paper's finances, and its editor made subject to annual election:

That two members of the Executive Committee be empowered, to act as trustees, and that the ownership of 'Justice' be taken in their names, the trustees and editor to be elected annually by a ballot vote of the members.

Petrov, in seconding the resolution, emphasised that the measure was necessary as Justice 'did not always express the opinions of the majority of the members.' In reply, F. Colebrook, the oldest director of the TCP, defended the directors of the company and the new editor of Justice, H.W. Lee, causing the resolution to be defeated by a large majority.⁴⁹ In a subsequent letter to Justice Colebrook outlined the position of the Board of Directors as regards control of the TCP. The Pollokshaws resolution, he argued, was 'inapplicable to the case':

The British Socialist Party is not a trade union. It is not an incorporated company with liability limited by shares (the normal form of trading company), nor with liability limited by guarantee. A trade union can own a journal. . . . for the whole resources of the union are attachable in the last resort for the payment of . . . bills.

There may have been cases in which it was mistily surmised that an incorporate body, like the BSP, was running some journal; but if probing questions had been put it would have undoubtedly been found that the journal in such a case was really run at individual risk and individuals could call the tune.⁵⁰

However, while on the surface this appeared to be a further triumph for the Right; in reality, control of the party had shifted to the Left. The resignation of Lee as secretary of the party, a position he had held for almost thirty years, as Kendall states, 'cost the Hyndman group their direct control of the party machine.'⁵¹ Albert Inkpin, (a member of the Central Hackney branch) who had been

appointed Lee's deputy seven years earlier, succeeded Lee as secretary to the party. Along with his brother Harry he was actively involved in the East London internationalist opposition. As Kendall has pointed out his 'arrival . . . at the head of the party machine was a further indication of the erosion of Hyndman's power.'⁵² However, while Kendall has argued that this opposition developed further during the war years, and provided most of the membership of the Communist Party of Great Britain; he also suggests that this movement was further evidence of the existence of a left-wing group in the British socialist movement, capable of shrugging off the 'sectarian isolation' of its Hyndmanite past.⁵³ The fact that he identifies two strands within the opposition movement at this early stage leads him to over-emphasise the dividing line between the pre- and post-1917 Left. Kendall was correct to identify the anti-war movement as having been 'forged in the pre-war years'; but, in order to emphasise the role of the Comintern in deflecting that Left along a different course, he fails to identify the particular Russian emigre contribution to that movement.⁵⁴ He especially neglects the role of Rothstein, who in the second half of his book comes into prominence as the Comintern's chief agent in Britain, thereby creating the impression that the CPGB was a wholly 'artificial creation.'⁵⁵ Similarly, he neglects Rothstein's role in co-ordinating that opposition, clandestinely, in the period 1914-1917. The clandestine nature of this activity, as Kendall and other historians claim, may have made it easier for Rothstein to operate undercover in the immediate post-revolutionary period, enhancing his status in the party as the spokesman for Comintern; but his status was already guaranteed, owing to his long period of activity as one of the main sources of opposition to Hyndman in the pre-revolutionary period.

Consequently, the following chapter examines the emigre's role not solely in response to changes taking place in the Russian revolutionary movement between 1914 and 1917, as

Kendall and other historians have done; but also takes cognisance of their contribution to the British labour movement, as an integral part of that movement.

Notes.

1. Cited Crick The History of the Social Democratic Federation (Keele University Press 1994). p.235.
2. See Kendall. The Revolutionary Movement in Britain (Lon.1969) p.34.
3. B. and S. Webb, History of Trade Unionism (Lon. 1950) pp.688-9.
4. See fn.43 Chapter 1 above. Also Keith Nield, 'Theodore Rothstein' Dictionary of Labour Biography. Vol.VII. Edited by Joyce Bellamy and John Saville (1984).
5. Crick op cit. p.245.
6. ibid p.246.
7. Justice 27 April 1912.
8. Clarion 26 April 1912.
9. BSP Conference Report 1912.
10. ibid.
11. Justice 19 Oct. 1912.
12. Crick op cit. p.250.
13. Justice 3 Aug. 1912.
14. Justice 2 Nov. 1912.
15. ibid. 22 April 1911.
16. Morning Post 6 July 1910.
17. Justice 11 Feb. 1911.
18. ibid.
19. ibid.
20. ibid. 20 March 1911.
21. ibid. 8 April 1911.
22. ibid. 15 April 1911.
23. ibid. 22 April 1911.
24. ibid. 29 April 1911.
25. Extracts from this article appeared in The Labour Leader 2 June 1911.
26. Justice 8 July 1911.
27. ibid. 15 July 1911.
28. ibid.
29. ibid. 5 Aug. 1911.
30. Zelda Kahan, 'V borbe protiv oportunizma i revizionizma angliiskikh sotsial-demokratov' in Imperializm i borba rabochego klassa (Moscow 1960) p.36.
31. BSP Conference Report 1912.
32. Justice 4 Jan. 1913; Zelda Kahan op cit. p.36.
33. Justice 11 Jan. 1913.
34. ibid. Correspondence 18 Jan.1913.
35. ibid. 11 Jan. 1913.
36. ibid. 18 Jan. 1913.
37. ibid. 15 March 1913.
38. ibid.
39. BSP Conference Report 1913.
40. ibid. See also Justice 17 May 1913.

- 41.ibid.
- 42.Kendall op cit. p. 59.
- 43.ibid.
- 44.Crick op cit. p.253.
- 45.BSP Conference Report 1913.
- 46.ibid.
- 47.BSP Conference Report 1914.
- 48.ibid.
- 49.ibid.
- 50.Justice 23 April 1914.
- 51.Kendall op cit. p. 61.
- 52.ibid.
- 53.ibid.
- 54.ibid. p. 62.
- 55.ibid. p. xii.

Chapter 5 August 1914 - October 1917.

This chapter examines the changes that took place on the British Left from the outbreak of the First World War to the October Revolution. Two main themes are explored: the struggle between the Hyndmanites and the anti-war section in the BSP, culminating in the split between the two factions in Easter 1916; and the response of the BSP to arguments for a new International at Zimmerwald and the events unfolding between February and October 1917.

It follows the activities of four main emigres, Theodore Rothstein, Joe Fineberg, Peter Petrov and Georgii Chicherin.

Rothstein, resigned from the BSP on the outbreak of war, giving as his reasons the BSP's War Manifesto and support for the government's recruitment campaign. However, in the circumstances of the time when Russian political emigres were being threatened with internment under the Defence of the Realm Act (DDRA), Rothstein found it expedient to resign from the Party. Early on in the war, the precise date is difficult to establish, Rothstein secured his position in British society by volunteering for newspaper work in the War office (W.O). The exact nature of Rothstein's W.O. work is difficult to establish, and significant controversy, therefore, surrounds these years. Morton and Tate in their history of The British Labour Movement, 1770 -1920 suggest that Rothstein on resigning from the BSP began immediate steps to bring together a few close associates - H.W. and Albert Inkpin, E.C. Fairchild and Joe Fineberg - in a determined struggle to end Hyndman's control of the BSP National Executive and party organ Justice.¹ This claim is repeated by the Soviet historian N.A. Erofeev, and Andrew Rothstein, in Imperializm i borba rabochego klassa published by the Institute of Academic Sciences, Moscow, in 1960.² None of these writers, however, mention Theodore Rothstein's work

in the W.O. with M.I. 7(d). Moreover, Andrew Rothstein has played down this employment by suggesting that his father was employed by Watergate House and not the W.O., following a request from C.P. Scott who had been asked to recommend suitable people from the staff of the Manchester Guardian.³ There is, however, conflicting evidence concerning the nature and significance of this work. Rex Leeper, an adviser on Russian affairs in the Foreign Office (F.O.), described Rothstein as an important contributor to the bulletin produced by the W.O., the Daily Review of the Foreign Press (DRFP).⁴

Raymond Challinor in his work on the SLP, has portrayed Rothstein as enjoying a comfortable position during the war while other Russian political emigres were either interned or deported. He repeats claims, made by Sylvia Pankhurst and J.T. Walton Newbold, that Rothstein acted as confidential adviser to Lord Balfour on Russian affairs; and writes in support of Kendall's contention, taken verbatim from Maclean, that Rothstein was a 'British Agent.'⁵ John Saville has replied to these accusations in which he draws on a F.O. document produced by Rex Leeper to show that Rothstein's underground activities were not known to M.I. 7(d).⁶ However, Rothstein had in fact struck up some form of working relationship with Leeper, and it was Leeper who was confidential adviser to Lord Balfour (the possible source of Walton-Newbold and Sylvia Pankhurst's suspicions?). This chapter, therefore, also assesses the role of M.I. 7(d), and Rothstein's W.O. employment.

Rothstein's low profile stood in marked contrast to the high profile activities of Georgii Chicherin, that ended with the latter's internment in September 1917. Chicherin, who arrived in Britain from Belgium at the end of August 1914, immediately threw himself into emigre politics. However, he ignored established emigre organisations, and provoked their censure for introducing the sectarian divisions of the continental emigre community into the British Russian community. On his arrival Chicherin

established the Russian Political Prisoners' & Exiles Relief Committee (RPPERC) in opposition to the already established Russian Political Prisoners' Relief Fund (RPPRF), a purely Russian organisation run by the Herzen Circle. The disagreements that followed between Rothstein and Chicherin found expression in Nashe Slovo, and centred upon the feasibility of the BSP Internationalists making an immediate break with the Hyndmanites, and endorsing Zimmerwald. These polemics, in the main, centred upon recent developments in the Scottish labour movement, and concerned the extent to which Scotland was seen to be in Maclean's famous phrase 'in the rapids of revolution', or still working within an inherited Liberal-Radical trade union framework. This chapter examines, among other issues, the conflicting arguments put forward by Rothstein and Chicherin in Nashe Slovo against a backdrop of growing antagonism between Scottish and English Socialists.

A key figure in these events was Peter Petrov. Petrov, who had been imprisoned for his part in the 1905 Revolution, arrived in Scotland in 1907, where he stayed first with John Maclean. Maclean invited Petrov back to Glasgow at the end of 1915 to act as second organiser of the BSP in Scotland following his own arrest for a speech prejudicial to recruiting. Maclean's purpose in sending for Petrov was to prevent the Clyde Workers' Committee (CWC), and particularly Gallacher, from assuming control of the BSP's Scottish organ, Vanguard. The public clash that followed between Gallacher, Muir and Petrov and the separation of Maclean and MacDougall from the industrial struggle on the Clyde, led to a split in the Scottish labour movement between the revolutionary socialism of Maclean and the syndicalism of the CWC. The role played by the London-based National Executive, both before and after the split at the Easter 1916 Conference, encouraged the Socialists grouped around Maclean to adopt an increasingly nationalist stance. The Government's attack on Maclean and those grouped around him, which, ironically, included the

CWC, followed the arrest and internment of Petrov and his German born wife, Irma. Many on the Left in Scotland felt that the Government was feeling its way into repression by launching an attack on the Petrovs to ascertain the state of public opinion in Scotland. It was also felt that the London-based Executive, which before the split was dominated by Hyndman, had played a role in denouncing Petrov to the authorities in an article published in Justice, 'Who and What is Peter Petrov?' Petrov, himself, was convinced that there had been a conspiracy against him owing to his uncompromising support for Zimmerwald. This conspiracy, Petrov maintained in a letter to Chicherin included the opposition grouped around Rothstein.⁹ Dismissing Rothstein and Fineberg as non-Marxists, and as supporters of Hyndman, Petrov questioned their credentials as Internationalists capable of developing a mass movement in opposition to Hyndman, that was anti-war and revolutionary in character. This chapter, therefore, will also examine the role of Petrov on the Clyde; who, along with Chicherin, identified new forms of political organisation emerging in Scotland, dependent on mass forms of organisation built from the bottom up, as opposed to what both men saw as the conspiratorial, cabal-led struggles that had characterised Hyndman's leadership. This style of leadership, they argued, now threatened to continue under Fairchild, the Inkpins and Joe Fineberg, with Rothstein acting sub rosa.

Joe Fineberg, a Russian Jew who had been brought to England by his parents in 1887 at the age of 18 months, was elected to the National Executive in a by-election in October 1915. His election strengthened the hand of the London-based Internationalists on the Executive, which then included Fairchild and Albert Inkpin. His election took place amidst a barrage of anti-Semitic articles appearing in Justice, which heralded the Nation State as the future foundation stone upon which Internationalism could flourish. The cosmopolitan Jew alone, Justice argued,

favoured an Internationalism without national frontiers.⁹

Fineberg's Internationalism was undoubtedly influenced by his support for the Bund and arguments for Jewish autonomy within the Russian State. The Internationalism of the London-based opposition was slow to adopt the implications of the Zimmerwald Manifesto, and continued to recognise the ISB as the legitimate form of the International; their Internationalism called for the rescuing of the ISB from Vandervelde and the Social-Patriots and not for the formation of a new International. The London Internationalists, prior to their official break with Hyndman, understood by a renewal of the International a move towards that autonomy which remained a dominant feature in the thinking of the Bund. National autonomy was to become the dominant force as opposed to the rights of Nation States loosely-grouped within an Internationalist structure. This chapter also examines Fineberg's contribution to this debate, and his part in challenging anti-Semitism in the British labour movement.

On the outbreak of the First World War, opinion among Socialists was divided. While the ILP had taken a staunchly pacifist line; the Labour Party, to which it was affiliated, both supported and participated in the Government from April 1915. The BSP, on the other hand, was riven with dissent against its Executive Committee. A month into the war the Executive issued a statement on 'Recruitment For The European War', which responded favourably to the Government's invitation to 'all political parties to join in a united campaign to secure recruits for service in the European war.'⁹ This statement had been signed by the entire Executive Committee of the Party, including E.C. Fairchild and Albert Inkpin, both members of the Central Hackney branch which had played such a prominent part in the anti-war movement in the years leading up to the outbreak of war. The statement expressed the Party's desire 'to see the prosecution of the war to a speedy and succesful issue.' But also demanded 'adequate

provision be made for the wives and dependents of servicemen, proper rates of pay for recruits and guarantees of employment, or insurance against disablement if and when they return from the war.'¹⁰

The publication of the Recruitment Manifesto caused the opposition to the Hyndmanites to coalesce around a more immediate single issue than the wider question of the war's moral justification. On 24 September three branches - Stepney, Nth. West Ham, and Bow and Bromley - dissociated themselves "from the terms of the manifesto published by the E.C." . Opposition to Hyndman and his supporters was undoubtedly growing and the following week both Pollokshaws and Central Hackney added their 'protests against the E.C.'s recommendation to the party . . . to take part in the general recruiting campaign'; while Tom Quelch, Harry Quelch's son, expressed his agreement with a recent article from John Maclean, that the war must be regarded 'as the crowning triumph of British diplomacy, . . . every move in the great diplomatic game' had been perfected in order 'to suffocate Germany industrially and politically.'¹¹

This controversy within the BSP took on even greater urgency following the resignation from the Executive Committee of Geo. Moore Bell to enlist in the Army. His resignation had been announced on 17 September and nominations for his successor were invited to be at Central Office by Saturday 3 October. On 4 September Justice published a letter from Fred H. Gorle in support of his nomination, in which he expressed his 'complete general agreement with the manifesto just issued by our Executive.' And the following week, Frank Tanner, wrote in support of his nomination, expressing his 'general agreement with the view taken by the Executive regarding the futility of a pacifist or neutral attitude.'¹²

In view of Gorle's and Tanner's nominations, a number of branches and members in the London districts sought an alternative candidate. Joe Fineberg was encouraged to stand, and in a letter supporting his nomination he stated

that his candidature 'simplified' the issues dividing the two sides:

Comrade Gorle's letter in your last number should simplify the issues of the election - at any rate, as far as our two candidatures are concerned. He is in complete general agreement with the Executive's manifesto on recruiting. I am standing as an opponent of the manifesto, because I hold that no provisos or conditions can justify our associating ourselves with those who must be regarded as part authors of the war . . .¹³

Other nominations were put forward. Victor Fisher described his nomination as 'not inappropriate as his friend Moore Bell, then serving in the Army, held the same opinions as himself on the supreme question of the war.'¹⁴ Opposition to the war, he argued, was tantamount to 'treason to the Commonwealth'; and if the BSP became tainted with pro-Germanism, then the British workers would turn away from Socialism.

Justice moved to close down this debate, describing as 'a weak moment' the publication of Gorle's letter, 'not altogether realising that we should be called upon to give the same publicity to other comrades who were candidates for the Executive vacancy.'¹⁵ The remaining candidates, J.G. Butler, J.W. Wilkinson and Peter Petrov were, therefore, denied space in Justice to put forward their views. The crucial factor, however, remained the Recruitment Statement of the BSP, and Fineberg's rejection of it. In fact, so strong was the reaction against the BSP's involvement in recruiting that the Executive Committee issued an official denial that they had ever advocated recruiting, nor had they given instructions to the membership to do so. Nevertheless, letters of protest kept appearing in the Party press. The following week resolutions condemning the Statement on Recruitment came from East Liverpool, Bethnal Green, Tottenham and Plymouth Branches. Resolutions in support of the Statement came from Hyndman's own branch (Central London), Carlisle and Burnley branches. On 22 October the Anderston (Glasgow) branch repudiated the

Manifesto "on account of its ambiguity." '

Opposition to the Hyndmanites was becoming more organised. In the same issue, Justice gave notice of a meeting of 18 metropolitan and suburban branches of the BSP that had passed a resolution on the vote of 15 delegates, calling for "the withdrawal of the Executive's statement on Recruiting." ' The meeting also condemned the war as a capitalist war.

Just who exactly co-ordinated this opposition is hard to establish. Both Albert Inkpin and E.C. Fairchild supported the Executive on recruitment by issuing statements in support of the Executive's disclaimer that they had ever advocated the Party's involvement in recruiting. The Central Hackney branch itself had undergone quite a dramatic change of personnel on the outbreak of war. Theodore Rothstein had resigned from the Party at the beginning of the war; and Zelda Kahan was absent from the Party press, writing instead in The Labour Leader. With the successful election of Joe Fineberg to the Executive, the opposition, however, had become more vocal and more organised. How far Fineberg's status as a Russian-Jewish political emigre affected attitudes towards him in the Party and on the Executive personally is hard to establish; but, following his nomination and subsequent election, there is a feverish debate within the columns of Justice on the issue of "Foreigners And The War."¹⁶

The starting-point for this debate, although it was not meant as such, was a letter from Plekhanov to Justice supporting Russia's involvement in the war. A German victory, he argued, would mean that Russia could only survive as an 'economic vassal' of Germany; a situation that would subject Russia to such 'onerous conditions' as to 'render her further economic evolution terribly difficult.' Russia would then find it almost impossible to overthrow Tsardom as 'economic evolution . . . the basis of social and political evolution' would be denied the revolutionary forces in Russia.'¹⁷

The following week J.F. Green, who spoke with some authority as the former Secretary of the Society of Friends of Russian Freedom (SFRF), expressed his full agreement with Plekhanov, who, in his experience truly represented the views of 'the real Russians ie those of Slav race . . . fighting side by side with Britain and France.' It was 'only for some of the Jews' that pro-German sympathies demanded the defeat of Russia. These pro-German sympathies were shared by the Russo-Jews in emigration, who owed their liberty to Britain's commitment to uphold the Right of Asylum. It was not for these men, to denounce 'the Government for going to war with Germany'; their proper role was to remain silent: 'If they cannot conscientiously support the country which protects them, they might at least preserve a discreet silence.'¹⁸

Green's letter, not surprisingly, provoked a number of protests from Russian Socialists living in Britain. E.J. Zondeleviich, in a letter to Justice expressed his doubts that such a letter could have been 'written by a Socialist to the Editor of the organ of the British Socialist Party, . . . One thing is certain', he continued, '"the long services to the cause of Russian freedom" have utterly failed to disclose to Mr. Green the meaning of the eternal, fateful question which the Russian - not Jewish-Russian, but "real Russian - Radical or Socialist, has to put to himself in every international crisis in which Russia is involved: Will not victory so strengthen the Russian political system based on unlimited despotism as to make it for Russia necessary and inevitable to be drenched in blood again in order to secure some form of tolerable political conditions?''¹⁹

Other letters of protest came from J.B. Askew and H. Lubert who stressed that it would be foolish to expect from people 'who have for decades been inhumanly oppressed by such a country as Russia to have that hatred for Germany which we Englishmen might have.' But it doesn't automatically follow '. . . that they have any ill-feeling

towards England.'²⁰ Le Vin, who had recently submitted an article to Justice supporting Russia's involvement in the war, pointed out to Green that the attitude of Russian-Jewish political emigres, vis a vis Russia and the war, was shared by The Labour Leader, and a good many Liberals and Radicals in Britain: 'The "Labour Leader", and all who share their views on the war, the Russo-Jewish refugees included, have made out a strong case. Their case must be met with argument and criticism, . . . it is hardly decent to turn around and instead of argument fling at them a "shut-up, you foreigner", as Comrade Green does.'²¹ It was further pointed out, by 'A Russian-Jewish Socialist', that within the Socialist movement, itself, there was a great division of opinion' on the war, surely 'Russian Socialists of Jewish origin' should be permitted 'freedom of thought and freedom of expression', in common with other Socialists. The BSP itself was divided, with 15 London Branches condemning the war and holding the governing classes of all the belligerent countries equally responsible. 'May not a Russian-Jewish Socialist', it was asked, 'agree with that resolution without being ungrateful and indecent?'²²

The Hyndmanites on the NEC, however, sought to exploit the anti-Semitism then manifest in British society. Victor Fisher argued that the war had ushered in the 'eternal idea of nationality' based upon an 'age old idealism' that evoked a wider spirit of 'racial life.' It was the Jews alone who lacked 'any strong attachment to European nationality'. The Jews had played a prominent role in the development of Socialist thought in the last decades of the nineteenth century, to the detriment of nationalism within the International Socialist movement. In order to move forward the Socialist International must root itself in Nationality. 'Democracy', Fisher argued, could only 'develop along the lines of national genius - not according to a vague and nebulous cosmopolitanism. The rights of the nation shall be affirmed as sacred as the rights of the

individual. And in the democratisation of the fecund idea of national rights we shall find the mightiest lever for the Social-Democratic transformation.'²³

It was not surprising that Victor Fisher's opinion provoked not merely debate, but strong protest against the anti-Semitic views appearing in Justice. Joe Fineberg sent a lengthy article to Justice which pilloried Fisher for setting-up nationalism as 'some all-powerful, all-pervading system, something immutable and indestructible' that Socialists, owing to the activities of 'false prophets in the form of cosmopolitan exiles and Jews,' had been unable to come to terms with. 'Poor Jew!', he continued, 'Even in Socialist discussions he must fulfil his historical role of scapegoat for the mistakes of others.' Fisher's argument relying upon the Jew as 'disintegrator of nationalism' was weakened by the very history of the Jews: 'If there is a race in the world . . . which is the very embodiment of the nationalist spirit, it is the Jewish race. The Jews could not if they would forget their nationalism. They are the "Chosen People" upon whom is wreaked the impotent hatred and revenge of oppressed peoples against their tyrants. The fact of their nationalism is impressed upon the soul of Jewry in tears and blood.'²⁴

Fisher's argument, Fineberg maintained, had distorted the reality of the situation prior to the onset of war. It was not a case of the International seeking to crush an undying Nationalism; but, rather 'the growth of Internationalism' had been 'cramped by our fostering of Nationalism.' The International had declared against war, while agreeing to the right of national defence. 'We acclaimed the right of autonomy of small nations. We sympathised with the movements for national liberation - Ireland, Poland, India, Egypt, the Balkan States etc. . . . we can support these things now. But on what grounds? That is the question which the International will have to answer in the future. Is it that there is something in Nationalism that is essential to the welfare of the world? Or is it that the infringement of

the rights of nations is an act of tyranny and must be opposed by Socialists?'²⁵ This was the cornerstone of the debate on Internationalism within the BSP on the eve of the District Conferences, demanded by the opposition, to discuss the BSP's position on the war.

This debate had assumed an added dimension owing to the "old guard's" anti-Semitism and Fineberg's recent discussion of the "Jewish Question". Consequently, Fineberg's approach to the present situation within the International was that of a Jewish and British Socialist, influenced by his activities both within British Socialism and the arguments he had extrapolated from the Bund. It was clear that by Nationalism, and in particular Jewish Nationalism, Fineberg meant the attainment of autonomy and the development of particular cultures within the framework of the existing International. He did not, on the other hand, see Nationalism as being determined as much by frontiers as by the experience of opposing oppression from an occupying force. Thus on Jewish Nationalism, Fineberg wrote of the Bund as: 'The most active and successful section of the Russian Social-Democratic movement . . . a completely Jewish organisation, which, while working in close harmony with the main Russian movement for the realisation of its ideals, yet exists independently in order to strive for the attainment of "Jewish autonomy and the development of Jewish culture."' The International was to function in much the same way, with each national section seeking autonomy within that body. Thus when Fineberg spoke of Nationalism in Europe, he spoke of 'the struggles of those nations . . . endeavouring to throw off the yoke of the foreign oppressor', in much the same way as the Jews in the Pale of Russia sought to throw off the yoke of Tsardom. 'To that movement we give our support . . . in order to bring this to a successful issue, simply from a desire to get these matters out of the way.' Once achieved, Nationalism will no longer be of importance, as the leaders of those national States will revert to the oppression 'of

their dearly-beloved countrymen', who, previously, they had fought side by side with for liberty. Only then will the Socialist International reassert itself, and Nationalism peter out.²⁶

Fineberg, by elevating autonomy within the International above the needs of the national socialist parties, therefore, stood in total opposition to those views being defended by the "old guard." As far as he and the growing opposition to Hyndman were concerned, patriotism had prostituted itself by becoming 'not a love of one's country, but a hatred of another's country.'²⁷

Fineberg's attack on Fisher was not merely a defence of the Jews, but was aimed at those elements in the Party convinced that the way ahead lay with a re-constitution of the International centred upon the nation state.

Despite attempts to discredit Fineberg on the grounds that 'the British public is not in a mood, at present to tolerate the interference of foreigners,' the District Conferences proved an unqualified success for the internationalist opposition.²⁸ A resolution was passed condemning the Executive for associating the Party with the Government's recruiting campaign; while a motion, intended to save the Executive's face by calling for a vote of confidence in the action and policy of the Executive, was easily defeated.

The extent to which Hyndman and the BSP Executive had separated themselves from the majority of BSP members on the war was illustrated by two letters from Hyndman to Clemenceau's journal L'Homme Enchaîné, in which he accused the ILP of receiving funds from Germany. Hyndman's letter provoked a response from Longuet, a French Socialist Deputy and supporter of the war, who, writing in L'Humanité deplored Hyndman's 'suggestion "from whence comes the money." ' The ILP, he continued, was more Quaker or Tolstoyan, than Germanophil.'²⁹

There followed a number of protests in the Labour Leader from disaffected BSP branches, angered by what the Kentish

Town Branch referred to as Hyndman's 'insinuation' that the ILP received 'money from unclean sources.'³⁰ Hyndman, it was stressed, did not represent the views of the BSP rank and file; while the Central Hackney branch called on the Executive to 'at once dissociate the BSP from Hyndman's views.'³¹ Unwilling to do so, it was left to the National Organising Committee of the BSP to repudiate Hyndman's comments on the ILP.³²

Further protests followed. The annual general meeting of the Glasgow District Council of the BSP carried a resolution putting on record "its absolute disapproval of H.M. Hyndman's base and blackguardedly insinuations on the ILP in his letter to the French Press, " 'and demanding " that he immediately make a public withdrawal of same." ' They also reiterated calls for the National Executive to "dissociate the Party from such views." '³³

Other protests appeared in The Labour Leader, from Accrington Branch of the BSP and the Paddington Branch, which recognised 'his (Hyndman's) right to express his own opinions, but does not consider him justified in claiming that the majority of Socialists in this country agree with him, especially since the decisions adopted by the recent Divisional Conferences of his own Party.'³⁴

The Hackney ILP expressed 'its disgust at Mr. Hyndman's letters', and called upon the National Administrative Council to request speakers of the Party not to appear on any public platform with him. It also congratulated the rank and file of the BSP on their repudiation of the pro-war policy advocated by Hyndman.³⁵ Pollokshaws' BSP 'expressed its indignation at H.M. Hyndman's attack on the ILP and his suggestion that German money is behind the issue of its pamphlets on the war,' and called for the Executive Committee to dissociate the Party from Hyndman's views; while the Newton Mearns BSP went so far as to call on Hyndman 'to resign from the BSP in the interests of the Party.'³⁶

The Executive Committee in due course issued its defence

of Hyndman, arguing that he was perfectly at liberty to express his own personal views, but declared that Hyndman's opinions must not be regarded as those of the BSP. The Central London branch, however, was more forthright in its defence of Hyndman, congratulating him on his letter to L'Homme Enchaîné and the publicity which he had obtained from the English Press in denouncing 'pro-German intrigues.' Furthermore, in an effort to embarrass Socialists working for the reconstruction of the International, the EC suggested that many of them were susceptible to the 'manoeuvres of German emissaries. . . careful vigilance is particularly necessary at this juncture.'³⁷

These words had an ominous purpose, given the anti-alien propaganda that was then so evident in Justice. The Socialist National Defence Committee, a body formed following the triumph of the opposition at the Divisional Conferences, began to issue statements 'that a handful of pseudo Socialists' were 'breaking the "national solidarity", and that some of them are "alien in birth, blood, or sentiment."' ³⁸ That this was aimed at British-born Jews seemed obvious:

. . . may I enquire who are the aliens in blood? By a process of exhaustion, it cannot apply to Germans or Austrians, nor can it mean Poles or Russians, for they are all alien by birth. The only remaining people, then, who can possibly fulfil the description are British-born Jews.³⁹

Anti-semitism, was becoming a constant theme running through editorials and articles in Justice, so much so, that Fisher was called to task by H. Alexander for introducing 'Jew-baiting' as 'part of the propaganda of patriotism.'⁴⁰ Accusations were renewed in Justice that 'certain Russian Jews, whilst protecting themselves behind the fighting forces of this country, (were) conspiring to undermine that very protection.'⁴¹ Fineberg described such suggestions as 'comical'.⁴² Justice, however, was not alone in issuing such statements, and as a result of similar

accusations appearing in the British press, the Russian emigre community found itself increasingly threatened by hostile elements. In response, a new organisation was formed - albeit outside the emigre community - seeking to establish closer ties between the British and Russian labour movements, and to foster a new internationalist spirit among the British working class. This organisation, the Russian Political Prisoners & Exiles Relief Committee (RPPERC), issued an appeal for funds in The Labour Leader on July 15th, 1915, under the signature of Georgii Chicherin, the future Soviet Commissar for Foreign Affairs.

Chicherin had arrived in Britain from Belgium on the outbreak of war, having spent six years in Berlin and six years in Paris. In Paris he had been closely associated with the views of A.N. Potresov, and the faction grouped around Zaria. Their doctrine opposed both Plekhanov's "social patriotism" and Lenin's "revolutionary defeatism"; arguing instead for a "defensist" policy of not obstructing national defence while continuing the political struggle against Tsarism. On his arrival in England Chicherin sided with those Russian Marxists who argued that Socialists should support the nations most likely to advance the cause of socialism and democracy in Russia. He, therefore, supported the British and French Governments against the "feudal monarchist" remnants of Germany and Austria-Hungary; while, in line with his support for Potresov, he continued to advocate that Russian Socialists work towards the final overthrow of Tsarism. His support for the Allies collapsed in early 1915, and towards the end of the year he began writing articles in Nashe Slovo renouncing "defencism" and advocating internationalism.⁴³ Nashe Slovo, edited initially by Menshevik-Internationalists and Trotsky, and later by Trotsky alone, supported Trotsky's contention that the internationalists should split at once with all non-internationalists. In order to facilitate the conditions

for such a split within the British labour movement, Chicherin now set up the RPPERC. Ostensibly to collect relief funds for Russian political prisoners and exiles, its main purpose was to broaden this body into an ad hoc International supporting the views of Nashe Slovo. Having arrived in Britain with little or no experience of the British labour movement, however, he became very much a one-man organisation outside the Russian emigre community in London. His internationalist views found him in opposition to the BSP, including those emigres opposed to the dominance of Hyndman. Significant ill-feeling developed between Chicherin and other emigres resident in London, who through the Herzen Circle, an inter-party political club for Russian emigres, already operated a broad-based Fund for the relief of Russian prisoners and exiles, in conjunction with the "Vera Figner Fund" in Paris, and the Krakov organisation in Zurich. Writing to Justice on 12 August 1915, the Committee of the Russian Political Prisoners' and Exiles' Fund, (RPPEF) consisting of Fanny Stepniak (hon. treasurer), Th. Rothstein, V. Mitrov, S. Perstovskii and E. Zoondelevich (hon. sec.), issued an appeal for funds, in a manner which censured Chicherin for his sectarian approach to Russian emigre politics. However, despite the fact that Chicherin was a member of the Herzen Circle, he persisted in setting-up a rival fund-raising organisation to the RPPEF with an altogether different political objective. To achieve his internationalist aims, Chicherin, owing to mistrust of the BSP, believed it necessary to by-pass British Socialist groups and to concentrate on the trade unions as the most effective means of spreading Internationalism. Furthermore, disagreements with prominent members of the Herzen Circle whom he accused of taking a "social-patriotic" stance, most notably (and mistakenly) Th. Rothstein and Maxim Litvinov, led him to censure both men along with the Herzen Circle, for failing to unequivocally condemn Russia's involvement in the war.

Chicherin's organisation, however, proved to be the more successful of the two bodies. Throughout the second half of 1915, Chicherin, with the assistance of Philip Snowden, Bertrand Russell and Mrs. Bridges Adams, built up extensive links with trade unionists in Britain. He wrote articles outlining the work of the RPPERC for several trade union journals - the Railway Review, Cotton Factory Times and Yorkshire Factory Times. He promoted the Committee at workplace meetings, on trade councils, at the TUC Congress in Bristol, and in both The Labour Leader and Justice. Writing in Nashe Slovo he described the Committee's work as evidence of a new internationalist spirit amongst British workers. In particular, he wrote of the 'good contacts' being forged in the engineering and munitions industries, most notably in Woolwich, Newcastle, Lancashire and Clydeside. On 8 October, he reported on the setting-up of a Local Committee of the RPPERC at the Woolwich Arsenal in conjunction with the local trades council. 'An important step', he argued, in giving to the Committee, 'the character of a mass movement', and promoting 'international workers' solidarity.'⁴⁴

The success of Chicherin's propaganda in key war industries was noted by the authorities, who began to take action against the Committee. On 22 October members of the Liverpool RPPERC were summoned to the Central Detective office, where they were 'told . . . that the work of the committee and especially the leaflets they had circulated, were exercising a harmful influence upon the British workers', and that they were 'prohibited from having any employment in Liverpool with British workers, unless they signed a statement, pledging themselves never to take part in any Union or Committee that is against the war, against the allied Governments, or against their internal administration, and promised to be in future heart and soul for Great Britain, France and Russia.'⁴⁵

This intimidation of the Liverpool RPPERC had taken place against a background of increasing industrial militancy

amongst munition, engineering and transport workers against industrial compulsion. Rank and file dissatisfaction with the action of their leaders played a prominent part in increasing hostility towards Government policy. Chicherin viewed this militancy as evidence of a growing movement of revolt against the war, and an "important step" towards internationalism. Chicherin followed events unfolding in Scotland closely and argued in Nashe Slovo that militancy in Scotland stood in marked contrast with the reluctance of the BSP opposition to split with Hyndman and the 'old guard.' This led to a serious disagreement with Rothstein and others in the BSP opposition over the nature of industrial militancy in Scotland and its significance for the wider labour movement.

Rothstein's position on the strike movement had been put forward in September 1915 in the Russian language journal Kommunist, intended by Lenin to be a monthly review of the labour movements in the warring nations; edited by Evgenia Bosch and Pyatakov in Geneva, it ran for one issue.

Rothstein had been approached by the editors on the 20 March with a request for a survey of the British labour movement. Here Rothstein argued that the strike movement on the Clyde, although having a 'spontaneity' that promised 'revolutionary explosions', did not go further than a distaste for industrial compulsion. The rank and file movement, which had opposed both the Government and the trade union leadership, could not achieve 'that level of independence' necessary for it to by-pass the union hierarchy in negotiations with employers. The reluctant acceptance of the Munitions Act, and the suppression of the strike movement by arbitration, had demonstrated this fact. The strike movement, he argued, had neither been revolutionary nor international in character; internationalism, he wrote, was 'still a matter for the future.'⁴⁶

Rothstein, working closely with the BSP in London, was unable to attach the same significance to the industrial

unrest in Scotland as Chicherin. Consequently, Rothstein saw developments taking place within the political parties of the left as more significant than what he saw as the unfolding of essentially trade union disputes on the Clyde. The 'spontaneity' that had characterised the strike movement in Scotland could not set in motion 'revolutionary explosions', he argued, without the input of a revolutionary organisation.⁴⁷

A section of the BSP in Scotland, however, remained unconvinced by such arguments. Vanquard, set up in September 1915 as the organ of the Glasgow District Council of the BSP, published an article from Petrov, stating that the situation could be turned to the internationalist's advantage if 'those members of the E.C. who pose as the opposition in the BSP sit down fast on one of the two stools between which they are wavering.' It was impossible, he argued, for the Executive 'to support the manifesto of the Zimmerwald Conference and at the same time Vandervelde, Hyndman and company.' The BSP Scottish branches, he argued, were in support of the tactics being put forward by Nashe Slovo and the Zimmerwaldians to immediately split the Party.⁴⁸

It was these arguments Rothstein dismissed when writing in defence of the BSP Executive in Nashe Slovo. Here Rothstein argued that the tactics of the BSP were not too dissimilar from those of the ILP. Both parties had a majority in favour of internationalism but remained reluctant to demonstrate their support for the International openly. Concern for the 'integrity' of their parties had effectively 'paralysed' the opposition, who now showed a determination to prevent any rupture that might weaken support for their respective parties. There was a substantial minority in the BSP in favour of the war, and to call for an immediate split would only prove counter-productive. The minority, who controlled Justice, were led by Hyndman and the BSP's most popular leaders, there was no guarantee that this minority would not take a considerable

part of the membership with them. Whereas, a more cautious policy, of working within the confines of Party unity was proving successful. At the recent Divisional Conferences the Internationalists had won control of the National Executive, and had secured a majority on the Inter-Party Committee on International Affairs. This dominance had allowed them to nominate a delegate to Zimmerwald, and to effectively marginalise the minority by forcing them to organise their pressure group, the Socialist Committee for National Defence, outside the mainstream of the Party. These successes, Rothstein argued, had been achieved 'without damaging Party unity'; 'mining operations, guerre d'usure,' had proved successful, should they now be 'abandoned . . . for a full-scale assault?'⁴⁹ To argue along these lines would be to go against the prevailing current of British left-wing politics. Similar tactics, he argued, prevailed in the ILP, where although disagreements were not so marked, the question of continued affiliation to the Labour Party threatened to divide the membership. If the ILP spoke out strongly against the war a rupture with the Labour Party would inevitably follow, and this, in turn, would lead to a split within the ILP, and a weakening of its overall position. The leaders had counselled caution, thereby halting the spread of internationalism in the British labour movement. But the British were nothing, Rothstein observed, if not pragmatic: 'between inactivity and issuing an "excessively sharp statement" they know a number of steps remain to be taken, namely the skilful manipulation of politics within the party, right up to the very point where such a split becomes inevitable.'⁵⁰

Chicherin, writing in Nashe Slovo, 'furiously attacked' Rothstein for supporting the BSP leadership, and for failing to urge his 'English comrades' to emulate all that their Scottish comrades had achieved.⁵¹ Accusing the internationalist opposition of the BSP with "Bismarckism", "procrastination", and "boundless opportunism", Chicherin remained convinced that the situation in Scotland was

essentially revolutionary in character. It had only been halted, and prevented from spreading by the lack of courage and supine behaviour of the BSP leadership.⁵²

Rothstein's reply accused Chicherin of failing to fully appreciate the nature of the relationship between the NEC, with its centre in London, and the provinces. London's historical role, he argued, was unlike that of other European capital cities; its support had been essential in securing victory for radical causes, but London had never initiated nor led a popular movement. This situation did not apply to present conditions. Glasgow was neither initiating nor leading a revolutionary situation, waiting upon London to act. Chicherin, he argued, had 'greatly overestimated' the significance of events in Scotland. The workers' opposition, both in Scotland and elsewhere, arose out of 'indignation against the principle of compulsion', and had not spoken out against the war. This may develop in the future, but in its present form the workers' movement in Scotland was still in its 'purely liberal phase.' Chicherin remained ignorant of developments within the BSP. His knowledge of events, Rothstein continued, had been gleaned from the columns of Justice, without an understanding of the struggle going on for control of that paper: 'If he knew of how many sacrifices had been made, both individually and collectively over thirty years, in building and supporting Justice then he would be reluctant to abandon it so lightly.' However, if the BSP finds it has no alternative but to relinquish Justice then plans are already in existence for a new opposition paper. Yet the internationalists within the party had never been stronger, both the Organisational and International Committees are in the hands of the Internationalists, and Fairchild's nomination to Zimmerwald secured. It would be foolish, in such circumstances, for the Fairchilds and the Scottish members on the eve of the forthcoming annual conference to resign. Surely the correct tactic is to strengthen the position of the Internationalists within the Party, and to

solve the question of Justice to their benefit. Chicherin's exhortation to the BSP 'to appeal to the masses, as in Scotland,' is inappropriate: 'London is not Scotland, and Scotland herself is not as Comrade Ornatsky supposes It will take time; when the masses have properly sobered, then Comrade Ornatsky will learn of the success of internationalist propaganda.'⁵³

Chicherin did not reply, although an editorial note expressed the paper's agreement with Chicherin and promised to put Nashe Slovo's views in the near future.⁵⁴ During the six weeks between the appearance of Rothstein's first article on the 7 December 1915 and the publication of his reply to Chicherin on the 9 January 1916, events in Scotland led to a further deterioration of relations between London and Glasgow. The arrest of Peter Petrov under the Defence of the Realm Act in Glasgow, on 22 December, was to have far-reaching repercussions for the labour movements of both Scotland and England, leading to ill-feeling amongst Scottish Socialists, and strained relations between the labour movements of both countries. Petrov's arrest was immediately followed by the publication of an article in Justice on the 23rd asking 'Who and What is Peter Petroff?', which many Socialists believed further encouraged the authorities on the Clyde to investigate Petrov's activities.⁵⁵ Petrov who had earlier attacked Vandervelde for 'demoralising the International,' and the BSP National Executive for its confused and vacillating position regarding Zimmerwald,⁵⁶ had clearly enraged the Executive Committee of the BSP. In issuing their note in Justice on the 23rd, in the middle of Lloyd George's visit to the Clyde, they suggested that Petrov's activities in Glasgow might have more than a 'nuisance' value:

Many of us have known of Peter Petroff for some years, though we have known little about him save that he has usually acted as a disintegrating nuisance. That he places a high value on his knowledge of and services to the Socialist movement we readily admit. He has now been for some weeks on the Clyde. What he is doing there, and what may be his

object, is best known to himself. It is for the representatives of the Glasgow workers to determine what is his status on the Clyde Workers Committee, and to make whatever inquiries concerning him they may deem necessary.⁵⁷

Petrov's appearance on the Clyde, although in response to John Maclean's invitation, was not welcomed by all labour organisations. The CWC, many of whom were members of the BSP or SLP, objected to Maclean's attempts to secure fraternal delegate status for Petrov at CWC meetings, ostensibly to make him safe. Justice's exhortations to the CWC to 'determine' Petrov's 'status' on that body, would have fallen on receptive ears. Gallacher's description of Petrov⁵⁸ and the CWC meeting where Petrov and MacDougall were barred from future meetings has been discussed by a number of historians, who, critical of Gallacher's role on the Clyde, have questioned Gallacher's motives for excluding both men.⁵⁹

The rift between Maclean and the CWC, however, went deeper than many historians of the CWC have hitherto allowed. Kendall's description of the meeting quotes Gallacher only to the effect that the meeting was called to discuss the making of plans to counter the 'dilution of labour.' In doing so Kendall raises the political struggle against the war - as represented by Maclean, Petrov and MacDougall - above the more immediate industrial concerns of the CWC. The fact that John Muir, a member of the SLP and editor of the party organ The Socialist and a supporter of the war-effort, had given the report on the campaign against dilution was an indication of the purely industrial concerns of the CWC. The bitter attack Petrov launched upon Muir and the leadership of the CWC for refusing to deal with the question of the war was bound to provoke a violent response. That it brought forth Gallacher's rancour was not surprising. He accused Petrov of deliberately attempting 'to disrupt the committee' and proposed that he should be barred from future meetings.⁶⁰ MacDougall's intervention on

Petrov's behalf led to his proscription as well. The late arrival of Maclean at the meeting led to a furious row between Maclean and Gallacher, leading to a rift that was never properly healed. Maclean had discussed political tactics with Petrov at his home in Pollokshaws.⁶¹ Consequently, Petrov's intervention at the CWC meeting would have been with Maclean's approval. Petrov had been brought to Glasgow with the specific purpose of preventing 'the local-minded trade union people' from gaining a foothold on The Vanguard. His role in Glasgow politics, therefore, would not have been welcomed by many trade unionists. Diana Miller, Peter Petrov's daughter, gave 'fear' of losing control of The Vanguard, as Maclean's reason for sending for Petrov:

Then in 1916 Maclean expected to be arrested and he sent for my father as someone who had an international outlook, because he feared too much control locally from the local-minded trade union people, among whom he included Willie Gallacher.⁶²

On 3 January Petrov was sentenced to two months imprisonment for contravening the Aliens Restriction Act. He protested against the sentence, lodged an appeal with the High Court, and was released on bail. Protests began to appear condemning Justice for its defamatory article of the 23rd. Given the precarious position of aliens resident in Britain, and the recent debate in Justice on the influence of foreign elements inside the BSP, many Socialists objected, both to the timing and to the content, of the paragraph on Peter Petrov. Chicherin writing as the secretary of the Social-Democratic Labour Party of Russia (Central Bureau of the Groups Abroad), sent a letter to Justice condemning the attack on Petrov and expressing their 'expectation that the Executive of . . . the BSP, will not allow under its name the appearance of such publications,' that threaten the security of Russian political refugees in Britain.⁶³ The Kentish Town Branch passed a resolution calling 'upon the Party Executive to

take action to protect comrades of the Party against an organ which is supposed to be the official organ of the Party." '64 Justice's editorial response was to blame those who had brought Petrov into the Clyde area:

To bring an alien into a district such as the Clyde for the purpose of stirring up opposition to the Munitions Act is simply to play into the hands of the authorities, and to render his position a serious one. We say unhesitatingly that, in times like the present, opposition to the acts of the Government must come from the people of the nation concerned, and not from those of other nationalities, if it is to be effective and above suspicion.⁶⁵

A similar view was put forward by James Morton, Pollokshaws BSP, who regarded John Maclean as chiefly to blame for Petrov's arrest:

McLean tells us that the GDC invited Petroff to Glasgow. But the GDC did not send Petroff to Bowhill in Fife. McLean tells us that he sent him to this prohibited area. It is here the mischief was done. . . Comments have been strong among Socialists at what is now called the one-man movement. . . . For the sake of the Cause it would be best that the Glasgow District Council should take the reins in hand, and not allow any one man to have the power of making such a blunder as the Petroff blunder. I am sorry for comrade Petroff, because it has unsettled him so that he will be suspicious that every agency is directed against aliens.⁶⁶

Morton's comments on Petrov's distrust of individuals and groups outside those of his immediate circle, proved to be prescient. On 16 January Petrov wrote to Chicherin, accusing the London-based opposition on the NEC of being untrustworthy and manipulated by Rothstein, whom he claimed had always been a supporter of Hyndman against the Marxists:

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.⁶⁷

Such accusations have to be seen in the context of Petrov's impending trial and his denunciation by Justice, which he clearly blamed on the entire National Executive of the BSP. According to Andrew Rothstein, Petrov had visited Rothstein 'more than once, before and during the war, . . . at the latter's home (often I was present) . . .'⁶⁸ He must, therefore, have been aware of Rothstein's activities before 1914. In a further letter, Andrew Rothstein has suggested that Petrov's attack on Rothstein and the NEC was in all likelihood determined by his close association with Maclean and McDougall. At this juncture, the internationalist opposition to Hyndman was split between the Scottish advocates of Zimmerwald, and the London supporters of a reconvened ISB. Petrov's suspicions of Rothstein reflected this divide. Andrew Rothstein's comments, on the other hand, provide some insight into the persistence of CPGB differences with Maclean and other Scottish critics of the British Communist Party:

The letter from Petrov to Chicherin makes funny reading. Petrov, reaching this country in 1907, would in any case have been too late to know of TR's "connection with the movement" as a member of the SDF EC from 1901 to 1906, after openly attacking Hyndman over the Boer War issue in 1901. And he obviously knew nothing even as late as the last pre-war years, when TR was inspiring Zelda Coates, Fairchild and others to fight Hyndman's jingoism! . . . That Petrov wrote this sort of thing in 1916, when he had made common cause with Maclean and McDougall, is not surprising.⁶⁹

Petrov, however, had other reasons for these accusations. The day after this letter was written Petrov wrote to Justice replying to the 'disgraceful, low, and stupid attack on me' from that quarter. In this letter Petrov had mentioned that at the same time as his arrest in Fife, raids had been carried out at the offices of the Russian Seamen's Union in Cable Street, and the premises of the Central Bureau of the Foreign Committee of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party. The note in Justice, Petrov

continued, was part of a wider campaign of persecution against Russians living in Britain, who were active in the Labour movement. It was not accidental, he argued, 'that the action of those responsible for "Justice" curiously coincided with the action of the authorities.'⁷⁰ In the same issue of Justice James MacDougall wanted 'to know the real reason for "Justice's volte face" regarding Petrov; which, he suggested, was as mysterious as the original note itself. Was Justice, he suggested, working with the authorities and manipulating the Petrov affair to attack the internationalists on the Clyde:

Formerly Peter was the shady and masterful villain who, for his own private ends, was leading the Clyde workers by the nose, now he is transformed into an innocent and helpless alien entrapped into a dangerous situation by us, wicked and thoughtless, Glasgow Socialists.

It would indeed be interesting to know the real reason for "Justice's" volte face."⁷¹

Clearly, harassment of the Russian political community, with or without the connivance of elements inside the British Labour movement, was beginning to be stepped up. In connection with the attack on the Russian Seamen's Union, four police raids had taken place, under a search warrant from the military authorities. On 20 December 1915 raids were launched on the private residences of the Union's secretary, Anitchkine, and those of Chicherin the Sec. of the RPPERC. In the wake of the Government's attack on the Russian Seamen's Union, Anitchkine had issued an 'Open Letter to British Trade Unionists', appealing for assistance in the name of 'justice and Labour solidarity'. On the evening of 5 January parcels containing copies of this letter, which Mrs. Bridges Adams had arranged to distribute to delegates at the Labour Party Conference on the sixth, were seized by police officers, along with leaflets issued by the RPPERC. A further incident involved Maiskii who had been invited to address a meeting of the Southampton ILP, and was then advised by wire on the eve of

the meeting that he would be arrested on his arrival in Southampton. All of these incidents, along with the imprisonment of Petrov, pointed to a concerted attack upon civil liberties in Britain, which a number of contemporaries felt was in preparation for the imposition of conscription. In Scotland, the case of Petrov was seen as a litmus test carried out by the authorities, for a series of arrests across the Clyde, effectively closing down all opposition to the Munitions Act and muting internationalist opposition to the war. The boisterous reception afforded to Lloyd George during his stay on the Clyde, and the reporting of the disastrous Christmas Day meeting in the Socialist press, had led to the suppression of four working-class newspapers in Scotland and the closing down of public and private halls to Socialist organisations, while threatening with prosecution anyone attempting to hold meetings in the open air. Having closed down the right of free speech and impugned the freedom of the Press the Government then turned its attention to the liberty of the person - Petrov's internment was the prelude for further arrests:

Having got their hands in, so to speak, without any great howling over the fate of an alien, the arrest of three members of the Clyde Workers' Committee and John Maclean, M.A., followed in quick succession. The three men arrested in connection with the "Worker" were Walter Bell, publisher, John W. Muir, editor, and William Gallacher, chairman of the CWC. They have been arrested on a charge of sedition, and allowed out on bail of £50 each. John Maclean was arrested by the police, acting on behalf of the military authorities, under the Defence of the Realm Act. He has since been given the choice of being tried by the military authorities or by the civil authority. Choosing the latter he has been taken before the Sheriff and bail fixed at £100.^{7e}

Petrov's arrest was reported in Nashe Slovo on the 11 February. Two days later an article appeared from Chicherin censuring Rothstein and Litvinov for their work with the

Russian Political Prisoners Fund, and for their activities in the Herzen Circle. Chicherin repeated claims that the Fund was taking up a 'defencist' position; and that statements issued by the Fund, under the signatures of Rothstein and Litvinov, were conciliatory towards the Tsarist regime. Nine days later, on the 22nd, Chicherin reported on the internment of Petrov, and questioned the role of Rothstein in defending the BSP Executive. Chicherin was convinced that Petrov's arrest had been the result of a conspiracy orchestrated by the Socialist Committee for National Defence, whose membership, he wrongly concluded, had permeated all sections of the BSP, including its central institutions. While not blaming Rothstein directly for the actions of the BSP National Executive, Chicherin criticised Rothstein for supporting the 'half-hearted "opposition" ' on the Executive, who had made themselves conspicuous, not by their success, but by their failure to condemn Justice for their denouncement of Petrov.⁷³

Rothstein's position in the BSP was, however, by no means as secure as Chicherin's accusations would suggest. On the outbreak of war, Rothstein had resigned from the BSP to reduce the risks of his internment, while taking 'active steps to bring the most determined of its members together on a platform of struggle against the war.'⁷⁴ This, by its very nature, would have pitted Rothstein against the National Executive. Andrew Rothstein writing on these activities described Rothstein meeting regularly during the autumn and winter of 1914/1915 with the brothers Albert and Harry Inkpin, Joe Fineberg, E.C. Fairchild and others to discuss the growing opposition to the Executive in the branches. In this respect Petrov was right about the involvement of Rothstein in the London-based opposition, but he was wrong about Rothstein's support for the Hyndmanites on the National Executive. Chicherin, unaware of Rothstein's 'unpublicised' activities, was similarly impolitic when he accused Rothstein of supporting the opportunism of the internationalists outside Scotland,

their refusal to split the Party, and their failure to condemn an Executive that had denounced Petrov. Chicherin's articles did, however, win the approval of Lenin. In an article intended for publication in the Bolshevik journal, Sozial-Demokrat, he recorded his full agreement with Chicherin, that it was time for a split in the BSP too.' He further 'disagreed with Theodore Rothstein for adopting a "Kautskian position" i.e. no split.'⁷⁵ Lenin's article, written sometime between February and April 1916, was never published until after his death. Instead he was welcoming the split a few months later (September-October).

A critical event in the preparations for such a split was the issue of The Call by the London-based internationalist opposition on 24 February. Since the closure of The Vanguard and other socialist newspapers in Scotland the internationalists had lacked any 'publicised' outlet for their views.⁷⁶ The centre of the internationalist opposition now switched to London, where a campaign to split the party was planned in the houses of Rothstein and the Inkpins. Accordingly, their views on the reconstruction of the ISB came to form the basis of the party's policy on the international.

The first issue of The Call effectively highlighted the enormous gap separating the London opposition from those who had supported the Vanguard on this issue:

Whilst giving friendly aid to the efforts of the Berne International Socialist Commission, the outcome of the initiative displayed by our Italian comrades, and to every similar endeavour, we shall demand that the International Socialist Bureau act immediately and with the utmost vigour in reconciling the workers now in conflict.⁷⁷

The London-based internationalists in fact gave less emphasis to the differences defining the ISB and the Zimmerwaldians, than Petrov, MacDougall and Maclean. While the latter thought internationally the immediate concern of the London-based internationalists was internal; underpinning their concerns over Zimmerwald and the ISB was

the struggle taking place in the London branches between the internationalists and social-chauvinists for the control of Justice. A key issue in the struggle was the adverse impression being created, both at home and abroad, by articles in Justice which ran contrary to the decisions of the Divisional Conferences held in February 1915.

That the case of Petrov had damaged the reputation of the BSP abroad, particularly in the eyes of Nashe Slovo, had undoubtedly galvanised the internationalist opposition on the National Executive. This encouraged them, through the National Organisation Committee, to publish a condemnation of Justice's note concerning Petrov in Nashe Slovo.⁷⁸ Despite Chicherin's questioning of the sincerity of this act, owing to the fact that it was printed in Nashe Slovo and not in an English newspaper, The Call in its first edition issued a statement 'dissociating the Party' from the recent attack made on Petrov in Justice. On the eve of the party conference Justice not wishing to be seen as out of touch with the views of the party at large, published an Executive Committee resolution protesting 'against the unjustifiable internment of Peter Petroff', and the arrest of Petrov's wife Irma, as an enemy alien.⁷⁹

However, while the case of the Petrovs was undoubtedly a cause of much ill-feeling between the social-chauvinists and the internationalists on the national Executive, a more immediate cause, was the split between the national sections of the ISB and the International Socialism of Zimmerwald. In a recent poll of the party a large majority had endorsed the action of the Executive in approving the Zimmerwald Conference, and its appointment of a corresponding secretary to the Berne Committee. The Central branch called upon the forthcoming Conference to repudiate its decision, and to dissociate itself from the Zimmerwald programme. The reasons given were the British and French Governments objections to a Conference that would prove 'likely to forward the interests of Germany;' that the French Socialist Party had disapproved of Zimmerwald by

9,947 votes against 545, similar reservations had been expressed by the Belgian 'and other Socialist comrades'; while participation could only be interpreted as an act of disloyalty to the ISB.⁸⁰

In reply the internationalists pointed to the ISB's failure to carry out the decisions of the International Socialist Congresses, which had clearly defined its duties in the event of war.

The battle lines were drawn and both sides confidently expected a split. The wider question concerned the fate of the Party newspaper. The social-chauvinists did not expect to win the vote censuring Zimmerwald, and were quite prepared to leave the Party in order to retain control of Justice. Fairchild had exposed their intentions in the previous issue of The Call:

. . . the Editor and Directors know that the Party organ, "Justice", now gains support it may not receive when the present absence of control is generally understood, and they fear the discussion, because if the Conference votes for control and for peace they intend an act of usurpation by the definite severance from the British Socialist Party.⁸¹

As the Conference drew closer it was becoming clear to Rothstein that in order to prove effective the BSP would have to sever its ties with the International Socialist Bureau, and 'form a new ISB.'⁸² Fairchild, however, remained attached to the ISB, and in an editorial in The Call on the 6 April 1916 had expressed the paper's support for the ISB, and announced its intention 'to resist every attempt to supersede the International Bureau.' Rothstein, writing as John Bryan, now advocated a position on the ISB reminiscent of Petrov's Vanguard article:

Dear Comrade,-Your pronouncement in last week's Call: "We have no desire, and shall resist every attempt to supersede the International Bureau", is not one which I, for one, should care to let pass without challenge. Surely, there are "limits to human endurance"? If the ISB is to be held in captivity by certain Ministers of France

and Belgium as a hostage for the good behaviour of the International, surely The Call and the BSP are not going to resist its supersession?⁸²

It was a measure of the changed circumstances in the party, that Rothstein could employ the same language as Petrov, and avoid censure. It also gave an indication that the split amongst the internationalists of the BSP was no longer one between the Zimmerwaldians represented by Maclean, MacDougall and Petrov and the Second Internationalists represented by Rothstein, Fairchild, Fineberg and the Inkpins; but was now one between the Zimmerwaldians - which included Rothstein - and Fairchild. Differences were beginning to emerge within the close knit group of London-based socialists who had come forward as an alternative leadership to Hyndman. Rothstein's article also gave an indication of the expediency of writing under a pseudonym as an English socialist.

From the setting-up of Military Operations 7 in the late spring 1915, Rothstein had increased his personal security by accepting work first under the Home Office, and later nominally under the general supervision of the War Office with M.I.7(d) (Watergate House) as a translator of the foreign press. How Rothstein reconciled such work with his internationalism, presumably rested on his fear of internment, it would be interesting to know, however, how many of Rothstein's immediate comrades in the BSP, and in the emigre community, knew of this employment. Willie Gallacher in his Last Memoirs speaks of this employment as being of a non-political nature and generally known to comrades. However, Gallacher's views were undoubtedly linked with his disagreements with Maclean, who later spoke of his suspicions of Rothstein when he refused his offer in 1919 of full-time employment with 'Hands Off Russia'.⁸⁴ There is no evidence to suggest that Gallacher was right. Similarly, there is no evidence to suggest that some of the wilder claims made against Rothstein by Sylvia Pankhurst and J.T. Walton-Newbold, and repeated by Kendall and

others, that he was acting as 'confidential adviser for Balfour' are true.⁸⁵ Andrew Rothstein, in a letter to myself, while not offering an insight into how many comrades knew of this employment, has suggested that by gaining 'a far wider access to foreign press opinions and events abroad than he had ever had before,' his father was in a position to inform his anti-war work.⁸⁶ Owing to the controversial nature of this work, it is important to establish just exactly what M.I.7(d) comprised. A War Office memo. gave the following description of M.I.7(d):

The duties of Military Operations 7 in the early months of the war consisted of the censorship of Press cables and articles of a military nature, the transmission to the Directors of the Press Bureau of the decision of the General Staff and the issue to the Press, through the Bureau of War Office communiques and of prohibitory notices suggested by the General Staff or by the Secretary.

In Janry., 1916, a re-organisation of the Imperial General Staff took place . . . M.O.7 became M.I.7 . . . Later another subsection, known as M.I.7 (d), was constituted to deal exclusively with the study of the foreign Press and the production of the Daily Review of the Foreign Press, which is a digest of important information, military, naval, political or economic, collected by the readers of the foreign Press.⁸⁷

The precise date when Rothstein joined the Daily Review of the Foreign Press (DRFP) is hard to establish. A further W.O. memo. talks of the DRFP as being 'undertaken hurriedly towards the end of the first year of the War.'⁸⁸ Andrew Rothstein writes of his father being seconded to this work:

TR didn't apply for this work. To the best of my knowledge, the authorities in some panic applied to the newspapers for any translators they could recommend, and Scott, for whom TR had been doing just such translations in the form of articles on foreign affairs, asked him to take on this work. . . As regards why they used him at all, I should say they were certainly badly off for translators, and probably (Rothstein's emphases) decided to overlook anything else. In wartime people do that: in

the second world war the Soviet Govnt. admitted a declared former British head of espionage in Russia as an official!⁸⁹

However, in a F.O. memo. dated the 29 October 1918 when Rothstein's deportation was first under discussion, Rex Leeper in charge of the Russian Department, talks of first making Rothstein's 'acquaintance in 1915 when he was reading Russian and German papers in the small office that had been set up by Mr. Muir and was at that time under the Home office.'⁹⁰ That Rothstein had joined M.O.7 from the outset and that he was a useful member of this department and not simply a 'seconded journalist, doing precis-work on foreign newspapers. . . .',⁹¹ becomes clear from this document:

When the reading of the foreign press was transferred to M.I.7D. at Watergate House, Mr. Rothstein became a member of the War Office Staff and has remained there ever since. Mr. Reynolds of M.I.7D. tells me privately that Mr. Rothstein has always co-operated very loyally and that it would be impossible to replace him owing to his extraordinarily wide knowledge of the Socialist movement in every European country. I know him very well personally and, in spite of violent disagreements on political questions, I have never been aware of any active steps taken by him against this country. He has often been accused to me of pro-Germanism, but he has always in conversation with me, expressed himself as the most bitter enemy of all that we are fighting against in Germany. His pro-Germanism only amounts to close association with and interest in the Socialist Movement in Germany before the war.⁹²

Rothstein, therefore, was an invaluable member of M.I.7(d). And contrary to the claims of Hyndman and others he was not dismissed from this post in 1917.

M.I.7(d), in fact, made a useful contribution to the war effort. It was under the 'general direction of the Director of Special Intelligence', and its brief was 'to read the foreign press and to produce Daily Extracts of military importance.' The staff consisted 'at first of one junior

officer and a small number of readers who were for the most part officials in other Government offices, or volunteers (my emphasis) who wished for war work and were acquainted with languages and political and economic affairs. The papers were sent to these readers and the extracts which they marked and annotated, were translated and edited in the War Office, and then printed and circulated to the General Staff and to General Headquarters, France.^{'93}

The War Office memo continues:

In October it was decided, in order to meet the wishes of the foreign sections of the General Staff, to collect also information as to the political and economic conditions of the enemy. . .

It became increasingly evident that much information might be extracted from the press which would be of value in other directions. . .

In . . . June 1916, the publication assumed its final title of The Daily Review of the Foreign Press.^{'94}

Rothstein, therefore, played, if not a key role, certainly an important role in the collecting and dissemination of information gleaned from the Russian and German Press for Military Intelligence. In order to continue his socialist and anti-war work, he by necessity had to work sub rosa. Hence the employment of two pseudonyms, John Bryan and WAMM, when writing for The Call.^{'95} Rex Leeper's statement in the F.O. memo. written in 1918, that he had never been aware of any active steps taken by him (Rothstein) against this country would suggest that Rothstein managed to operate successfully in this way.^{'96} What of course his W.O. employment gave him access to, which proved to be of significance after the Russian Revolutions, was contact with Foreign Office officials - notably Rex Leeper and Bruce Lockhart - both of whom he met, along with Litvinov, in cafes in London. This will be discussed further in the next chapter. However, there still remains three important questions to be answered. How Rothstein came to be recruited? What were his precise

motives in seeking this employment? And who in the socialist movement and emigre community knew of this work? It is likely that C.P. Scott had some involvement in his recruitment, but it is doubtful that he was seconded. As the W.O. memorandum quoted from above pointed out, readers were 'volunteers' wishing for war work. Rothstein's motive was clearly to avoid internment; it is interesting to note that his application was successful, while an application from Litvinov was rejected.⁹⁷ Litvinov worked closely with Rothstein, and would have been aware of Rothstein's employment in the War Office, although there is little evidence to suggest that many more knew. Litvinov, himself, was on very good terms with Leeper. During the first years of the war Litvinov had taught Russian in Berlitz schools in both London and Rotterdam. It was in this capacity that Litvinov had met Leeper and, along with Rothstein, tutored him in Russian. It was Leeper, not Rothstein, who advised Balfour on Russian affairs. It was through Leeper that Litvinov secured a job with the Purchasing Commission of the Russian Delegation in London, 'where he was soon considered one of their most faithful employees. In this way considerable information of value was transmitted direct to the Bolshevik Party.'⁹⁸ It was also through Leeper that Litvinov met his wife Ivy Low, he arranged for the two to meet at a literary party in Bloomsbury, and not long afterwards in 1916 witnessed their marriage.⁹⁹

This is of interest, as it shows the establishment figures both Rothstein and Litvinov were able to cultivate. Ivy Low's father worked closely with H.G. Wells on the Educational Times while her uncle, Sir Sidney Low, enjoyed the friendship of Curzon, who was to play an important role in determining the nature of Anglo-Soviet relations in 1920; and Lord Milner, who was to play a prominent part in the war of intervention. The question this raises, and which will be discussed further in the next chapter, is how far the foreign policy needs of the new Communist regime in Russia vis a vis London, made use of Rothstein's and

Litvinov's official contacts, influencing both the Communist Unity negotiations in Britain, and determining the activities of Litvinov and Rothstein after the October Revolution; and, indeed, to what extent did the F.O. rely upon Litvinov and Rothstein to verify reports coming from Lockhart, Sidney Reilly and others in Moscow, through Rex Leeper in London?

However, as far as Rothstein was personally concerned, in the atmosphere that prevailed throughout the war, which witnessed the virtual ending of the Right of Asylum, his employment by the War Office secured his freedom for the period 1914-1918, allowing him to play a prominent role in the anti-war and socialist movement. A flavour of the times can be gleaned from an article in The Call three days before the final BSP Conference, where a protest was raised against attacks on foreign members of the BSP in the jingo Press over the signatures of Victor Fisher and Adolphe Smith (A.S. Headingley) accusing 'members of foreign origin' of ' "acting under instructions from Berlin." '100

The Annual Conference of the BSP that was held in Manchester, Easter 1916, was an acrimonious affair. Twenty-two Hyndmanites, representing 18 of the 91 branches walked out of the Conference to form the National Socialist Advisory Committee with headquarters in the premises of the Twentieth Century Press at Clerkenwell Green. In the branch ballot for the election of a new Executive, which had taken place in the weeks before the Conference, the victory of the internationalists was complete. Among those elected were John Maclean, - who in the week before the Conference was sentenced to three years imprisonment for sedition - E.C. Fairchild, and Joe Fineberg. A Kentish Town resolution endorsed the action of those members of the executive who voted for a delegate to the Zimmerwald Conference, and condemned the Government for its refusal to grant a passport. It welcomed the 'magnificent manifesto' issued by the Conference, and instructed the Executive Committee to support the Berne Commission in its endeavour to bring

about a renewal of international relations between socialists of all the belligerent countries. A Central London resolution sought to dissociate the BSP from the Zimmerwald Conference and the Berne Commission. The Kentish Town resolution was carried by 77 votes to 6; the Central London resolution was defeated by 7 to 77.

There remained the problem of Justice. A Pollokshaws resolution to establish a new party organ was withdrawn, interestingly, in favour of a Central Hackney resolution instructing the Executive Committee to acquire effective control over the policy of Justice, and carried by 73 votes to 4. The Central Hackney branch whose members had been instrumental in setting-up The Call, still saw Justice as the party's rightful newspaper. The issue wasn't settled until 24 May when Fairchild, the BSP's sole representative on the Board of the Twentieth Century Press (1912) Ltd., was forced to stand down. The Call then became the official organ of the BSP to be issued weekly. The management of the paper, and its editorial policy, was to reflect party decisions and be accountable to members:

The control of The Call will be in the hands of the party, through its Executive Committee, . . . Whilst the free expression of individual views and opinions in signed articles will be welcomed and solicited, the editorial policy of The Call will be conducted by a Committee directly responsible to the BSP Executive. It will thus at all times reflect the considered decisions of the party and be subject to the ultimate control of the members through their delegates at the Annual Conference.¹⁰¹ (The Call's emphasis).

These guiding principles for the management of The Call, assume greater significance, when set against the Pollokshaws resolution for the formation of a new party newspaper to oppose Justice. A section of the opposition to Hyndman in Scotland, that had until recently focused its campaign upon The Vanguard, remained mistrustful of the London-based opposition. Indeed, in many respects, the two

groups were regarded by those around Maclean as manifestations of the same beast, with several Scottish branches fearing the continuation of an established SDF-SDP-BSP leadership tradition located in London, whether Justice continued as the party organ or not. There was ample justification for Scottish fears. Of the 22 delegates who had walked out of the BSP Conference, no less than nine were London men only nominally representing the provincial branches they attempted to take with them. Now The Call - the outcome of meetings between Fairchild, Rothstein, Fineberg and the Inkpins, in the privacy of their London homes - threatened to continue that tradition. There is no evidence to suggest that BSP members, either in England or Scotland, were consulted on the formation of The Call, and they were, consequently, presented with the editorship of Fairchild as a fait accompli:

A circular letter has been issued to the branches and members of the British Socialist Party announcing that a new fortnightly journal, entitled "The Call," is to be published to-day (Thursday). The circular has been sent out by E.C. Fairchild, who states that this step has been decided upon by a "few members holding Internationalist views."¹⁰²

Differences soon emerged between the new Executive of the BSP and a significant minority of socialists in Scotland, over the campaign to secure John Maclean's release. The first signs of disagreement could be found in the pre-Conference edition of The Call.

The immediate response from Scotland to the three year prison sentence passed on John Maclean was to repeat calls 'for the BSP . . . to get down off the fence and declare definitely for International Social-Democracy.' The savagery of Maclean's sentence had made it apparent that 'only a strict adherence to the solid principle of international working-class solidarity' could 'save the workers from the dire consequences of war.'¹⁰³ While a campaign was launched to secure Maclean's release, it was

not co-ordinated. The Executive Board of the Fife and Kinross Miners' Association had reportedly called on the British Federation to "down tools" if the sentence was not quashed, securing the support of the South Wales region. The Glasgow District Council of the BSP issued its own independent appeal for funds for Maclean's family; while the BSP National Executive was considering a petition against the sentence. Maclean, himself, called for branches to send resolutions of protest to the Secretary of State for Scotland, demanding that he be treated as a political prisoner.¹⁰⁶ The unco-ordinated nature of this campaign reflected not only the break up of the labour movement in Scotland, as a result of government repression, but also its growing separation from the labour movement in the rest of Britain. Under such conditions a section of the Scottish labour movement, while still promoting Zimmerwald, began to be drawn towards arguments for an independent status for Scotland. The response to the Easter Rising in Dublin was beginning to promote this trend, particularly among the large number of Irish people in Scottish labour organisations. It was ironic, therefore, that just as the BSP had unequivocally endorsed the Zimmerwald Manifesto, its mishandling of the agitation for the release of Maclean, and the anti-democratic origins of The Call, were beginning to exacerbate differences between sections of the Scottish and English labour movements, again loosely-based on the premises of Zimmerwald. An indication of how far the BSP in London now differed in its opinions about nationalism and the rights of small nationalities from a growing body of opinion in both Scotland and Ireland, can be discerned from an article from Rothstein (John Bryan) in The Call, which denied both the feasibility and the desirability of small Nation States within the global economy in accordance with the principles outlined at the second Zimmerwald Conference.¹⁰⁵

In Scotland accusations now began to appear charging The Call, the BSP leadership, and the Glasgow District Council

of the BSP, with cynically undermining attempts to develop a mass movement to demand Maclean's release, which had taken on a nationalist character. Critics of the newly-formed Executive Committee were denied space for their views in The Call, giving added weight to Pollokshaw's fears that The Call was merely Justice in an internationalist's guise. Most of the information concerning the agitation to secure Maclean's release, given the closure of The Vanguard, was collected in Nashe Slovo. On the 11 July Chicherin, writing under the pseudonym Ornatsky, published an article with the title 'Manoeuvres Against the Agitation for the Release of Com. Maclean', in which he made the claim that 'unseen hands' were 'hindering the agitation for Comrade Maclean's release.' The immediate cause for these suspicions was an article in the Daily Herald on the 24 June that Scottish comrades 'have decided not to put forward the petition concerning the release of John Maclean until the moment of the war's conclusion. Therefore the petition forms will not be circulated in the future.'¹⁰⁶

Chicherin wrote that he and many other activists were 'amazed' by this announcement and turned to The Call for an explanation. The Call which appeared on the same day as the Daily Herald's article (The Herald was issued two days earlier than dated) did not carry 'a single word of explanation concerning Comrade Maclean and his Scottish comrades.'¹⁰⁷ Shortly afterwards, however, information was received from Glasgow about what had happened there. The Scottish organisation of the BSP had previously decided to issue a petition limited in its demands. This petition demanded that Maclean's confinement should be shortened and that he should be granted the rights of a political prisoner. However, controversy followed the decision to invite a solicitor, 'an outsider', to draw up the petition demanding Maclean's release.¹⁰⁸ According to Chicherin this solicitor then 'sat on this matter . . . for several weeks' maintaining that he had been requested 'to put off the

petition until the end of the war.¹⁰⁹ Two reasons were given for the continued imprisonment of Maclean: 'Firstly, Maclean had refused to beg for indulgence in court, and therefore an application for clemency would contradict his own wishes; and secondly he had been condemned by a jury, and it would be impossible to achieve the reversal of such a verdict.' Chicherin described these arguments 'as highly strange', and questioned the Glasgow District Committee's readiness to accept these conclusions.¹¹⁰ The campaign surrounding John Maclean's release, Chicherin maintained, was not a matter of 'juridical formality', nor was it a straightforward appeal for clemency; it was dependent upon 'the will of the proletariat.'¹¹¹ The 'plotters' inside the BSP have sought to control this aspect of the agitation for Maclean's freedom by taking away from the working class the 'opportunity' of securing his release by 'their own organised efforts.' Furthermore, the solicitor employed by the BSP had made it known that the petition for Maclean's release would prove successful once the war had ended. However, Chicherin pointed out, 'it is very likely that the authorities will release him themselves once the war is over, without a petition.' An opportunity, therefore, had been squandered by the party leadership of effectively building a mass movement of protest. Approached by the Glasgow District Council of the BSP, with a request to take the agitation into Parliament, the party leadership had immediately rendered such a move ineffectual by allowing the petition movement to 'breakdown.' It was not accidental, Chicherin argued, that this decision to stop the petition coincided with the return of Parliament after the Whitsun recess. If the BSP had been serious in its campaign to secure Maclean's release, or even to win for him political status, then it would have taken the opportunity of calling upon workers at the London Conference of trade unions, where The Call for the 29 June was distributed free of charge, to take action over the Maclean affair. In effect the leadership of the BSP, in

agreement with the party's Glasgow District Council, had 'put-off the campaign for John Maclean's release until the end of the war.'¹¹²

Chicherin saw in this proof that very little had changed in the party since the split at the Easter Conference. The split had ben dictated from below, and a prominent part played by the rank and file in Scotland, yet the leading circles of the party, who had worked closely together for many years, had maintained the working practices of Hyndman's 'depraved clique.' 'Over the course of many years', he argued, 'they have become impregnated with the (BSP's) old atmosphere, of a narrow, bureaucratic routine, a diminutive, inner-organised squabble of petty intrigue and political feebleness.'¹¹³ Hence their inability to grasp the wider significance of the John Maclean affair.

On the 22 June a letter from John Maclean to his wife was published in The Call in an attempt to take some of the heat out of the agitation for Maclean's release. The letter attempted to show that Maclean was not being maltreated in prison:

For some weeks there have been persistent rumours that our comrade, John Maclean, was not being properly treated by the "powers that be" in Peterhead Prison. It is, therefore, with great pleasure that the Glasgow comrades are able to state that such rumours are inaccurate. In a letter written a day or two ago Maclean says that he is working out of doors during the daytime and is absolutely fit. Further, he has permission to read novels, and has commenced, or, perhaps, re-commenced, his studies in economics. So it remains with us to carry on his educational schemes, and to have the Labour College he so much desired in full working order to greet him on his return to liberty.¹¹⁴

Chicherin's article in Nashe Slovo questioned the motives of the BSP leadership in commenting on a letter Maclean had been allowed to write to his wife, when its sole purpose was reassurance:

The ill-informed reader will think that Com. Maclean supposedly flourishes in a

sanatorium, and that it is impossible to wish anything better for him. It is necessary to warn comrades in other countries: the fact is that in Scottish jails the treatment of prisoners is very rough, constant humiliation, abominable food, physical labour is very arduous, they frequently have to work on explosive substances without the necessary precautions, and accidents are frequent. Let foreign readers of The Call not be misled by the idyllic picture that has been drawn by the latter.¹¹⁵

Following Chicherin's criticisms in Nashe Slovo and others by Mrs. Bridges Adams in the Cotton Factory Times,¹¹⁶ The Call issued a note dismissing rumours that the Glasgow BSP 'have decided not to take further action regarding the imprisonment of John Maclean.' 'The matter', the note assured readers 'has never been out of our minds, and plans for action are being considered.'¹¹⁷ Chicherin's response was dismissive: 'Better late than never. But it is impossible not to admit that this is late. More than three months have passed since Com. Maclean's conviction.'¹¹⁸ In fact, a further three weeks were to elapse before The Call issued its statement outlining the nature of its campaign to secure Maclean's release. Here, it became obvious that the BSP had completely enmeshed itself in the legal arguments surrounding the case. Two reasons were given whereby Maclean's release could be secured - clemency or wrongful conviction. The first of these was dismissed outright as Maclean's own attitude had rendered a petition along these lines impossible. The second was regarded as 'more feasible', as many believed that Maclean had been wrongfully convicted. But objections were raised that a petition along these lines would have necessitated an investigation into the case before Maclean's release could be granted, 'whereas the demand should be for his immediate and unconditional release without any further investigation. If the case were reconsidered, it would serve no useful purpose, as the judgement was a jury one, and against such judgements Government officials have

always been slow to move, and the line generally taken is that the judgement cannot be disturbed unless new evidence is produced which, had it been placed before the jury might have influenced their judgement.' Without any additional evidence, the result of a reconsideration would not be in Maclean's favour, and the doors would be closed 'to future demands for his release on any grounds whatsoever.'¹¹⁹ It was this no win situation which convinced the Glasgow District Council of the BSP that the petition should be put to one side for the war's duration. Instead an 'agitation for common justice' was to be started to secure Maclean's immediate release:

In the interim it was decided to set on foot an agitation for his immediate release, and endeavours are being made to arrange demonstrations to this end throughout the country. One will shortly be held on Glasgow Green, and other places in Scotland are likely to follow suit. A statement will also be circulated to Socialist and labour organisations asking for resolutions demanding Maclean's release to be sent to the Secretary for Scotland, the Prime Minister and local Members of Parliament.¹²⁰

While Maclean remained in prison it was demanded that he should be treated as a political prisoner.

A week later, on the 8 August Albert Inkpin sent a letter to Nashe Slovo defending the actions of the BSP. As in previous polemics with Chicherin his understanding of the political situation in Scotland was questioned. His emphasis on the revolutionary potential of the Scottish labour movement was seen to stand in marked contrast to his 'hostile attitude' towards the BSP as a whole. The letter from Albert Inkpin was an indication of the extent of ill-feeling that then existed between the BSP National Executive and Nashe Slovo's London correspondent. Referring to Chicherin's article of the 11 July, Inkpin dismissed its contents as 'a crude lampoon against the BSP and a cruel slander of our Scottish comrades.' He rebuked Chicherin for presenting readers of Nashe Slovo with 'an unusual medley

of false allegations, half-truths and insinuations' concerning the BSP and John Maclean. Chicherin, he continued, was well-known inside the BSP 'and his hostile attitude does not surprise us. On the contrary, this is quite natural from someone, who, at the time of sharp conflict inside the BSP', could find no 'better use for his pen, than to mock and scoff in the columns of your paper at those seeking to direct the British Socialist Party along the path of internationalism and struggle against the war. His attacks merit a response . . . having been printed and left without a refutation in Nashe Slovo they threaten to cause damage to the BSP in the eyes of our foreign comrades.' To talk of "manoeuvres" and "intrigues" against the agitation for the release of Maclean was merely an attempt by Chicherin to cover his mistakes as regards his analysis of the situation on the Clyde. The indignation caused by Maclean's imprisonment was not as widespread as Chicherin would have readers of Nashe Slovo believe. Lacking first-hand knowledge 'your London correspondent systematically leads you astray concerning the power and character of the workers' movement on the R. Clyde.' By attaching 'a revolutionary character and aims to this movement, which, unfortunately, it has never had,' he then found it 'awkward to explain the non-realisation of his prophecies.' Chicherin did not know the character of Maclean nor the temper of the workers on the Clyde.' He must excuse us if we protest against the attempt which he makes to shelter himself behind attacks on the BSP.'¹²¹

That Inkpin's criticisms struck a discordant note with the editorial policy of Nashe Slovo was evident by the comments from Trotsky attached to Inkpin's letter. Here, in summarising Chicherin's views, he felt it necessary to defend Chicherin's personal character removing all 'suspicions' regarding the 'honesty of our London correspondent.' Trotsky effectively approved Chicherin's analysis of the situation on the Clyde:

Not wishing to forestall Com. Ornaty, who will answer of course the letter of the Sec.

of the British Socialist Party; we consider . . . it is enough to make the following remarks: 1) The criticism of Com. Ornatsky was directed mainly against the fact that the leaders of the party limited agitation by their subordinates to considerations of a judicial nature, instead of trying to give it the character of a mass protest; 2) So far as the British Party now undertakes to move towards a wider organisation of agitation for Comrade Maclean, Comrade Ornatsky himself noted that fact and welcomed the initiative of that very leadership he had earlier subjected to revolutionary criticism in Nashe Slovo no.168.¹²²

It is arguable whether the viewpoint of Albert Inkpin, and those of the BSP National Executive, regarding the situation in Scotland repeated the earlier arguments of Theodore Rothstein in Kommunist, although how far Rothstein shaped these views as opposed to the Glasgow District Committee of the BSP is open to debate. What is clear, however, is that deep divisions had opened up, not only within the Scottish labour movement, but also between English and Scottish socialists. The underlying reason for these disagreements was the extent to which Scotland, to use a later phrase of Maclean's, was 'in the rapids of revolution.' Clearly, the view from London was that Scotland was not; but there is evidence to show that a growing body of opinion supported not only revolutionary politics in Scotland; but also a separate identity for Scotland within a revolutionary-internationalist framework. On the 23 August Nashe Slovo published a letter from 'an ex-member of the Glasgow District Committee of the BSP and an ex-organiser of the BSP in Scotland' which gave an indication, not only of the extent of the differences separating London from Scotland, but also of the increasing awareness that a revolutionary-internationalist Scottish movement existed and objected to Inkpin's attempts 'to cast a shadow' over their movement. Dismissing the petition as 'ridiculous', the author characterised this tactic as an attempt by a 'narrow circle of hairsplitters to divert the

anger of the broad masses of the Scottish workers away from the Government for the harsh punishment given to Com. Maclean.' The BSP, he argued, had spurned an opportunity for socialist advance; the agitation for the release of John Maclean had provided the best means of building-up a movement of mass protest in Scotland, where large demonstrations against dilution, rent racketeering, deportations and conscription had taken place. Inkpin and others had deliberately weakened the agitation for John Maclean's release by moving the battleground south:

Next he (Inkpin) reports on a number of demonstrations now being prepared in different parts of England. (our italics). Com. Maclean has languished in jail for several months already, and Coms. MacDougall and Maxton - in other prisons, and only now, "now", (author's emphasis) has the preparations for demonstrations begun! A Circular letter to MPs is not a method of mass political action.¹²⁹

This letter had the purpose of showing that the Scottish workers' movement had been developing along independent lines ever since the beginning of the war. The Scottish internationalists, he argued, had unlike Fairchild, refused to accept the BSP's war manifesto, which had allowed the branches and individual members to take part in the Government's recruitment campaign. Nor had the Scottish workers acquiesced in the decision, again agreed to by Fairchild, Fineberg and the Inkpins, to send 'the provocateur Victor Fisher and the Chauvinists Dan Irving and Hunter Watts' to the London Conference of "Allied" Socialists.

While Scotland witnessed the mass protests of socialists and trade unionists against the government, the war and the social-patriots, the new "leaders of the BSP, sat with the Hyndmanite clique or occupied themselves with domestic disputes. At that time, he continued, when the Scottish organisation was waging an energetic campaign within the working class for the Zimmerwald Manifesto, the "revolutionaries" on the BSP's National Executive were

proving incapable of balancing Vandervelde with Zimmerwald. Inkpin, he argued, was trying to give a different interpretation to the Scottish, and the British labour movement in general, without subjecting Ornatsky's articles in Nashe Slovo to serious criticism. He had merely reproached Ornatsky for writing about the campaign to secure Maclean's release when he did not know Maclean personally. 'But this', he argued, 'by no means hinders Com. Ornatsky from assessing correctly the activities of Co. Maclean.'¹²⁴

But perhaps more damaging for the relationship between the BSP in Scotland and the new National Executive in London, was the ill-feeling that remained from publication of the article 'Who and What is Peter Petroff?' The author of this letter ended his attack on Inkpin with a statement that the National Executive could not be trusted, and although he welcomed the 'change that has taken place in the BSP . . . the internationalists (must) remain on guard, and not put down the weapon of criticism. Foreign comrades should not be led astray by the groundless statements and denials of Com. Inkpin.'¹²⁵

Chicherin's own response to Albert Inkpin appeared three days later in Nashe Slovo on the 26 August. Here Chicherin repeated his arguments that the petition had not only been mismanaged, but had effectively kept other organisations - most notably the miners of Fife and South Wales who had issued a call for a general strike - from involvement in the campaign to secure Maclean's release. But this Chicherin maintained was not the sole issue to arise from Inkpin's letter. Accusations had been launched of a personal nature following attacks that he had 'jeered at the so-called "opposition" on the BSP's National Executive in the period preceding the Manchester Conference.'

Chicherin, rather than dampen down this controversy, welcomed the sense of injury he had caused, and explained why it had been necessary to 'jeer' at the opposition's 'cowardly tactic of systematic self-effacement before their

opponents.' The tactics of the opposition had not led to the split at the Manchester Conference as they had argued. 'On the contrary,' their tactics 'consisted in avoiding a split at any price, as was stated at the time by Com. TR - in the pages of Nashe Slovo.' As a result of their unwillingness to confront the social-chauvinists there developed 'simultaneously with a loathing of the Hyndmanite clique . . . a deep distrust of the "opposition". Many of the best members of the BSP left, the entire Scottish organisation, still at that time undefeated on the Clyde, threatened to leave.' It was this pressure from below, especially from Scotland, that forced the upper echelons of the party to split, 'counter to the tactical principles outlined by TR.' These events bore witness to a new understanding of the class struggle and to new forms of the workers' movement in which the self-activity of the masses came to dominate over the 'deeply reactionary role of the official coteries.' However, he admitted, these developments have been essentially 'instinctive' as opposed to 'conscious'; and for this reason 'spontaneity' has been the dominant force behind the worker's struggle on the Clyde; the movement has lacked an 'organised political expression.'

As a result, this movement of the rank and file frequently came up against the opposition of the leadership cliques, who, in the majority of instances, had been no more than mediators between the ruling classes and the proletariat, who at best introduced 'narrow-clannish methods' into the work of the movement weakening the rank and file. Thus 'the leadership clique of the old BSP was simply an agent of disorganisation of the workers' movement.' While the present leadership might have broken with this old clique, they nevertheless remained its product. Even The Call had commented upon the "glorious past" of the BSP, attributing to the old guard deviation from the true path only in the circumstances created by the war. Continuity spanning the leadership practice of the

SDF-SDP-BSP had demonstrated that the present leadership of the BSP remained firmly rooted in another 'epoch.'¹²⁶

The arrest and imprisonment of Maclean was part of a wider assault on civil liberties in Britain, of which the Russian emigres in general became a specific target. Joe Fineberg contributed an article to The Call which linked the 'surrender of popular liberties', voluntary or otherwise, to the lack of "class-consciousness" among the working class. 'The enforcement of a rigid discipline in the civil as well as in the military sphere', he argued, had proved non-problematic for the authorities, owing to an 'absence of purpose and direction in the development of the labour movement.'¹²⁷ The introduction of conscription on the 2 March 1916, and the subsequent campaign to apply the Military Services Act to 'friendly aliens', was seen as part of the general repressive atmosphere that was being whipped up in British society.

Following the introduction of conscription a campaign had been launched in the jingo Press aimed specifically at the immigrant Jewish population, who had been excluded from the Military Services Act. Jews were accused of taking advantage of absent British shopkeepers and workers to promote their own interests. Calls were issued for a clause to be inserted in the Act empowering the military authorities to either deport Jews to their country of origin for military service or to *conscript* them into the British Army. As the majority of these Jews were either Russian political emigres or refugees from the Pale of Russia escaping religious persecution, there was no guarantee that they would not be prosecuted or ill-treated on their return to Russia. This Press campaign, orchestrated by the Daily Express and the Evening News, was creating a situation of near-pogrom mentality in the East End of London. The Bethnal Green News of 20 May published an interview with a Vice-Consul of a Friendly Power in London, in which it was reported that the Consuls of such Friendly Powers were 'urging the Governments to compulsion

of aliens.'¹²⁸ Other sections of the Press welcomed this intervention from outside Powers and saw in the Military Services Act an opportunity to launch a wider attack on the Right of Asylum. In response a campaign was launched amongst Jews to defend the Right of Asylum in Britain. This campaign, under the auspices of the Foreign Jews Protection Committee against Deportation to Russia and Compulsion (FJPC), was restricted to the threat facing Russian Jews. Not all political emigres, however, were Jewish; and a further organisation, the Committee of Russian Socialist Groups in London (CORSGL), was formed by Chicherin and other Russian socialists with the specific purpose of launching a campaign amongst trade unionists and other working class organisations to maintain the Right of Asylum, and to oppose any attempts at compulsion of Russians to enlist in the British Army under threat of deportation.

The growing antagonism between the Government and the East End of London forced the Home Secretary, Herbert Samuel, to adopt what the CORSGL referred to as 'a slight change of method' in his plans to conscript immigrant Jews. It was announced in the House of Commons on 22 August that 'an active recruiting campaign' would be carried out amongst the Jewish population with a view to securing the 'voluntary enlistment in the British Army of Russian subjects living in this country who are eligible for military service.' It was agreed 'that until the results of this campaign are seen, the question whether those who do not enlist should be repatriated, shall remain in abeyance.' Voluntary recruitment was to last until 30 September, when the question of repatriation would be reconsidered. No measure with the object of compulsory repatriation was to be adopted until the House had reassembled in October.¹²⁹

By the time Parliament did reconvene, however, attitudes towards the war had undergone a considerable change. According to Rothstein (writing as John Bryan) popular

psychology was 'in a stage of transition'. Old certainties underpinning the moral justification for Britain's participation in the war were gradually being undermined. The belief that Belgium 'could be had back at any time for mere asking', 'the coercion of Greece and other neutral countries', 'the introduction of compulsory service' all served to undo confidence in the further prosecution of the war. While initial fears surrounding Germany's occupation of the Belgian coast had provided some justification for initial popular support for the war; the rejection of Germany's offer of a withdrawal from Belgium in return for 'free and unfettered connection with Constantinople and Bagdad' had Rothstein felt, exposed the real nature of Britain's war aims. With Belgian neutrality no longer occupying the place in popular psychology it once did 'a new ideology' had to be carved out by the British Government to further their Imperialist aims. The desire to 'cut Germany's south-eastern connection' gave added impetus to calls for a United Southern Slav State to block Germany's path to Constantinople.¹³⁰ In this way the new state of Yugoslavia would play a similar role in British conceptions of the European balance of power, as that formerly played by Belgium.

Such a policy would undoubtedly imply an attack on Turkish interests in Europe. Arguments, therefore, began to appear in the Press calling for a widening of the front against Turkey. The creation of a Jewish Legion specifically to defend Egypt and assist in the conquest of Palestine was increasingly seen as a viable alternative to the deportation of Russian Jews or their conscription into individual units of the British Army. Lord Milner, a key figure in the "Serbian Society", travelled to Petrograd in order to reach an agreement with the Russian Government on the question of conscription and deportation of Russians of military age. Russian interest in the Balkans, and her desire to incorporate the Dardanelles and Constantinople into a greater Russian Empire, played a crucial part in

these negotiations. Offering Russian subjects resident in Britain the alternative of service in the British Army or deportation to Russia, where they faced conscription into the Russian Army or prosecution, formed a part of these negotiations. In February and March 1917 the British and Russian Governments intensified their campaign against Russian exiles living in Britain. A Foreign Office memo dated 6 February on the "Committee of Delegates of the Russian Socialist Groups" contained alarmist reports from the Russian Home Office that plans were underway for the assassination of Herbert Samuel and other acts of terrorism emanating from the East End; and listed five persons it regarded as most dangerous, among them Chicherin.¹³¹

The Committee, it was alleged was working closely with influential members of the BSP, 'whose pacifist tendencies are well known.' The alarmist nature of this memo caused Sir E. Dawson and Lord Robert Cecil to comment that this 'demonstrates the necessity for pushing on with the necessary legislation for applying the Military Service Act to Russians in England.'¹³²

The whole controversy, however, was dramatically altered by reports from Russia of revolution. While many emigres sought to return to Russia to assist the revolution, it was by no means clear that the war aims of the new Government were essentially different from those of the Tsarist regime. For this reason the position of the emigres had not radically altered, and the British Government sought to allow only those emigres to return to Russia who supported Russia's continued involvement in the war. Initially, all sections of British society had welcomed the February Revolution, and it was felt that the question of compulsion of aliens would no longer prove such a contentious issue. However, different groups had different motives for supporting the revolution. Socialists, labour organisations and the Establishment released conflicting statements concerning the role of classes in the revolution, and the aims of the revolution. While Sir George Buchanan issued a

despatch from Petrograd speaking of the 'necessity of the British Press recognising that revolution was the work of the entire Russian nation, . . .'¹³³ The Times and other organs of the commercial Press propagated the view that the revolution had been carried out by the 'united forces of the Duma and of the Army,' in order to strengthen Russia's war effort.¹³⁴ It was an indication of the depths of ignorance prevailing in the Foreign Office vis a vis Russian matters that the F.O. commented on Buchanan's despatch, 'As a matter of fact this is the line which our Press has taken. Nothing could have been better than the attitude of our Press. No action required.'¹³⁵ That both the F.O. and The Times equated the Duma with 'the entire Russian nation' was evident from the nature of this response to Buchanan's despatch. Accordingly, this attempt to place the revolution firmly within the Duma's history as an expression of Russian patriotism was regarded by many on the Left as 'both significant and sinister.'¹³⁶ The Call in its report welcoming the revolution gave a very different interpretation of events:

The real truth of the matter is that the revolution was begun and carried out with the utmost success by the masses of the people themselves against the previous exhortations of the Duma, who had feared nothing so much as a revolution, that it was the masses who, ever since Thursday, had been fraternising with, and gaining over to their side the troops, and that it was not until Monday that the Liberals and the Radicals of the Duma appeared on the scene.¹³⁷

On the question of war-aims The Call was adamant that the 'revolutionary people of Russia were not out for the conquest of Constantinople, nor even for the re-conquest of Poland. Their watchword is "Reform and Peace" - of course, peace, not by surrender, but by negotiation and on the principle of no-annexations, but still peace in preference to the continuation of the war for Imperialist objects.'¹³⁸

The situation in Russia remained uncertain, and while The

Call welcomed the revolution as the 'first tremendous breach in the walls of the enemy' the triumph of the revolution was by no means assured. The Labour Leader published articles by J. Bruce Glasier and Philip Snowden which gave a strong suggestion that plots were underway 'to capture the Revolution from the democracy in the interests not of the Russian commonwealth, but in the interests of a powerful political faction.'¹³⁹

The British labour movement became increasingly involved in this struggle. When General Poole, Military Attache to Russia, interviewed Kerensky on 15 March expressing his concern that 'grave dangers' attended the 'total stoppage of all munition output in these (local) works', Kerensky drew attention to the important role to be played by British labour in ensuring that the revolution went the way the Entente and all sections of the Russian Government desired:

. . . that all the new Government realised situation but that in his view present was an unsuitable time to attempt to coerce the people as they are now within a measurable distance of Anarchy and he feared that any drastic steps might only precipitate matters . . . He hopes that by gentle persuasion and in time that Government may get situation in hand but that at present they are powerless He thinks strong representations of English labour party would have good effect here Poole says there is no doubt that he realises situation and is afraid of what may result.¹⁴⁰

Kerensky's fears were exploited by Sir George Buchanan who suggested in a F.O. memo that 'labour leaders in England . . . send a telegram to messrs. Kerensky and Chkeidze . . . expressing their confidence that they and their colleagues will know how to strengthen the hands of free peoples fighting against the despotism of Germany whose victory can only bring disaster to all classes of the Allies.' The F.O. then drafted an 'Appeal to the Russian People' that was signed by leading figures of the Parliamentary Labour Party and the TUC, stating that they

'confidently look forward to the assistance of Russian Labour in achieving the object (victory over Germany) to which we have devoted ourselves.'¹⁴¹ The despatch of this telegram on 16 March provoked protest across Britain and resolutions from the ILP, BSP and other socialist and labour groupings dissociating the British working class from the actions of those 'termed the "leaders of the British Labour movement", who are fast winning for themselves the bad eminence of being the most obtuse and self-centred politicians in our country, . . . '¹⁴² The decision that followed to send a Labour Party deputation to Russia caused a similar sense of outrage, and led to demands that a second deputation from the ILP National Council and Members of Parliament, the BSP and some of the larger trade unions be granted passports and similar facilities as the Labour Party to travel to Russia. Philip Snowden asked the P.M. in the House whether this deputation had been undertaken at the request of the Government, and if so 'what credentials these men have to represent the English Labour movement?' The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Bonar Law, left the House in no doubt as to the true nature of their visit:

These gentlemen are going with the one object of encouraging, so far as they can, the present Russian Government in the prosecution of the war.¹⁴³

The ILP and the BSP took immediate steps to distance themselves from the Labour Party's support for the Government's position on the Russian Revolution. Following news of the revolution the Russian emigre position as regards deportation to Russia had undergone a dramatic change, and a number of emigres had returned to Russia, despite British Government attempts to prevent those who were anti-war from returning. M.V. Chernov, future Minister of Agriculture in the Provisional Government, returned to Russia on 4 April, and carried with him a personal message from the ILP and the BSP to the Committee of the Council of the Soviet of Workers' Deputies stating 'that the Delegates

in no way represented British labour': and that they were sent here by the British Government who paid their expenses and used them to help their imperialistic designs and the continuance of the war.' This message published in Pravda helped to ensure that the British Labour Party delegation's visit to Russia did not serve the purpose Kerensky had intended.¹⁴⁴ Further difficulties were caused for the Labour Party delegation by the publication of a letter from Chicherin in the soldiers' newspaper Soldat-Grazhdanin, of the ILP's Conference resolution dissociating the ILP from the Labour Party deputation, and warning Russian socialists that the delegates were 'agents of the British Government'.¹⁴⁵

The response of the British labour movement towards events inside Russia, therefore, was by no means uniform. However, while there was a wide gap between the Labour Party, and the socialist organisations, developments inside Russia brought into sharper focus the differences existing between the Left and Centre of Britain's socialist groups. Both the ILP and the BSP based their understanding of events on the views of the majority of the Petrograd Soviet, calling for a negotiated end to the war; and although Rothstein would have had access to Russian and German socialist newspapers in the W.O., neither group offered any serious analysis of Lenin's April Theses or the views of the Bolshevik Left. The Glasgow-based Socialist Labour Party (SLP), and to a lesser extent Sylvia Pankhurst's Workers' Socialist Federation (WSF), reported favourably on Lenin's views in their newspapers.

The SLP published a number of Lenin's articles translated from the German and Swiss Press by Alexander Sirnis. Raymond Challinor has suggested that this was the first time Lenin's articles had been translated into English.¹⁴⁴ Challinor, in order to demonstrate the Bolshevik character of the SLP, regards Sirnis as representative of Bolshevik thinking within the Russian emigre community, and consequently places his activity above other emigres active

in British left-wing politics during the revolutionary months of March to October. He makes much of Sirnis's decision to leave the BSP in September 1917, citing as his reasons that the BSP was 'floundering in the bog of political opportunism'.¹⁴⁷ Challinor, concerned to demonstrate that "British Bolshevism" was synonymous with an industrial unionism which had developed a Leninist conception of revolutionary power; emphasised the differences between industrial and political forms of working class political struggle in order to show that Lenin, if properly informed, would have approved of the SLP over and above the BSP and ILP. Hence he cites approvingly Sirnis's final criticism of the BSP that it failed 'to take the struggle for industrial unionism seriously.'¹⁴⁸

Challinor's overall thesis - that the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) was formed around the reformist elements in the BSP at the expense of the more revolutionary elements in the SLP and WSF - relies upon exposing the political opportunism of the BSP, and to show how these political views came to dominate the negotiations leading to the formation of the CPGB. A key role in these negotiations, Challinor argues, was played by Theodore Rothstein, who as Soviet plenipotentiary to Great Britain and distributor of the ubiquitous "Moscow Gold", influenced proceedings by maximising the role of the London-based Executive Committee of the BSP. Challinor, therefore, attempts to show the political unreliability of Rothstein and the Executive Committee, (as did Chicherin) during the February Revolution.

Challinor's arguments, however, are weakened by his need to demonstrate that Rothstein's political thinking was irredeemably flawed. John Saville in his 1983 introduction to Rothstein's From Chartism to Labourism (1929) shows how Challinor has quoted selectively to misrepresent Rothstein's views on the entry 'of the moderate Socialist parties' into the Provisional Government:

The relevant quotation from Challinor reads:
He (Rothstein) backed the entry of the

Mensheviks into the Provisional Government, describing it as 'a great step which marked the official triumph of the revolutionary proletariat'. By contrast, he criticised the 'violent opposition of the Leninites'. It may be noted, wrote Saville, that the first two quotations from Rothstein are given in the reverse order in which they appeared in this Plebs article: a juxtaposition which imposes a somewhat different reading from that which may have been intended. But what is inexcusable is that in the original there is no full stop after 'revolutionary proletariat' and the sentence continues with the words, 'but at the same time weakened its opposition to the bourgeoisie'. And later, in the same paragraph, Rothstein went on to illustrate 'How weak the position of the Socialist Ministers really is . . .'¹⁴⁹

Saville refers to Rothstein's final paragraph, which he quotes in full, as evidence of Rothstein's 'very good political sense, and independence of approach' in his political writings. Here Rothstein drew attention to the growing strength of the 'Jacobins (Bolsheviks)' and predicted that if the Provisional Government failed to deal with the worsening economic, political and military situation then it would pave the way for the Jacobins to assume power.¹⁵⁰ The challenge of the Jacobins was an indication that the 'struggle of classes' had become 'the main factor in the Russian situation' and that the class struggle alone would determine the 'logical' outcome of the revolution. The revolution if it was to survive had to 'proceed to the next ascending phase of development.'¹⁵¹

Rothstein's analysis proved accurate. From the abortive Kornilov rebellion to the announcement of the October Revolution British socialists came increasingly to accept that if the revolution was to survive then the Soviets would have to take power. The Call gave evidence of a significant shift in the BSP's outlook in an article on the Kornilov affair that condemned the 'past errors' of 'opportunism' in Russia:

What now? We hope that those who have hitherto guided the Revolution in its historical paths will perceive their past

errors and realise, at last, that opportunism, mischievous at any time, is most mischievous in revolutionary conditions.¹⁵²

The initial response of the BSP towards the October Revolution, however, showed that the BSP still had an inadequate grasp of the class struggle in Russia. In an article welcoming the October Revolution The Call assumed that the second revolution was made to defend the democratic ideals of the first in pursuit of a democratic peace. Responsibility for the salvation of the Revolution, therefore, again rested with the Entente Powers:

The programme of the new revolutionary Government brings the immediate objects of the Revolution back to what it was at the commencement: immediate democratic peace, the granting of land to the peasants, and the convocation of the Constituent Assembly. Russia must have peace now, there is no question about that . . . Russia once again holds out the offer of a general democratic peace, which, if the peoples of Europe desired it, can be secured now. Revolutionary Russia does not desire a separate peace. The Soviet prevented Miliukoff from doing the same. It is the reactionary Minister of War, Vertchovsky, who proposes a separate peace to Kerensky. But if Russia is compelled through sheer exhaustion to make a separate peace the responsibility will rest on the Governments and people of the Entente. Their treatment of the Revolution has been shameful.¹⁵³

In essence, the BSP subscribed to the views of the Manchester Guardian that the failure of the Entente Governments to respond positively to the Provisional Government's peace overtures, had created the conditions for the October Revolution. It now remained for the Entente to salvage this situation by seizing the opportunity for peace offered by the second Russian Revolution. The naivety of this view was fully exposed by Sylvia Pankhurst who pointed out in an article welcoming Lenin's Revolution in The Workers' Dreadnought that the October Revolution was a Socialist Revolution, and that its aims and ideals differed

from those of capitalism:

The Bolsheviks, like the French revolutionaries, realise that the Governments of Europe are unfriendly; but they separate the peoples from the Governments. They realise that the Imperialist-capitalists of all nations are their enemies, and that the workers of all nations are their friends. The "Manchester Guardian" suggests, and some British Socialists who should know better suggest, that if the Allied Governments had shown more sympathy for Russian aims and treated Russia somewhat more generously, this Bolshevik view would not have been held. To argue thus is completely to ignore the outstanding fact that the Russian Revolution is a Socialist revolution, and that its aims and ideals are incompatible with those of capitalism.¹⁵⁴

This realisation that the Russian Revolution had changed the fundamental relationship between States was missed by both the BSP and the ILP. Philip Snowden reporting the Bolshevik Revolution in The Labour Leader questioned the practicality of peace negotiations without formal recognition of the Revolution by the Entente and Central Powers. Germany's refusal to enter into 'communications with a Government which is not supported by a Constituent Assembly' convinced Snowden that the 'dominant party in Russia' had to hold elections as soon as possible.¹⁵⁵ Unlike Pankhurst, Snowden did not discuss the socialist objectives of the Bolshevik Revolution; his concern was to point out the dangers inherent in not having a legitimate government in Russia with whom the Entente and Central Powers could negotiate. He did not see any future ideological incompatibility between the foreign policy of the Constituent Assembly and other Powers.

Initial reactions to the October Revolution, therefore, with the exception of Sylvia Pankhurst's WSF, reflected the insular character of the British socialist movement at the time of the Bolshevik Revolution. Trotsky's peace decree sent to all the belligerent Powers was seen by many to be the prime mover of the October Revolution, and the negative

response of the belligerent Powers only served to underline that the Revolution's survival was dependent on an Entente, and to some extent German, brokered peace. Even the SLP, unswerving in its support for industrial unionism, could see little further than Russia extricating herself from the war in the absence of a 'thoroughly organised industrial movement.'¹⁵⁴ The attitude of Socialists towards the October Revolution, therefore, was to a large extent determined by their understanding of the class struggle in Russia; which, in turn reflected their empathy with class conflict in Britain. In the negotiations that were to lead to affiliation to the Communist International in March 1919 and the formation of the CPGB in August 1920, an understanding of Bolshevism and of the struggle unfolding between the classes in Russia interacted with the unfolding of the class struggle in Britain. This ongoing interaction between British and Russian socialism bore out Sylvia Pankhurst's view that the 'aims and ideals' of a Socialist revolution were 'incompatible' with capitalism. The next chapter examines the negotiations leading up to the formation of the CPGB and its role in the Third International in the light of Pankhurst's contention.

Notes

1. Morton and Tate, The British Labour Movement 1770-1920. (1956) p.258.
2. Erofeev, Imperializm i borba rabocheho klassa (Moscow 1960) p.13 & A. Rotshtein ibid p.50.
3. Andrew Rothstein letter to myself, 13 Jan. 1981.
4. F.O. 371/347/179551. 29 Oct. 1918.
5. See Challinor, The Origins of British Bolshevism (1977) pp.246-7; Walter Kendall The Revolutionary Movement in Britain 1900-1921 (1969) p.247 fn.16.
6. John Saville Introduction to Th. Rothstein From Chartism to Labourism (1983) p.xv. See also F.O. op cit.
7. Justice 23 Dec. 1915.
8. Petrov to Chicherin, letter post-marked 24 Jan. 1916 (Bridges Adams Papers) cited R. Grant article in John Slatter (ed.) From The Other Shore (1984) p.123.
9. Justice 17 Sept. 1914.
10. ibid.
11. ibid. 24 Sept., 1 Oct. 1914.
12. ibid.
13. ibid. 8 Oct. 1914.
14. ibid.
15. ibid.
16. ibid. 22 Oct. - 17 Dec. 1914.
17. ibid. 15 Oct. 1914.
18. ibid. 22 Oct. 1914.
19. ibid. 5 Nov. 1914.
20. ibid. 12 Nov. 1914.
21. ibid. 19 Nov. 1914.
22. ibid. 26 Nov. 1914.
23. ibid. 14 Jan. 1915.
24. ibid. 28 Jan. 1915.
25. ibid.
26. ibid.
27. ibid.
28. ibid. 4 Feb. 1915.
29. The Labour Leader 25 March 1915.
30. ibid.
31. ibid. 1 April 1915.
32. ibid. 8 April 1915.
33. ibid.
34. ibid.
35. ibid.
36. ibid. 29 April 1915.
37. ibid. 6 May 1915.
38. Justice 27 May 1915.
39. ibid.
40. ibid. 24 June 1915.
41. ibid.
42. ibid.
43. S. Zarnitskii and A. Sergeyev, Chicherin (Moscow 1966) pp.44-58.

44. Nashe Slovo 8 Oct. 1915.
45. The Labour Leader 4 Nov. 1915.
46. Kommunist Sept. 1915.
47. ibid.
48. The Vanguard Dec. 1915.
49. Nashe Slovo 7 Dec. 1915.
50. ibid.
51. Files of Nashe Slovo are incomplete, and there are gaps between the appearance of Rothsteins article on the 7 Dec. 1915 and Rothstein's reply to Chicherin on the 19 Jan. 1916.
52. Nashe Slovo 19 Jan. 1916.
53. ibid.
54. ibid.
55. ibid.
56. The Vanguard Dec. 1915.
57. Justice 23 Dec. 1915.
58. W. Gallacher, Revolt on the Clyde (1936) pp.59-62.
59. See Kendall op cit. p.119; Harry McShane No Mean Fighter (1978) pp.77-8; Nan Milton John Maclean (1973) pp.108-112.
60. ibid.
61. McShane op cit. p.78; Justice 30 Dec. 1915.
62. Diana Miller, interview with myself 6 Nov. 1982.
63. Justice 6 Jan. 1916..
64. ibid.
65. ibid. 13 Jan. 1916.
66. ibid. 20 Jan. 1916.
67. See note 8 above.
68. Andrew Rothstein, letter to myself 15 Aug. 1982.
69. ibid. 27 Aug. 1982.
70. Justice 27 Jan. 1916.
71. ibid.
72. ibid. 17 Feb. 1916.
73. Nashe Slovo 22 Feb. 1916.
74. See notes 1 and 2 above.
75. Lenin, 'Split or Decay.' Written between Feb/April 1916 but not published until 1931. Collected Works 4th edn. Vol.xxii (Moscow 1964).
76. See note 2 above.
77. The Call 24 Feb. 1916.
78. Nashe Slovo 11 Feb. 1916. Kendall claims that the circulation of Nashe Slovo in England was as great as its circulation in France. (Kendall, op cit. note 4 p.376).
79. Justice 9 March 1916.
80. ibid. 24 Feb. 1916. See also The Call 23 March 1916.
81. The Call 9 March 1916.
82. ibid. 20 April 1916.
83. ibid.
84. Challinor op cit. p.227; Gallacher Last Memoirs p.141; McShane op cit. p.112; Milton op cit. pp.227-9; see also John Maclean 'Open Letter to Lenin' The Socialist 3 Feb. 1921.
85. Pankhurst Papers, Amsterdam; see also Challinor op

cit. p.247. For J.T. Walton Newbold see Kevin Morgan & Robert Duncan Labour History Review Vol. 60 Part1 (1995) p.41.

86. Andrew Rothstein, letter to myself 13 Jan. 1981.
 87. W.O. 32/9304.
 88. W.O. 32/9297.
 89. See note 86 above.
 90. F.O. 371/3347/179551.
 91. See note 86 above.
 92. See note 90 above.
 93. See note 87 above.
 94. ibid.
 95. 'So far as I know, the second pseudonym was adopted after some occasion when the first seemed to have been "sunk".. Andrew Rothstein, letter to myself 10 Nov. 1980.
 96. See note 90 above.
 97. F.O. 371/29521/65655.
 98. A.U. Pope, Maxim Litvinoff (New York 1943) pp.110-111.
 99. ibid.p.112.
 100. The Call 20 April 1916.
 101. ibid. 1 June 1916.
 102. Justice 24 Feb. 1916.
 103. The Call 20 April 1916.
 104. ibid. 4 May 1916.
 105. ibid., 8 June 1916.
 106. Nashe Slovo 11 July 1916.
 107. ibid.
 108. ibid.
 109. ibid.
 110. ibid.
 111. ibid.
 112. ibid.
 113. ibid.
 114. The Call 22 June 1916.
 115. See note 106 above.
 116. See Ron Grant, 'G.V. Chicherin in Great Britain,' in John Slatter (ed.) op cit. pp.125-7.
 117. The Call 13 July 1916.
 118. Nashe Slovo 22 July 1916.
 119. The Call 3 Aug. 1916.
 120. ibid.
 121. Nashe Slovo 8 Aug. 1916.
 122. ibid.
 123. ibid. 23 Aug. 1916.
 124. ibid.
 125. ibid.
 126. ibid. 26 Aug. 1916.
 127. The Call 10 Aug. 1916.
 128. The Labour Leader 1 June 1916.
 129. The Call 7 Sept. 1916.
 130. ibid. 5 oct 1916.
 131. F.O. 371/3004/28533 6 Feb. 1916.
 132. ibid.
 133. F.O. 371/2995/57146 17 March 1917.

134. The Call 22 March 1917.
 135. See note 133 above.
 136. The Call 22 March 1917.
 137. ibid.
 138. ibid.
 139. The Labour Leader 22 March 1917.
 140. F.O. 371/2995/56485 16 March 1917.
 141. ibid.
 142. See note 139 above.
 143. The Labour Leader 12 April 1917.
 144. F.O. 371/2996/96045 12 May 1917.
 145. Soldat-Grazhdanin 3 May 1917; F.O. 371/2996/105142
 26 May 1917.
 146. Challinor op cit. p.167.
 147. ibid.
 148. ibid.
 149. Saville op cit. pp.xiii-xiv.
 150. ibid. p.xiv; John Bryan, 'The Struggle of Classes in
 Russia.' Plebs Magazine Aug 1917.
 151. ibid.
 152. The Call 20 Sept. 1917.
 153. ibid. 15 Nov. 1917.
 154. The Workers' Dreadnought 17 Nov. 1917.
 155. The Labour Leader 29 Nov. 1917.
 156. The Socialist Dec. 1917.

Chapter 6 October 1917-August 1920.

This chapter covers the period from the Bolshevik seizure of power to the formation of the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) in August 1920; and concludes with the British Government's refusal to allow Theodore Rothstein re-entry into Britain on 11 August, following an aborted trip to Moscow. It examines the role played by the Russian emigre community, in particular Th. Rothstein and Maxim Litvinov, in establishing quasi-diplomatic relations between Great Britain and the Russian Socialist Federal Soviet Republic (RSFSR), and their influence on the foreign policies of both countries. Both men, Rothstein in particular, remained influential figures within the British labour movement during these years, and played a controversial role in the formation of the CPGB. In doing so they were well-placed to carry through the 'dual policy' which had dominated Soviet foreign policy since the rejection by the Western Powers of Trotsky's 'decree on peace'. This 'dual policy', described by Carr 'as a choice between principle and expediency,' rested on the premise that Soviet national interest was compatible with the interest of world revolution.¹ Such a policy inevitably proved controversial and raised questions concerning the role of the RSFSR in the world labour movement, and within the world system determining relations between nation states.

Many historians have subsequently seen the formation of the CPGB as an 'artificial' creation; from its inception subservient to the needs of Soviet foreign policy.² Kendall's insistence that Moscow Gold was the motive force behind the movement towards Communist unity in Britain - leading to a Communist party stripped of its independent elements - led him to the false conclusion that British revolutionary socialists were swayed not by argument but by payments to labour organisations and personalities. These

payments were made through Rothstein, who, Kendall has argued, utilised his long-standing influence in the British labour movement to reform British Marxism along Russian lines. Apart from the counter-argument that Rothstein had been an influential figure within British Marxism long before he became Lenin's representative in Britain, Kendall's central thesis highlights only one aspect of the 'dual policy' - the interest of world revolution. By ignoring the very real needs of the fledgling Soviet State, Kendall is unable to show why Lenin was so intent on the formation of a Communist Party in Britain and affiliation to the Third International. Influencing Lenin's need for a Communist Party in Britain was his need to maintain pressure on the British Government to conclude a trade agreement with the RSFSR which would have implied de facto recognition of the Soviet Government. That this was also a major platform in the programme of the British Left lends weight to the argument that the formation of a Communist Party was neither incompatible with the needs of the 'dual policy' nor with the arguments being put forward in favour of Socialist unity in Britain. Difficulties only arise when one questions Lenin's belief in the imminence of world revolution. The majority of British revolutionaries, naively or otherwise, held to the view that Britain was on the verge of revolution. The dualistic nature of Soviet foreign policy, however, of attempting to hasten the downfall of capitalist governments while at the same time attempting to negotiate with them, led to a more cautious approach being adopted by the British labour movement, undermining belief in the practicalities of a revolutionary seizure of power in Britain. For Lenin, who in domestic affairs was moving towards the New Economic Policy, those Bolsheviks arguing for a revolutionary war were reluctant to exchange revolutionary tensions in Europe for a normalisation of diplomatic relations. In such circumstances, Lenin saw in the CPGB a vehicle for the propagation of communist ideals in the present; while

preparing for a revolution to take place in decades as opposed to years. Between 1917-1920 Rothstein's role was to keep Lenin informed of political developments in Britain, while outlining the potential for revolutionary activity. He was also entrusted with Soviet funds in order to publish pro-Soviet material, and to assist in the negotiations for Communist unity on the basis of affiliation to the Third International. In this capacity Rothstein fulfilled one of the functions dictated by the 'dual policy' - the promotion of world revolution.

Rothstein, however, was well-placed to fulfil the second function demanded by the 'dual policy'. Following Litvinov's expulsion in October 1918, Rothstein took over a number of his responsibilities, and arguably enjoyed a quasi-diplomatic status in Britain. Until early 1919 Rothstein remained employed in the War Office where he maintained unofficial contact with junior Foreign Office officials, most notably Rex Leeper and Bruce Lockhart. Both Leeper and Lockhart had been in favour of continuing negotiations with the RSFSR up until direct military intervention in August 1918, and of pursuing a trade policy with the Soviet Government, a view which went against the policy of Churchill and Lord Curzon in the Government, who persistently worked for Lockhart's recall from Moscow. Leeper and Lockhart's views, however, were also shared by Lloyd George, who at one stage allegedly intervened personally to prevent Rothstein's deportation.³ It is also interesting to note in this connection that others, notably Rex Leeper and E.H. Carr, also advised against Rothstein's deportation in a F.O. memo dated 29 October-19 November 1918. It is arguable that Rothstein, whose activities regarding the distribution of Soviet funds were to become well-known to Scotland Yard, and appeared regularly in Cabinet Reports on Revolutionary Organisations, was tolerated by, among others, Lloyd George who had argued consistently for a policy of trade with the RSFSR as a more effective means of bringing about the collapse of

Bolshevism. Any discussion of Lenin and Rothstein's role in the formation of a Communist Party in Britain, therefore, needs to take account of these factors. Both men's thinking was undoubtedly influenced by the confines of the 'dual policy' then defining Soviet foreign policy. However, care must be taken not to give an undue emphasis to the role of Soviet foreign policy in determining the tactics of the British revolutionary movement between 1917 and 1920. Undoubtedly, Rothstein played a crucial role behind the scenes in the negotiations leading to the formation of the CPGB. The question that needs to be addressed, however, is the extent to which this involvement was the result of a conspiracy conducted by a foreign government, or the continuation of a domestic political process, part of which was the growing realisation of the need for an independent foreign policy by the labour movement at large. One also has to take into account the fact that British socialists were beginning to frantically think for themselves in response to the Russian Revolution; and were examining the socialist political tradition in the light of pre-war and wartime failures, both in Britain and on the continent. This chapter, therefore, chronicles developments within the British labour movement between October 25 1917 and August 10 1920 within the wider context of that movement's commitment to international socialism.

Two months after the Bolshevik seizure of power Socialists in Britain were still trying to come to terms with the implications of a socialist revolution aimed at overturning hitherto accepted concepts of Government. While the WSF and the SLP were confident that the Bolshevik Revolution was justified on the grounds that Sovietism, as a higher form of democracy, had to be defended, the BSP was less convinced that Bolshevism was compatible with Socialist Government. Consequently, they saw the October Revolution as a first step in the move towards Socialist Government in Russia. On December 6 The Call published an article on Russia which clearly saw the need for political

advance within the constitution of the Constituent Assembly, an assessment which stood in marked contrast to that of the SLP and WSF who saw the Soviets as justifying their opinion that 'the Political State must be replaced by an Industrial Administration'.* At this juncture British Socialists imposed their own models on a revolution they had little information about. The arrest of Chicherin before the revolution on 25 August for alleged German and pro-German associations had deprived the British labour movement of a potential source of information. With Petrov also interned, British socialists came to increasingly rely on Rothstein who throughout this period wrote under the pseudonyms John Bryan and WAMM.

Despite continued attempts to secure Chicherin and Petrov's release, their cases were not taken up by the British labour movement until after Chicherin's appointment by Trotsky as Russian Ambassador to Britain. Trotsky's concern was to use Chicherin's official status to force recognition of the Soviet Government upon the British Government in order to strengthen the negotiations taking place at Brest-Litovsk.

The official British response, however, transmitted through Sir George Buchanan, was uncompromising in its rejection of the Bolshevik Government as a legitimate body with whom it could negotiate. Unofficial contact, however, was being considered, and with the arrival of Bruce Lockhart from Moscow the machinery for such contact was put into place. Lockhart who had been in Russia since 1912 had returned to England in September 1917, ostensibly because of ill-health. While in Moscow, as British Vice-Consul, Lockhart had met with British members of the military inter-Allied delegation to Russia in January 1917. Among the delegation was Lord Milner who held a number of conversations with Lockhart on the likelihood of revolution in Russia. On his return to England Lockhart was approached by a number of politicians, among them Lord Milner, anxious for news from Russia. Lockhart's views were radically

different from those then prevailing in London. At a December meeting with Lord Milner Lockhart expressed the view that the Bolshevik regime was not on the point of collapse; arguing that 'it was madness not to establish some contact with the men who at that moment were controlling Russia's destinies.'⁵ Lockhart's arguments made a favourable impression on Lord Milner who arranged for a meeting between Lockhart and Lloyd George, where 'the necessity of getting into touch with Lenin and Trotsky' was agreed upon.⁶ On 4 January it was decided to send Lockhart to Russia as head of a special mission to establish unofficial relations with the Bolsheviks; while Sir George Buchanan, the Ambassador, was to be withdrawn. It was hoped that the Bolsheviks would grant Lockhart the necessary diplomatic privileges without being recognised by the British Government, while similar concessions would be accorded to Litvinov, whom the Soviets had already appointed Ambassador in London. An introduction to Lenin and Trotsky and the setting-up of a modus vivendi with Litvinov was arranged through Rex Leeper, whom Lockhart remarked 'was on friendly terms with Rothstein. . . then an official translator in our own War Office.'⁷ Lockhart accordingly met Rothstein who agreed 'to use his influence with Litvinov to provide . . . the necessary recommendation to Trotsky.' Unofficial diplomatic relations were later established between the two countries 'over the luncheon table at a Lyons' shop in the Strand' on 11 January. Lockhart's description of the event gives some impression of the underlying nervousness that accompanied the first tentative moves towards normalisation of relations between Britain and Russia:

The two contracting parties were represented by Litvinoff and Rothstein on the Russian side and Leeper and myself on the English side. There was to be no recognition - at any rate for the present. Unofficially, both Litvinoff and I were to have certain diplomatic privileges, including the use of ciphers and the right to a diplomatic courier.

.
 After a nervous beginning the course of our negotiations ran smoothly, and there and then, on the rough linen of a standard Lyons' table, Litvinoff wrote out my letter of recommendation to Trotsky. . . .⁸

The meeting ended, however, on a humorous note, and in many respects prophetically for Litvinov who was to be deported in October 1918:

As we were ordering a sweet, Litvinoff noticed on the menu the magic words: "pouding diplomate." The idea appealed to him. The new diplomatist would eat the diplomatic pudding. The Lyons "Nippy" took his order and returned a minute later to say there was no more. Litvinoff shrugged his shoulders and smiled blandly. "Not recognised even by Lyons," he said.⁹

Trotsky had appointed Litvinov Soviet charge d'affaires on the 30 December 1917. Four days later Sir George Buchanan left Moscow, and Chicherin and the Petrovs were released and deported. Litvinov's first act as Soviet Ambassador to Britain was to issue an appeal 'To the Workers of Great Britain' calling on British labour to force their Government to join the peace negotiations.¹⁰ A campaign was subsequently started to win support for Litvinov's appeal at the forthcoming Labour Party Conference. Accordingly, the Executive Committee of the BSP issued a Manifesto on the 17 January calling on the Labour Party to take the initiative in 'restoring peace':

Let the forthcoming Labour Party Conference at Nottingham give the answer to Russia's urgent and imperative appeal.

.
 Say to the Government: "If you will not comply with Russia's request for an immediate armistice and negotiations for a general peace, Labour will thrust you aside and take up itself the task of restoring peace to a sorrow-stricken world."¹¹

The Government fearing a demonstration in favour of Russia's appeal for peace, raided the BSP's London premises and confiscated copies of the above Manifesto and of

Litvinov's appeal to British workers, preventing their distribution to delegates at Nottingham. Litvinov's speech to the Conference, however, in which he implied advocacy of revolution in Great Britain, was warmly received by many in the audience prompting the Government to protest to the RSFSR against Litvinov's "impossible behaviour."¹²

At this point, however, Litvinov's speech was out of step with Lenin's arguments for accepting the German peace terms at Brest-Litovsk which had rejected calls for a revolutionary war, and immediate world revolution. Litvinov's writings and speeches began to reflect this new caution. In an article prompted by accusations from the newly-formed United Labour Party of Russian Social-Democrats, in effect the Menshevik opposition, circulated through the ISB in the form of an "Appeal to the International," Litvinov defended the Bolsheviks against charges of having 'broken with the policy of International struggle for a general democratic peace.' Litvinov's article, published in The Call under the heading 'In Defence of the Bolsheviks', gave some indication of the realisation by many Bolsheviks that the Russian Army was incapable of fighting a revolutionary war:

"In the sphere of foreign policy the Bolsheviks have broken with the policy of International struggle for a general democratic peace." Yes, with the "International struggle" carried out by Miliukoff and Tereschenko, culminating in the wrecking of the Stockholm Conference! It is only to be regretted that the Bolsheviks did not attain their power immediately after the outbreak of the first Revolution, when the country and the army were less disorganised; they could then have found means to bring about a general, democratic peace. At that time, energetic pressure on the Allied Governments would have achieved the desired results.¹³

Although Litvinov's pronouncements were becoming less provocative, his position in London was becoming less secure. The Home Office, which had put him under close surveillance from the time he had been appointed

unofficial Ambassador to Great Britain, began to step up its policy of intimidation. Although the appointment of Litvinov had been a purely Foreign Office affair opposed by the Home Office, once the Bolsheviks began to sue for peace at Brest-Litovsk the F.O. also altered its position regarding Litvinov. The arrival of Kamenev on 23 February and the confiscation of £5,000 intended for the purposes of the Embassy and the arbitrary deportation of one of Litvinov's secretaries, Stefen Wolf, without charge or trial, was an indication of shifting attitudes within the Cabinet towards the Bolshevik Government. The conclusion of a separate peace with Germany on 3 March 1918 tilted the balance in favour of those who favoured allied military intervention in Russia. A schism began to appear in the official labour movement, with Henderson and a majority of the Parliamentary Labour Party and the Parliamentary Committee of the TUC moving away from reluctant support for Litvinov and the October Revolution, towards a more pro-Government stance of open opposition. Given such support for the Government the BSP's continued affiliation to the Labour Party came up for renewed discussion on the eve of the BSP's Annual Easter Conference.¹⁴ Joe Fineberg, who was to advise Lenin on this issue during the negotiations leading to the formation of the CPGB, opened the debate with three articles in favour of continued affiliation to the Labour Party in The Call between the 7 and 21 March.¹⁵ Only two articles appeared opposed to Fineberg's views, from Albert Ward and M. Jacobs. The issue was debated at the BSP Annual Conference where a North West Ham resolution in favour of disaffiliation was defeated by 102 votes to 17.

Steps were also taken to consolidate moves towards Socialist Unity. Kendall's assertion that British revolutionary groups sought unity free from outside interference between Easter 1918 and May 1919, suggests that at this stage the desire for unity (worries over conscription threatening membership, notwithstanding) had

been the result of developments taking place within the various Socialist and Syndicalist groups.

Rothstein, whom Kendall argues was eventually responsible for Communist unity in Britain, had recently been quiescent. He had not written for The Call since November 15 1917, when he had submitted an article on 'The Balkan Question.' His first article for nearly five months appeared under the pseudonym of WAMM on April 11 1918.¹⁶ The article entitled 'Whited Sepulchres' held up for obloquy the ineffectual response of both the German Majority and "Independent" Socialists to the 'peace of force concluded at Brest,' and the renewed German offensive against Russia. Of greater significance was a later article also under the signature of WAMM, calling for a break with the Second International and the creation of a new International of Revolutionary Socialists.¹⁷ On the eve of moves to reconstruct the Second International, Rothstein's article raised a number of difficult questions. In all likelihood there would be two Internationals, splitting the Labour Party and the Trade Unions from the Marxian Socialists. In such circumstances, the BSP would find it difficult to justify continued affiliation to the Labour Party.

On the eve of the 'first Conference of the re-constructed Labour Party' two letters appeared in The Call, both from "high-ranking" Executive Committee members of the BSP, H.W. Inkpin and H.Alexander, reinforcing the arguments underpinning the BSP's affiliation to the Labour Party.¹⁸ As a gesture towards Socialist Unity, however, Sylvia Pankhurst, who opposed affiliation, was added to the BSP's delegation to the Labour Party Conference. The other members of the delegation were H. Alexander, E.C. Fairchild, B. Kahan, Dora B. Montefiore, and J.T. Walton Newbold.

The Conference was remarkable for two events: the resolution moved on behalf of the BSP by Sylvia Pankhurst calling on Labour Ministers of the Cabinet to withdraw from the Government; and the speech from Kerensky calling for

military intervention in Russia. Sylvia Pankhurst's resolution, while defeated, gave her a platform from which to attack the Labour Party leaders for supporting a policy which the Party had declared against. Kerensky's speech, and the manoeuvrings behind the scenes to bring Kerensky to the platform, were an indication of the extent to which the Labour Party had moved since the Brest-Litovsk Treaty, in favour of the Government's policy of intervention.¹⁹ The refusal to allow Litvinov to speak gave evidence that Henderson did not want to flout the F.O. by allowing Litvinov to oppose the policy which Kerensky had just outlined. Litvinov, refused a platform at the Labour Party Conference, replied through the Socialist Press. Raising the question 'Whom Does Kerensky Represent?', his article warned British Labour that attempts were being made to win their support for the 'restoration of Tsarism':

Do not allow yourself to be misled by the presumption that Kerensky pleaded for one Labour Party in Russia against another. The overthrow of the Bolsheviks cannot mean that any other Socialist or even Democratic party will take over the power. The Soviet Government, if overthrown at the present juncture, can only be superseded by the most brutal and barbaric military dictatorship, resting on foreign bayonets, with the inevitable subsequent restoration of Tsarism. Is British labour going to be a party to these dark schemes? Is the British proletariat prepared to take upon itself the responsibility before history for the crushing of the great Russian Proletarian Revolution?²⁰

Allied military intervention in Russia was, in fact, to divide the British labour movement over a number of related issues. Was the response of the British labour movement to the Russian Revolution merely to offer a defence of the young Soviet Republic from capitalist intervention? Or was it to develop its own revolutionary will to power in opposition to the purely Parliamentary role envisaged for it by the Labour Party? The role of the British proletariat in assuming 'responsibility' for the outcome of the Russian

Revolution influenced the strategies being developed in writings looking forward to the eventual form of Socialist Unity. The debate in The Call on 'The Reconstruction of the International' that took place over the months from July to October 1918 unfolded against this backdrop. E.C. Fairchild, as editor, opened the debate and warned of the possibility of two Internationals if the Left adopted a rigid approach to membership. His emphasis on the International's reconstruction rested upon an analysis which saw the responsibility for the breakdown of the old International not in terms of the policies pursued by its leaders, but in the loose structure of the International, whose resolutions had not been binding on affiliated bodies. Fairchild's overall concern, therefore, was for a reformed International, broad based in membership, with a more 'authoritative' structure.²¹

Of the five articles that followed, only two, by G.Davey and Camille Huysmans, agreed with the line taken by Fairchild.²² Rothstein, writing as WAMM, suggested that the failure of the Second International was due less to its loose structure than to its readiness to admit other than avowedly Socialist parties to the International; thereby weakening the integrity of the International as a repository for Socialist ideals and practice. When the war came the International had proved too broad based to organise any effective protest against it. However, it was not just those outside the Socialist movement who had failed the workers' movement but those Socialists of the Centre whose acceptance of the union sacre had destroyed the integrity of the International. Any future International would need, therefore, to be based on revolutionary principles and to exclude all but the parties of the "left wing" if 'Labourism' and 'Centrism' were to be prevented from again undermining the revolutionary movement.²³

Rothstein's views were echoed by James D. Macdougall, who argued that the 'main weakness of the International

Socialist movement during the period 1880-1914 was the enormous importance attached to Parliamentary action.²⁴ At the time the needs of the International were subordinated to the needs of the German SPD whose eagerness to avoid Government persecution and build up their electoral strength, had 'snuffed out' Herve's call for a general strike against war at the Stuttgart Congress of 1907. The strength of the German party had come to dominate the International Congresses and their success led the other parties in Europe to model themselves upon 'the "great" German organisation'; the British Labour Party was no exception. Macdougall's view of the future International was of a revolutionary body developing different forms of political action alongside industrial organisation. Macdougall who worked closely with John Maclean in the Lanarkshire coalfield over the 1917-1918 period saw evidence of a growing industrial militancy in Scotland offering opportunities for radical political advance. His experience in the Lanarkshire coalfield led him to advocate Industrial Unionism as a means of achieving the degree of industrial unity needed for a political strike.²⁵ Macdougall's viewpoint was symptomatic of the moves towards Socialist unity then taking place in Scotland. Facilitating closer co-operation between the BSP and the SLP were the organisational changes that had taken place in the Shop Stewards' Movement and the growing influence of the Union Reform Committees in the mining industry.

Dora B. Montefiore, who also disagreed with Fairchild's editorial, had spoken against military intervention in Russia at the recent Labour Party Conference. She felt that all those responsible for allowing Kerensky to address the Labour Party Conference should be automatically barred from membership. Her position that only revolutionaries should be considered was based on the belief that the new International could only function 'as a weapon of offence'. Interestingly, she also saw the 'supreme test' for admittance into the 'Red International' as 'the manner in

which the workers in various lands are either supporting or helping to destroy the Soviet Administration in Russia.'²⁶

Fairchild's reply was quite definite, and pointed to the bankruptcy of thought which held to the belief that methods applicable to revolutionary Russia were also applicable to America and Great Britain. It was the first open breach between Rothstein and Fairchild, and, contrary to the arguments put forward by Kendall - who repeats John Maclean's accusation that Rothstein brought about Fairchild's retiral from the BSP - Fairchild was already moving in the direction of Parliamentary struggle, and was opposed to Sovietism. Consequently, his vision of the International remained broad based and relied solely upon the conquest of political power. Industrial organisation remained a secondary consideration. Fairchild's belief in the efficacy of Parliament as a legitimate road towards Socialism led him to believe in an 'International of the Left with the door open for all who care to come in . . .

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However, at the same time that a majority of the Socialist and Syndicalist groups appeared to be moving towards the reconstruction of the International on a revolutionary basis, allied military intervention began; forcing to the forefront Montefiore's contention that support for the Soviet Government was an essential prerequisite for membership of the revolutionary International. The Executive Committee of the BSP issued a statement on allied intervention echoing Lenin and Trotsky's appeal for economic assistance, and emphasising one aspect of the 'dual policy' - the normalisation of relations with the capitalist powers. That the BSP issued this appeal in language which both appealed to capitalist self-interest and to the organised Labour Movement, was an indication of conflicting philosophies existing within the BSP. The majority of the Party still had little concept of what a revolutionary party in possession of a revolutionary will to power ought to specify as its immediate objective.

In conditions where class antagonisms were seen to be on the wane in British society in the late summer of 1918; the International was seen to be in danger of issuing grandiose revolutionary statements with little substance, much as it had done before 1914. The defence of the Soviet form of Government in Russia promised to provide both the vocabulary and the conditions for activism that a wider desire for peace and the normalisation of relations between states would deny to the revolutionary movement in Britain. Hence the confused thinking that held sway over the BSP National Executive when it issued its demand for the normalisation of relations with Russia. Accepting that Allied intervention was determined by the desire to prevent German capital from penetrating Russian commerce and industry, it was argued that the most effective way of achieving this would be to allow British capital to trade with Russia; what was preventing this from happening was the class analysis of the British Government, which would not allow the control of national resources by organised labour in Russia or anywhere else. It was an obvious next step, therefore, for the Executive to conclude that the collapse of Soviet Russia would be a defeat for the world Labour Movement:

This meeting believes that the overthrow of the Soviet administration would be a disaster to the organised Labour Movement throughout the world, and could only be construed as evidence of the intention of Governments to make war on the working class. It calls upon the British Government to abandon its present policy with regard to Russia and instead to offer Russia the technical and economic aid required for her reconstruction.²⁸

To talk of 'economic aid' and 'reconstruction', when the Government had embarked upon a policy of active support for the White Armies, was to give to the Labour Movement (Henderson's support for intervention apart) a foreign policy commitment in direct opposition to that pursued by the Government. Following the arrest and deportation of

Litvinov in the first week of October 1918, in the wake of the "so-called" 'Lockhart Plot', the involvement of the British labour movement in framing an alternative policy towards Soviet Russia became more pressing.²⁹ The appointment of Rothstein as Soviet intermediary confirmed this trend. Rothstein's role was less concerned with maintaining contact with the Foreign Office than with establishing closer links between the revolutionary Government in Russia and the British labour movement. In this respect, Rothstein could disseminate propaganda in favour of Sovietism not only from his position as Soviet intermediary but also as a long-standing member of the revolutionary movement in Britain. Thus he was in a position to work within the framework of the 'dual policy', allowing Rothstein to promote both the interests of the world revolution, and to argue in favour of a normalisation of relations with Soviet Russia.

His relationship with the Foreign Office was less clearly defined. Following Litvinov's expulsion Rothstein was also considered for deportation. E.H. Carr, Basil Thompson and Rex Leeper all argued against Rothstein's deportation, with Lord Robert Cecil as the only dissentient voice. Basil Thompson, who had been approached by C.P. Scott on behalf of Lloyd George, interviewed Rothstein at this point and was adamant in a letter to E.H. Carr that no 'further action' should be taken 'against him', stressing the point that he 'will continue to be employed by the W.O.'³⁰ Rex Leeper, who provided the F.O. report on Rothstein's activities, was of the opinion that Rothstein 'if now sent back forcibly to Russia' would damage the interests of the British Government:

Owing to his very real ability, doctrinaire though he is, and his intimate knowledge of this country, extending over many years, he would be a dangerous opponent to us and of great assistance to the Soviet Government. On this ground I think his deportation inadvisable.³¹

Leeper, who claimed to know Rothstein well, stated that

he knew nothing about his underground activities, and asked to approach him privately to warn him that any further activity on behalf of the Soviet Government would end in his expulsion. The extent to which Rothstein's activities were known to the F.O. is difficult to ascertain from official documents, but the fact that Rothstein was not deported raises the question whether his function was not simply that of an intermediary between the British labour movement and the Soviet Government, but also a vehicle for Chicherin and Lenin to communicate, albeit sub rosa, with the Foreign Office at a time when normal diplomatic relations with the Soviet Government had come to a close. At this stage Lloyd George allegedly felt it important enough to block Rothstein's deportation, although the main direction of Soviet foreign policy, following intervention and the allied response to Brest-Litovsk, had been to renew propaganda in the allied countries.^{3e} That Rothstein was spared deportation is all the more remarkable given the fact that the H.O. over the period when Rothstein was being considered for deportation - 24 October-19 November 1918 - had stepped up its campaign of persecution of native and Russian born Socialists alike. On the 19 October the Central offices of the BSP were again raided by officers from Scotland Yard and several thousand copies of Lenin's pamphlet, "Lessons of the Russian Revolution", were seized under the Defence of the Realm Act. The Socialist Labour Press was also raided and closed down for printing the constitution of the Russian Socialist Republic of Soviets in the September edition of The Socialist. The printer, E.H. Williams, although not a socialist, and despite the fact that he had signed an undertaking not to print any similar Labour journal, was prevented from resuming his business. Similar treatment was meted out to the journal of the London Workers' Committee, Solidarity, and a general policy of intimidation of printers was got under way by Scotland Yard. Summonses were issued to Albert Ward, an Executive member of the BSP, and Sylvia Pankhurst under the

regulations of DORA for alleged seditious speeches.³³ There was also a systematised offensive against Russians living in Britain sympathetic to the new Soviet Administration. The Call reported the cases of two Party members, the Secretary of the Central Committee of the Jewish Social Democratic Organisation (BSP) and the Secretary of the BSP Manchester (Jewish) Branch, who were dragged out of bed in the middle of the night and unceremoniously deported, apparently for membership of the BSP.³⁴ In such an atmosphere, either Rothstein was very adept at keeping his activities as a revolutionary out of sight of the authorities, while he retained his W.O. employment, or else his connections with the Bolsheviks kept the channels of communication between the Government and Soviet Russia open. At this time, however, following Leeper and Basil Thomson's separate interviews with Rothstein, it would appear that the authorities did not suspect Rothstein of seditious behaviour. He continued to write for The Call under the pseudonyms of John Bryan and WAMM, publishing an article welcoming 'The German Revolution' on 21 November, presumably written while under threat of deportation.

Following the Armistice and the overthrow of the Kaiser attitudes towards the Bolsheviks underwent a telling change. Camille Huysmans, the International Secretary of the ISB, writing in the Manchester Guardian denounced Bolshevism as "Asiatic".³⁵ It was a significant shift in attitude on behalf of the ISB. The Bolsheviks, no longer seen as "pro-German", were threatening to disrupt any future International with a non-European creed. An attempt was made therefore to marginalise Bolshevism by dismissing it as an alien doctrine, anathema to European Socialists. This shift in attitude was not solely a response to the Armistice; the Menshevik declaration of support for the Soviet Administration accepting the Bolshevik Revolution of October 1917 as a historical necessity, unbound the ties linking the Right Wing of the European Labour Movement to the Socialist opposition in Russia.

Rothstein, in an article directed against Huysman's charge of "Asiatic Socialism", took issue with these attempts to marginalise Bolshevism, pointing out the universality of the Socialist ideals underpinning the Russian Revolution, and reaffirming the European nature of Russian Bolshevism. The course of the German Revolution, he argued, had lain waste to Huysman's view that the refusal to convoke the Constituent Assembly had meant the Bolsheviki had rejected the democratic principles of "European" Socialism for a despotic "Asian" model. A similar process, he argued, of moving away from Parliamentarism towards Sovietism, was taking place in Germany. While the Junkers and the Scheidemann Socialists were supporting arguments for a Constituent Assembly, the Extreme Left, along with a section of the Independent Socialists under Ledebour, were calling for "all power to the Soviets", on the grounds that the bourgeoisie will only turn against the proletariat in the make-up of the Constituent Assembly. The German Revolution, Rothstein argued, was offering an exact parallel of recent events in Russia, with Germany 'inclined to walk in the footsteps of semi-Asiatic Russia.'³⁶

The response of the Allied powers to the German Revolution was to maintain economic pressure on the German Government, in order to force compliance with the terms of the Armistice. The Left-wing in Britain rejected this approach, and in a joint statement issued by the ILP, BSP and the SLP linked the mercantile blockade against the German Revolution with military intervention in Russia. The move towards Socialist Unity which had marked relations between the Socialist Parties over the course of 1918, now found expression in a concerted attack on the British Government's foreign policy.³⁷ Not even the Labour Party could remain immune from the rising tide of discontent with military intervention. During the December election campaign the Labour Party, faced with a war-weary electorate, condemned the interventionist policy. E.C.

Fairchild, writing in The Call, went a stage further and called on the British Labour Movement 'to enforce withdrawal from Russian territory without a day's delay.'³⁸ In the same issue, notice was given of a forthcoming conference, to be held on 18 January by the London Workers' Committee, with the purpose of uniting under one umbrella all the organisations willing to bring 'about a cessation of the Allied powers' violation of Russia.'³⁹ On 16 January two days before this conference was due to be held, Fairchild wrote of the early successes that had attended this movement against continued intervention in Russia. 'Already', he argued, 'the British working class have compelled the Government to abandon their original plans for intervention. Now recourse is made to the subterfuge of a "volunteer" army, in place of a conscript force, but that will not satisfy the demand that all attempts at the coercion of Russia shall be abandoned. . . The demand for a general strike against the anti-Russian policy of the Allies is rising on all sides.'⁴⁰

Two days later at the inaugural "Hands Off Russia" Conference, 500 delegates representing nearly 350 organisations, discussed the question of a general strike unless the Government announced a cessation of intervention in Russia. The debate, however, was remarkable not merely for the expression of unanimity regarding non-intervention in Russia; but, also for the varying responses of delegates to the implications of such a strike for political ends. T.J. Smith a delegate from the NUR and Arthur MacManus (SLP) moved a resolution that a general strike would, with 'more scientific organisation of the workers . . aim at the overthrow of the capitalist State,' thereby compelling 'the abandonment on the part of the Allies to maintain capitalism in Russia, the true purpose of intervention.'⁴¹ E.C. Fairchild, taking issue with this view, protested against the implied relegation of "Hands Off Russia" 'to a secondary place in revolutionary thinking.' Looking at the practicalities involved in calling such a strike, he argued

that a strike to promote political ends, was as much dependent on industrial as political organisation. He suggested that a national labour convention be called to oversee the union of industrial and political action but rejected the idea of a workers' Government, talking instead of 'the furtherance of . . . workers' power over the organisation of the State.'⁴² William Paul (SLP) gave an indication of the chasm still dividing the Socialist political groups from the industrial groups when he advanced the view that 'the general strike called for organisation not on the part of representatives of Socialist political organisations, but by the workers themselves in their industrial organisations.'⁴³ Sylvia Pankhurst backed by W.Sanders (Vehicle Workers) was less cautious: 'Let the Conference act, declare the strike, and the dramatic effect of such action would arouse the support necessary for its success.'⁴⁴ A further meeting was arranged for 8 February to be held in the Albert Hall, among the principal speakers were to be John Maclean, Sylvia Pankhurst and George Lansbury, with E.C. Fairchild occupying the Chair.

The announcement of the decision by the Congress of the Russian Communist (Bolshevik) Party to call an inaugural congress of the revolutionary International, reported in The Call on 6 February, was the first step in a campaign to prise the "Centre" Parties away from the patriotic Socialists who were beginning to organise the reconstruction of the ISB on a reformist model. "Hands Off Russia" promised to be such a vehicle for the Third International in Britain by incorporating defence of Soviet Russia with the organisation of the political and industrial strength of the working class, in a manner which was potentially revolutionary. The action of the Labour Party at the Berne Conference of the ISB in supporting a resolution censuring the Bolshevik regime reinforced this tendency; and was a further indication of the growing awareness that Centre and Right-wing Labour organisations

could not address the challenges thrown up by the Bolshevik Revolution. The failure of the Labour Party to develop a campaign in Parliament against intervention further weakened its position as a focal point for International activity, and raised interest in the Third International on the Left of the Party. Underpinning this general trend away from the Labour Party was a realisation that a working class democracy was incompatible with existing Parliamentary institutions. E.C. Fairchild, a supporter of continued affiliation with the Labour Party and an opponent of revolutionary tactics, gave an indication of the extent to which dissatisfaction with Parliamentarism was felt inside the Labour Movement, when in an article in The Call he suggested that parliamentary institutions were unfit for economic administration:

To those who urge that Parliament through the medium of Government departments could efficiently administer production in the common interest, it may be replied that the history of production, owned and controlled by the State, is a record of management bureaucratic in its nature and seldom efficient in results.⁴⁵

Parliament, as it was then organised could not go beyond the State capitalism that had informed Radicalism and Fabianism during the 1890's. The Government itself, when it had been driven by working class unrest to manage industrial affairs, had realised the practical impossibility of controlling industry by methods of bureaucracy. Parliament, therefore, had to be reformed if it was going to secure the democratic control of industry, on the basis of common ownership:

In other words, the Parliamentary institutions known in British history must be re-cast, extended, and modified to meet the needs of national industrial organisation. When that process is completed the Parliament known to history will have been abolished.⁴⁶

Fairchild, however, was less clear as to how this reform of Parliament was to be accomplished. In a further article

he referred to the workshop movement which had been developing at local level, as having an 'effect on current Socialism . . . more considerable than . . . from any other quarter.'⁴⁷ Fairchild saw in this movement a complementary form of struggle to that of reformism, arguing that the workshop movement rested upon a conception that working class action could penetrate the capitalist State, and divest it of its coercive powers. In a similar way palliatives created the conditions for society to achieve the Socialist community.

That Fairchild as a result of these views came to find himself increasingly isolated in the BSP was closely bound up with his belief that the International should not break up into two rival bodies. His displeasure at the Labour Party's refusal to allow BSP delegates to attend at Berne, along with his growing dissatisfaction with the political direction of "Hands Off Russia", led him to try and steer a middle course between the two Internationals. The BSP, at this time uncertain whether to embrace Berne or Moscow, was beginning to favour Moscow following publication in The Call on 17 April of details of the First Congress of the Third International. Fairchild found himself increasingly unhappy with the direction the BSP was taking. The turning-point came with an article from John Bryan in The Call, published in the same issue as the resolution establishing a Communist International, in which he called on the BSP to make up its mind and decide where it stood as regards the two Internationals. Written on the eve of the BSP's Annual Conference Rothstein's article called for affiliation to the Third International on the grounds that the BSP was a revolutionary party opposed to Parliamentary forms of warfare. Rothstein was convinced that the British working class, despite being "'traditionally" wedded to Parliamentary methods,' confronted 'the same social factors - modern industry, capitalism, proletariat; and, now, the world-war' which had led to revolution in Russia, Germany and Hungary. A similar revolutionary crisis was developing

in Britain, and events would mirror those that had taken place in the above mentioned countries. In such a situation the British working class would 'forget their Parliamentary "traditions," and confront both Parliament and the Government with some such tangible expression of their will as a Labour Convention, a congress of delegates from the rank and file, call it a Soviet. . . ' rivalling Parliamentary Government:

. . . what will parliament and the Government do then? Will they dissolve themselves and invite the workers to take their seats? Or will they start parleying with them, thereby themselves making the Convention or the Soviet a permanent institution, rivalling in authority and disputing power with Parliament.'⁴⁸

The 'Sovietist resolution' which provoked much debate at the Annual Conference on the 20 April repeated these sentiments. Kendall's assertion that Rothstein was the moving spirit behind this resolution relies heavily on Fairchild's role at this Conference, and his subsequent accusation that the 'Sovietist resolution' had been introduced in an underhand fashion. The resolution, introduced by J.F. Hodgson (Reading), argued 'that the World War is bound to give birth to a World Revolution in which the hitherto exploited and oppressed classes in all countries

would seize the reins of power, overthrow the rule of the capitalist and landlord classes parading in the shoddy cloak of Parliamentarism and sham democracy, establish the direct rule of the workers and peasants by means of Soviets, and wind up the Capitalist order of society, . . .'⁴⁹

The resolution was opposed by Fairchild who moved its amendment by deleting the above indented words and their replacement by the less divisive, (would) "supersede capitalism." ' He urged delegates not to ignore recent developments and to support the Triple Alliance in its challenge to parliamentary authority rather than be caught

'playing at Soviet building.' H. Alexander in seconding the amendment pointed out that 'differences between this country and Russia, necessitated different methods here. He urged the Party not to "Jazz." '50

Fairchild's views, however, gained little support and the amendment was defeated by an overwhelming majority. The strongest censure coming from John Maclean who remarked that 'Fairchild had "gone over to the enemy." '51

Disagreement between Fairchild and the Conference continued during the debate on Socialist Unity, and showed the extent to which Fairchild had drifted towards the Centre Right of the Party. The resolution that 'steps be taken by the Conference to unite the BSP, ILP, and SLP in a united Socialist Party,' was opposed by Fairchild on the grounds that 'recent negotiations with the ILP and SLP . . . afforded small grounds for believing that unity could be had on any other terms with the SLP unless that body swallowed the BSP. With the ILP', he argued, 'there was some prospect of being able to work.' The resolution in favour of Unity was adopted by 83 votes against 33.

Fairchild had more success in opposing the resolution on affiliation to the Communist International. The resolution, moved by W. McLaine, called on the 'Executive Committee to sever the party's connection with the International Socialist Bureau and to affiliate to the Third International established at Moscow.' In language reminiscent of Rothstein's article, 'What is Our Position?', McLaine called on the BSP to 'say where it stands. The Berne Conference was a farce, and our duty was to get into touch with the Communist International.' Fairchild, in speaking against the resolution, 'asked the Conference not to be precipitate in declaring its adhesion to the Moscow group of Socialist parties. . . . Two internationals would weaken Socialism. There was still a chance, just a bare chance, that common ground might be found. Let the door be left open a little longer.'52 Fairchild's argument prevailed and the question was

referred back to the branches. Agreement was also found on the question of continued affiliation to the Labour Party, with Fairchild, Alexander and John Maclean all speaking in favour. Their views were supported by the overwhelming number of delegates, 86 votes in favour and 32 against⁴⁷.

Events, however, were to take a dramatic turn in May when Fairchild resigned his editorship of The Call. According to George Deer, in correspondence with Walter Kendall, Fairchild's resignation had been a result of 'his refusal to print an article from Rothstein.'⁴⁸ Deer, a member of the BSP Executive, described The Call as being 'dependent on Rothstein's subsidies.' John Maclean later charged that 'Rothstein's attempt to buy Fairchild . . . brought on his retiral from the party.' However, it must also be urged that Fairchild's position within the Party had changed dramatically since he assumed the editorship of The Call in February 1916, as Kendall himself admits:

A party discussion was opened by Rothstein on 17 April and continued in the columns of The Call until September. Fairchild could muster scarcely an ally against the Sovietism which had captured the party and its leaders.⁴⁹

The party discussion which began with Rothstein's 'What is Our Position?' coincided with a change in policy by the British Government towards the RSFSR. All attempts at establishing a modus vivendi with Soviet Russia were jettisoned and all-out aid, short of direct military action, was extended to the 'Whites.' The formation of the Communist International, and the subsequent negotiations for the CPGB, took place against this backdrop. The Comintern's need for a British Communist Party affiliated to the Third International grew in importance as the Soviet Government became increasingly isolated in world opinion. The negotiations leading to the formation of the CPGB and affiliation to the Third International coincided with moves already taking place amongst the Socialist groups towards Socialist Unity. In these circumstances, the basis upon

which Socialist Unity was to be established led to differences of opinion concerning the role of the Moscow International and the tactics to be pursued. Following the foundation of Comintern the momentum towards Socialist Unity gathered pace, and assumed even greater urgency as the Soviet Government sought to break out of its isolation. This has led several historians, chiefly Kendall, to suggest that the role played by Comintern in influencing the Unity negotiations and the subsequent formation of the Communist Party deflected the Socialist groups from their original path. Rothstein's role as Soviet intermediary distributing Russian funds to Left-wing organisations in Britain was crucial to Kendall's argument. The Comintern, he argued, sought to manufacture 'artificially inspired splits' forcing 'secessions amongst the socialist parties of Europe.'⁵⁵ The isolation of Fairchild within the BSP was seen to be part of this overall design. However, Kendall's history (published in 1969) was strongly influenced by the disavowal of Communism by British intellectuals in the 1950's, and he consequently wrote of developments in the British revolutionary movement between 1917 and 1920 in terms of conspiracy, and not in terms of politics. This allowed him to overlook the fact that Fairchild had moved closer to the ILP in his thinking, and away from the more revolutionary sentiments of the BSP. Kendall's attempts to elevate Fairchild to the position of a potential leader of the BSP, removed only by the manoeuvrings of Rothstein operating behind the scenes, was to fuse Cold War politics with the origins of the British Communist Party. A similar attempt has been made by both Challinor and Kendall in respect of the history of the SLP. Rothstein's connections with the SLP were not as obvious as they were with the BSP. This was partly a result of Rothstein's party affiliation but was also influenced by other factors. In the main the SLP had already embarked on a policy of Socialist Unity before Rothstein's financial intervention, and the debates that took place in the Party regarding

Unity were dominated by purely domestic considerations. Foremost of these was the reformist character of the BSP and the ILP, and the continued affiliation of both groups to the Labour Party. Rothstein's intervention took the form of funding for the candidatures of Paul, Murphy and MacManus at the 1918 Coupon election and financial assistance for the Socialist which had become a weekly in January 1919. The fact that Paul, Murphy and MacManus formed the main focus for Socialist Unity in the SLP led to claims that Rothstein had been influencing events from as early as Nov./Dec. 1918. Further evidence of Rothstein's activities was found in the expansion of the Socialist into a weekly in the same month that a special Conference to discuss Unity had been held in Glasgow; although the need to report the 40 Hour strikes would have been a more pressing concern. Until the shift in British foreign policy in April 1919, and the foundation of the Communist international in March, Rothstein's purpose as Soviet intermediary had been to finance groups who opposed intervention in Russia, and unity at this time was not an immediate issue for Russian Communists. In April, however, the situation changed and the formation of a Communist Party in Britain supporting the Soviet form of Government became an essential part of Lenin's strategy, both in terms of world revolution and in terms of applying pressure on the British Government to halt military intervention. It was at this point that Rothstein raised the question of affiliation to the Third International and the debate on Sovietism followed. A clear majority of the BSP at this early stage voted in favour of Sovietism at their Easter Conference, and questioned the efficacy of Parliament and trade unionism as methods of working-class advance, while, ironically, remaining wedded to these forms of political and industrial organisation. The debate in the BSP, however, became more heated once the inference was drawn that support for Sovietism was incompatible with continued support for Parliamentarism and trade unionism. The need to

found a new Party outside these familiar concepts, which would accept the conditions set down by the Third International, assumed greater importance for Party members following the referendum of the vote on affiliation to the Communist International at the party conference.

The debate on Sovietism, opened by Rothstein in the columns of The Call on 5 June, had as its main purpose to secure a positive vote from the branches in favour of Sovietism and affiliation to the Third International. Rothstein's articles, therefore, sought to persuade readers of The Call that Sovietism constituted a higher form of political and industrial democracy than Parliamentarism and trade unionism. His first article rejected Parliament as a sham democracy, where the individual, isolated from his class, voted solely on a basis of self-interest. Sovietism, on the other hand, operated a system of 'corporate (as distinguished from individual) voting in workshops and various Labour organisations,' and, therefore, encouraged participation on a wider class basis and in the interests of Labour.⁵⁶

Trade unionism, was seen to be similar in its defects to those he had associated with Parliamentarism, where the interests of a particular section of society - the aristocracy of labour - dominated over the wider interests of the class. The structure of trade unionism militated against revolutionary organisation, consolidating the bureaucratic work of the trade union official, and suffocating the initiatives of the rank and file. Trade unionists, Rothstein argued, had to look towards the Soviet model in order to prepare for revolution. The shop stewards' movement and the workers' committees were to form the basis of the Soviet form of organisation amongst the British working class. However, Rothstein having dismissed Parliament and the trade unions as ineffective instruments of revolution, nevertheless, refused to jettison these bodies completely, preferring to see in them a secondary role in the struggle for Socialism:

This line does not by any means imply that we must abandon parliamentary warfare, just as it does not mean that we must leave our trade unions. Any opportunity or place for our propaganda is good for us, whether it be an election platform, or the floor of the House of Commons, or the meeting of our trade union branch. What we must bear in mind, and what we must propagate, is that the Revolution will not come about through the instrumentality either of Parliament or the trade unions, but by the direct action, political and economic of the rank and file through their politico-economical organisations of the Soviet type.⁵⁷

The following week Rothstein's article was attacked by H. Alexander for being impracticable, and an ill-considered attempt to apply the Russian model to British conditions. Britain had emerged from the war in a relatively strong position compared with Russia and the Central Powers, and was not facing an immediate revolutionary crisis. In such conditions it was futile to indulge in articles designed solely to prove the superiority of one form of democracy over another, when the 'possibility of establishing in this country the Soviet system here and now', has still to be 'proven.'⁵⁸ A revolutionary programme organised around the Soviet as an expression of working-class power had little or no relevance for the British working class, whose outlook had already been determined by a degree of prosperity and involvement in the capitalist system. The British working class, Alexander argued, was still wedded to a policy of permeation and would not be swayed by arguments that the mere creation of Soviets would lead to a revolutionary situation.

Fairchild was even more critical of Rothstein's rejection of Parliament and trade union organisation, accusing him of utopianism and flights of fancy 'far from the facts that govern politics.' Ridiculing Rothstein's call for a Labour Convention rivalling Parliament, Fairchild argued that if the ruling classes used all the power at their disposal to prevent the working-class from securing a foothold in

Parliament, then they would be unlikely to 'allow the establishment of a permanent convention pursuing war on existing society. Governments do not wink at that kind of thing.'⁵⁹ At a time when the Labour Party can poll 'two and a-half million votes for a workers' political party, and . . . the idea of a political strike spreads abroad', Rothstein retreats into 'the moribund shop-stewards' movement and the highly unstable workers' committees' as the closest expression to Russian Sovietism in Britain.⁶⁰ Fairchild's own position had changed significantly. On the eve of the BSP Conference Fairchild had seen in the workers' committees a means of penetrating the capitalist State, having accepted that Parliament was unfit for economic administration. Those who advocated Sovietism, on the other hand, now did so because they believed that the impetus for revolutionary change in Britain would come from the class struggle organised as much on the industrial as the political front. J.F. Hodgson, who had proposed the Sovietist resolution at the BSP's recent conference attacked Fairchild for refusing to see in the various "unofficial Movements" a working class will to power. In what he saw as an increasingly militant industrial environment *he remarked on the growing importance of the unofficial movement at a time when the trade unions were becoming increasingly aware of their political strength. It was an argument equally applicable to the divisive question of continued affiliation to the Labour Party:*

The unofficial movement inside the trade unions is doing exactly the kind of work we wish to be done - we could not have an unofficial movement outside the official movement. In the same way we are an unofficial movement inside the Labour Party.⁶¹

In all, seven letters appeared critical of the stand taken by Fairchild and Alexander. In 'A Rejoinder' Fairchild charged that the Sovietist resolution that had opened the debate on parliamentarianism and trade unionism had been sprung on the conference at the last minute, and

had not, therefore, been circulated among the branches before the conference. Furthermore, in a letter to The Call, Fairchild later claimed that the resolution had been drafted by someone who was not a member of the BSP and had been forced upon an 'invertebrate Executive Council' hinting at Rothstein's influence.⁶² In summing up the debate, however, Rothstein pointed out that both Alexander and Fairchild remained in 'a hopeless minority in the party', and failed to understand the majority's standpoint. The experience of the German and Russian revolutions had given ample proof that Parliament could neither initiate nor guarantee a successful outcome to a revolution. Rothstein remained convinced that Parliament had a role to play but only if socialists continued to 'think "dialectically", that is, in process.'⁶³ In October the BSP branches voted overwhelmingly in favour of affiliation to the Third International and Fairchild resigned from the party.⁶⁴ Despite Kendall's attempts to portray Fairchild as the party's political leader, shunted to the periphery by Rothstein acting on Comintern instructions, Fairchild had independently reached a position in his thinking significantly different from the majority of the BSP.

However, the issue of Parliamentarism had not been satisfactorily resolved, and while Fairchild had openly proclaimed his support for the class struggle within the parliamentary tradition, the BSP remained reluctant to break with Parliamentarism as a means of organising the mass of non-political workers. In many respects the question of continued affiliation to the Labour Party and parliamentary tactics reflected the 'dual policy' imperatives of Soviet diplomacy. The ending of the "economic blockade" of Soviet Russia on 6 January 1920 strengthened the position of both the parliamentarians in Britain, and the advocates of normalisation of diplomatic relations in Russia among the revolutionaries. This led to a fusion of interests between the two groups that determined the nature of the BSP's and later the CPGB's,

relationship with Comintern. On 22 January 1920 The Call published an article from Tom Quelch entitled 'Parliamentarianism, Lenin and the BSP' which claimed Lenin's support for the BSP's pro-Parliamentary stand. Quelch referred to a letter from Lenin in reply to 'a leading English Communist', published in the September edition of Kommunisticheskii Internatsional and extracts recently printed in the Newcastle Daily Journal, that favoured participation in parliamentary elections by a revolutionary party.⁶⁵ What was more interesting, however, was that Tom Quelch, a leading figure in the party, should have demonstrated so forcibly such a positive predilection for parliamentary politics so soon after recent BSP statements in support of the unofficial movement in the trade unions:

What is the position of England to-day? Are the workers rejecting political action? Are they solely concentrating on "direct action?" Are there no indications of the growing class-consciousness of the English proletariat? What about the recent bye-elections? What about Spen Valley? Ever since the last General Election any ordinary political observer would have detected a growing class-consciousness, a growing interest in political action, and a growing distrust of the bourgeois political parties on the part of the British working-class.⁶⁶

Such an unabashed statement of parliamentarism would have alienated the other socialist groups in Britain seeking unity under the banner of the Communist Party. The tortuous negotiations that had been underway since Easter 1918 appeared to have come to a complete standstill in January 1920 when the SLP withdrew from the negotiations. A ballot of its members firstly on the question of unity and secondly on the question of Labour Party affiliation had produced a favourable vote on the first question and a majority opposed to the second. The issue of parliamentarism and Labour Party affiliation had not been satisfactorily dealt with in Lenin's September article. Lenin, despite the rival claims of Pankhurst and Quelch,

was reluctant to favour one side to the total detriment of the other and called instead for the formation of two Communist parties in Britain if agreement could not be reached. It was clear that Lenin, complaining of a lack of information from Rothstein at this stage, did not understand the full implications of such a step when disagreements between the rival socialist groups precluded any useful co-operation between the anti and pro-parliamentarians.⁶⁷ Rothstein's role in bringing these groups together and ensuring that the unity negotiations took place, although heavily criticised by historians, rejected Lenin's two party option and seized the initiative in grouping the emergent CPGB around the political programme of the BSP.⁶⁸ It was Rothstein, according to his son Andrew, who first proposed to the leadership of the BSP that they should approach the other socialist groups with a view to the formation of a Communist Party in Britain, and that he would act as an intermediary between the interested groups.⁶⁹ When these negotiations floundered over the question of affiliation to the Labour Party it was Rothstein who 'confidentially, offered the SLP leaders a compromise' to ballot all Communist Party members on the question of Labour Party affiliation three months after the CPGB's formation.⁷⁰ The rejection of this 'compromise' by the SLP undermines Kendall's argument that financial subventions were calling the tune in the unity negotiations. Again the refusal by the SLP to jointly publish Lenin's State and Revolution, a venture initiated by Rothstein, is evidence of an independence of thought outside financial considerations.⁷¹

Rothstein's increasing belief in the efficacy of parliamentary forms of struggle contradicted earlier statements made during the debate on Sovietism which followed the 1919 Easter Conference of the BSP. While revolutionaries in the BSP, along with Rothstein, continued to believe in the inevitability of revolution, they were less convinced of its imminence. Accordingly, there was

less support given to 'direct action' as a means of immediate revolutionary advance and more attention was directed towards a long drawn out struggle which would make use of a parliamentary struggle for power. Lenin, since his reply to Sylvia Pankhurst's letter in the Kommunisticheski Internatsional, also favoured parliamentarism as a means of preparing Britain for communism, and was opposed to any adventurist attempts by revolutionaries in the industrial organisations to make a bid for power. From the end of 1919 he began to collect information for Left-Wing Communism: An Infantile Disorder, from among others Rothstein, Joe Fineberg (who was then working for the Comintern in Moscow) and Lansbury during his visit to Moscow in January.⁷² Rothstein contributed a lengthy article on 'Revolutionary Perspectives in England', published in the Russian language edition of the Kommunisticheski Internatsional, which addressed many of the issues Lenin was to raise later in Left-Wing Communism concerning the British communist movement and affiliation to the Labour Party. Rothstein regarded Britain as being at the same point of development as Russian society on the eve of the February Revolution. All sections of society, he argued, expected a Labour Government to be formed in the near future. The reactionary nature of this Government would force the working class movement further and further towards the Left. The bourgeoisie finding itself unable to resume political power would stage a coup d'état along the lines of Kornilov in Russia or Kapp in Germany, leading to Britain's October revolution. The proper place for British communists, therefore, was inside the Labour Party struggling for a communist programme and preparing the ground for the second Soviet stage of the British revolution which would follow inevitably the demise of the Labour Government.⁷³

As the drive towards unity gathered momentum the BSP began to appeal more frequently to the authority of the Third International. On 22 April The Call published Sylvia

Pankhurst's letter to Lenin and Lenin's reply with a commentary by Fred Willis outlining Lenin's support for BSP tactics. In the same issue the statement of the Executive Committee of the Third International appeared under the signature of Zinoviev which drew a distinction between parliamentarism, which sought to change the present system constitutionally through Parliament; and Sovietism which sought to use parliamentarism for overthrowing Parliament, . . .' The invitation to the supporters of the Soviets and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat to join in one 'great, powerful Communist Party' affiliated to the Third International was broad enough to incorporate all the groups seeking unity in Britain:

We have to state again that the most vital part of the struggle must be outside of Parliament - on the street. It is clear that the most effective weapons of the workers against capitalism are: the strike, the revolt, armed insurrection. Comrades have to keep in mind the following: organisation of the Party, instalment of Party groups in the trade unions, leadership of the masses, revolutionary agitation among the masses, etc. Parliamentary activities and participation in elections must be used only as a secondary measure - no more.⁷⁴

The Russian drive towards Communist Unity across Europe under the aegis of the Third International had assumed greater urgency since the Polish declaration of war on Soviet Russia on 26 April. Up until this point relations between Soviet Russia and the West were heading towards normalization, while communist propaganda throughout Western Europe was becoming less forceful in its appeals to revolution. With the occupation of Kiev on 8 May, however, the need for a united Communist Party in Britain became of more immediate concern as an additional force in the negotiations between the Soviet and Western Governments. On 27 May a Soviet Trade Delegation arrived in London, headed by Leonid Krasin; ostensibly to discuss trade issues these talks nevertheless had a political agenda. Soon after the Delegation's arrival Rothstein was added to the group,

according to Kendall to prevent any further threat of deportation during the negotiations for Communist Unity.⁷⁵ Throughout June the Krasin-Lloyd George negotiations centred around the sensitive issue of trade and the British demand that propaganda directed against any government of the Entente should stop. Krasin sought to widen these talks and demanded a comprehensive peace treaty before Russia would cease anti-British activities. On 16 June Krasin issued a veiled threat to Lloyd George that Soviet foreign policy operated on two levels, dominated by two opposing groups - the one seeking trade and the normalisation of relations while the other, 'a minority . . . preferred world revolution to world peace, . . .'⁷⁶

The formation of a united Communist Party in Britain was now a matter of urgency given Lenin's overall design to isolate this 'minority' in his party. A trade agreement with Britain would not merely have this effect; but would also serve as a step towards securing full diplomatic recognition, and the protection of the Soviet State in the world system of States. A Communist Party in Britain exploiting the parliamentary system to promote communist ideals would act as a safeguard for the full diplomatic recognition of Lenin's Government post-bellum. *A combative Communist Party concentrating solely on the offensive, and extra-parliamentary activity, would have the opposite effect.* At one last meeting on 29 June before his return to Russia on 1 July Krasin reiterated that his Government was ready to give up communist propaganda in Western countries in exchange for a trade agreement.⁷⁷

The negotiations for Communist Unity took place within this framework. At the recent Annual Conferences of the various socialist groups and parties all were agreed on the establishment of a Communist Party on the principles of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat, the Soviet System, and the Third International. The SLP was opposed to unity with the BSP fearing that its anti-parliamentarian stance would be swamped by the parliamentarism of that body. Accordingly,

a rival Conference took place in Nottingham at which a Communist Unity Group (CUG) was formed by Bell, MacManus and Paul prepared to continue unity negotiations with the BSP. The sticking point among the groups seeking unity was the question of affiliation to the Labour Party. Lenin's views on parliamentarism had been accepted by the WSF, SWSS and the CUG but the Labour Party remained an anathema to many revolutionaries who had been in the forefront of the industrial organisations. The first concrete move towards the formation of the Communist Party took place on 24 April with a further Conference on Communist Unity held in London. Interestingly, the views of the BSP proved to be in a minority, and a resolution moved by Sylvia Pankhurst and seconded by William Paul to 'proceed to the formation of a Communist Party on the basis of non-affiliation to the Labour Party' was carried by 8 votes to 3. The BSP delegation drew back from the notion of a Committee to carry the resolution into effect without first reporting back to the BSP Executive. Tom Bell's resolution that the new Communist Party 'participate in Parliamentary action in order to stimulate the revolutionary fervour of the working class, and to use it for agitational purposes' was passed by 5 votes to 2.⁷⁸ A considerable amount of agreement had been reached.

Rothstein's role in this process was well-documented in the Cabinet Reports on Revolutionary Organisations throughout 1920. As early as January reports were appearing that Rothstein was organising events behind the scenes:

Special attention is called to the secret negotiations now proceeding on the Continent between adherents of the Third Moscow International. British subjects are taking part in it and there is an intention to transform the British Socialist party into the "Communist Party". The money has been furnished by Theodore Rothstein, a Russian Jew journalist formerly employed in the War Office, he is believed to have received it by courier from Moscow. Quotations are given from a letter written by Lenin to a British Communist, in which he declares that the cause of Communism will

be best used by using the parliamentary machine. Lenin's letter dated Aug. 30 1919, shows the difficulty of communication with this country.⁷⁹

At the time of the Easter Conferences, Rothstein, according to these Reports, paid fifty pounds to Saklatvala to manufacture a change in the Executive of the ILP and to bring the ILP Left-wing into the unity negotiations. Further evidence of Rothstein's role in the ILP can be found in the essay by Rajani Palme Dutt in the Academy of Sciences volume Imperializm i borba rabochego klassa, who writes that 'the leading role' in overcoming the 'difficulties and differences between the participants' was played by Rothstein.⁸⁰

In June it was reported that both Sylvia Pankhurst and Theodore Rothstein were in touch with the Russian Trading Delegation, while Krasin was cautioned over involvement in British domestic affairs.⁸¹ Clearly Rothstein's involvement in the Unity negotiations was well-documented; however, the exigencies of both British and Soviet foreign policy during the trade negotiations led to a degree of tolerance of these activities by the British authorities.

In July, however, the situation changed dramatically when the Red Army went on to the offensive and threatened to occupy Warsaw. At the Second Congress of Comintern this changed situation led to renewed calls for a revolutionary war. Although Lenin was less enthusiastic than many in his Party he saw in this situation an opportunity to put additional pressure on Lloyd George in respect of recognition of the Soviet Government.

By the end of July Krasin was on his way back to London from Moscow. This time he was accompanied by a member of the Politburo, Lev Kamenev, who was now head of the Soviet delegation, while Krasin held second position. On 4 and 6 August, both men met with Lloyd George, although neither meeting proved very successful. Overriding all other considerations on the Soviet side was formal recognition of the Soviet State, and not a solution to the Polish problem.

It was undoubtedly to the Soviets advantage to leave the Polish question unresolved; they could use Russia's presence in Poland as a bargaining chip in any future negotiations with Lloyd George while the Red Army tightened its hold around Warsaw. Unquestionably, the international situation determined the final arrangements, and to a certain extent the agenda, for the inaugural conference of the CPGB. The two sticking points of parliamentarism and affiliation to the Labour Party had been to all intents and purposes resolved at the Second Congress of the Third International in favour of the position being put forward by the BSP. The need for unity at such a stage in the trade negotiations and the Polish war had been a decisive factor in Rothstein's bringing together the disparate socialist parties in Britain. The general desire for unity had undoubtedly manifested itself within the internal politics of the British revolutionary movement; whereas the pressure to maintain the drive towards unity was undoubtedly provided by the Comintern. Within the context of the international situation this pressure threatened to undermine the revolutionary potential of the new party and ineluctably wed the policy of the CPGB to the needs of Soviet foreign policy. The CPGB formed mainly from the political parties, or at least under their dominance, did not emerge as a revolutionary force capable of mounting an offensive against the British State in August 1920 because the exigencies of both Soviet foreign and domestic policy demanded a period of peace. The Soviet Government was reluctant to be seen as instrumental in spreading industrial unrest to Britain. Although the threat of a general strike against military intervention in support of Poland by British forces was very real; this threat, partly caused by war-weariness, was not seen by Lenin as a tactic whereby a revolutionary confrontation with the British Government could be engineered. Lenin's own tactics were far more cautious. On the eve of the inaugural conference of the CPGB The Call published extracts from Lenin's Left-

Wing Communism dealing with the current situation in Britain. His conclusions recalled those put forward by Rothstein earlier in the year in the Kommunisticheskii Internatsional. Both men held to the view that the Labour Party in power would inevitably fail, and a leftward shift would take place in British politics following the Labour Party's collapse. In this first stage of the British Revolution "Soviet" men of politics affiliated to the Labour Party, would prepare 'from inside Parliament the triumph of the Soviets' before 'dismissing Parliament altogether.'⁸² The parallels with the Russian Revolutions were obvious. The Communist Party, like the Bolsheviki in the Duma before them, would form part of the Labour group in Parliament until such time as that Parliamentary Government, like the Russian Constituent Assembly, would be dismissed. Up until that point headlong rushes into confrontation with the Government had to be discouraged:

It is as if some ten thousand soldiers would rush into battle against an enemy five times their strength at a time when it is imperative for them 'to halt,' 'turn aside from the road,' conclude even a 'compromise' so as to hold out until the arrival of some reinforcements a hundred thousand strong, but who, however, cannot come to their assistance immediately. Such a policy is intellectual childishness, and in no way serious tactics of a revolutionary class.⁸³

Lenin's caution, his postponement of revolution and apparent readiness to 'conclude even a "compromise" ' fitted Lenin's world view during the Polish crisis. In many respects the two aspects of the 'dual policy' were at last beginning to complement one another. The financial subventions paid by Rothstein to the various Left-wing and labour organisations did not, contrary to Kendall's view, have as their sole objective the creation of a Communist Party in Britain subordinate to Moscow; the dissemination of literature and funds to those groups outside the Communist Party and prepared to comment favourably on the

policies of Soviet Russia, was also seen as a crucial arm of Soviet foreign policy. In many respects this tied the hands of the Communist Party in its dealings with other sympathetic, but essentially non-revolutionary, bodies. This became apparent in the divisions of opinion that opened up between the Councils of Action, dubbed by many militants the Councils of Inaction, and the "Hands Off Russia" Committee at the end of August 1920. Rothstein, who had returned to Moscow on a visit on 11 August, had helped establish the broad-based "Hands Off Russia" movement but had not been directly involved in the activities of the Councils of Action, other than through the Russian Trading Delegation and his son Andrew. The F.O. which had intercepted a number of wires from Chicherin to Krasin in London, compiled a Report on Theodore Rothstein, which left no doubt as to the role Communists were to play in Labour sponsored organisations. This wire was despatched on 9 September almost a month after Rothstein's departure from England:

"ROTHSTEIN desires me to transmit to you the following "I notice in the papers an inclination on the part of the Council of Action towards the side of agreement with adaptability to the policy of the British Government. This is unavoidable, having regard to the present composition of the Council, and therefore I should consider necessary the energetic continuation of the agitation among the masses themselves through the Committees of "Hands off Russia" and the ruthless exposure of the traitorous tendencies of the Council through the Communist party. Communicate this view of mine to KAMENEFF for transmission to my son and instruct KAMENEFF to offer £500 for the use of the Committee indicated"*

While involved with "Hands off Russia" in Britain, Rothstein had been less involved with developing revolutionary tactics than those militants who had remained in the SLP, and other Left-wing groups, who refused to join the CPGB. Their refusal to join the CPGB, however, ironically in the face of their militancy, now allowed them

a role in the newly-formed Labour Councils of Action; whereas the Communists found it increasingly difficult to find representation on these bodies. The Communist strategy of sabotaging the Labour Party from within had pushed the Communists into an alliance with the left-wing of that body on a political level, to the neglect of industrial organisation. The subsidy paid to the Daily Herald earlier by Rothstein working under the code name Mozart, while successful in disseminating the propaganda essential for the formation of the Councils of Action, had merely reinforced this political trend, and undermined combative industrial tactics.⁸⁵ Cabinet Reports suggest that the Russian Trade Delegation through the manipulation of the Labour Press, in particular the Daily Herald, helped to create a situation in Britain where even the most moderate trade unionist believed war with Soviet Russia was inevitable. As a result the initial input into the CPGB, formed on 31 July, was effectively encapsulated in the phrase "Hands off Russia", and remained a long way from an expression of a revolutionary will to power.

With Rothstein's removal from the scene - he was not allowed back into Britain following his visit to Moscow - the Communist Party's direct contact with the Russian communist movement had been severed.⁸⁶ Strong links, however - a result of Rothstein's and other Russian political emigre's involvement in the British labour movement - had been forged. In many respects their work was carried on by Theodore Rothstein's son Andrew, whose subsequent role in the CPGB has yet to be researched. His death in 1994, almost a hundred years after Theodore Rothstein's initial involvement in British Marxism, marked the ending of a unique chapter in Anglo-Russian relations, which influenced not only the history of the British Communist Party, but also the relationship between the two States.

Notes.

1. E.H. Carr, The Bolshevik Revolution 1917-1923 Vol.3 (1953) p.32.
2. See W. Kendall The Revolutionary Movement in Britain 1900-21 (1969) p.xiii; Challinor The Origins of British Bolshevism (1977) p.221; H. Pelling The British Communist Party. A Historical Profile (1958).
3. Leonard Woolf Downhill All The Way (1967) p.18.
4. The Socialist Feb. 1918 The Socialist's emphasis; See also Workers' Dreadnought 28 Jan. 1918.
5. R.H. Bruce Lockhart Memoirs Of A British Agent (1932) p.197.
6. ibid. p.200.
7. ibid. p.201.
8. ibid. p.202.
9. ibid. p.204.
10. The Call 10 Jan. 1918.
11. ibid. 17 Jan. 1918.
12. Carr op cit. p.31; Labour Leader 24 Jan. 1918.
13. The Call 28 Feb. 1918.
14. The BSP had reaffiliated to the Labour Party in 1916.
15. The Call 7, 14 & 21 March 1918.
16. 'Whose were these initials? Mozart! Father had a passionate love of German classical music.' Andrew Rotshtein 'Iz vocpominanii ob ottse' in Imperializm i borba rabochego klassa (Moscow 1960) p.51.
17. The Call 9 May 1918.
18. Workers' Dreadnought 6 July 1918; The Call 4 July 1918. The Labour Party had finally accepted the collective ownership of the means of production as part of its constitution.
19. Labour Party Eighteenth Annual Report 1918 pp.35 & 60.
20. The Call 4 July 1918.
21. ibid. 11 July 1918.
22. ibid. 29 Aug. 1918 and 24 Oct. 1918.
23. ibid. 25 July 1918.
24. ibid. 8 Aug. 1918.
25. ibid.
26. ibid. 29 Aug. 1918.
27. ibid. 26 Oct. 1918.
28. ibid. 29 Aug. 1918.
29. See ibid. 12, 19 Sept. & 10 Oct. 1918.
30. F.O.371/3347/179551 29 Oct. 1918.
31. ibid.
32. See above fn.3.
33. The Call 24 & 31 Oct. 1918.
34. ibid. 7 Nov. 1918.
35. ibid. 21 Nov. 1918.
36. ibid. 5 Dec. 1918.
37. ibid.
38. ibid. 26 Dec. 1918.
39. ibid.

40. ibid. 16 Jan. 1919.
41. ibid. 23 Jan. 1919.
42. ibid.
43. ibid.
44. ibid.
45. ibid. 6 March 1919.
46. ibid.
47. ibid. 27 March 1919.
48. ibid. 17 April 1919.
49. ibid. 24 April 1919.
50. ibid.
51. ibid.
52. ibid.
53. Kendall op cit. p.388 fn.33.
54. ibid. p.202.
55. ibid. p.225.
56. The Call 5 June 1919.
57. ibid. 12 June 1919.
58. ibid. 19 June 1919.
59. ibid. 26 June 1919.
60. ibid.
61. ibid. 17 July 1919.
62. ibid. 28 Aug. 1919 & 4 Sept. 1919.
63. ibid. 11 Sept. 1919.
64. The ballot results announced in The Call on 9 Oct. 1919 showed 98 branches in favour of affiliation to the Third International and only 4 against.
65. The full text of this letter written by Sylvia Pankhurst on 16 July 1919 was not published in English until 2 April 1920 in The Call.
66. The Call 22 Jan. 1920.
67. V.I. Lenin to Theodore Rothstein 27.x 1919; V.I. Lenin to G.V. Chicherin 4.1 1920. Lenin Collected Works Vol.44 pp.304 & 325.
68. See Kendall and Challinor op cit.
69. A. Rotshtein op cit. (Moscow 1960) p.52.
70. ibid.
71. ibid. p.53.
72. Fineberg had returned to Russia in June 1918. He was employed in the Department of Revolutionary Propaganda, producing 'British newspapers, flysheets and so on . . .' for distribution amongst 'Anglo-American soldiers in the Armies of intervention.' Boris Reinstein in Communist International p.431 April 1929, cited Kendall op cit. p.396.
73. Kommunisticheskii Internatsional March 1920.
74. The Call 22 April 1920.
75. Kendall op cit. p.238. See also Kendall fn.14 p.402. F.O.371/6399 12 Jan. 1921 makes the same claim.
76. Lloyd George Papers, House of Lords Library, F202.3.19, quoted in Richard H. Ullman, Anglo-Soviet Relations, 1917-1921, vol.3, The Anglo-Soviet Accord (Princeton 1972) p.105.
77. ibid.
78. The Call 6 May 1920.
79. CAB 24/96/491.

80. CAB 24/103/1009.
R.Palme Dutt 'Fedor Rotshtein - Marksist, borets protiv imperializma' in Imperializm i borba rabochego klassa (Moscow 1960) pp.24-5.
81. CAB 24/106/CP1400.
82. The Call 29 July 1920.
83. ibid.
84. F.O.371/6399 12 Jan 1921.
85. '. . . one Mozart, who was to receive the money from the delegation and to deliver it to Francis Meynell. It has now been pretty conclusively proved that this Mozart is no other than, Theodore Rothstein, and that the name Mozart is an anagram of the Yiddism Dmsart=Red-stone=German=Jew=Rothstein.' CAB 24/111/1804.
86. Kendall suggests that 'since the BSP was regarded with a certain scepticism in Moscow' (a dubious proposition in itself) 'Rothstein was recalled to give first hand information on the British scene and the formation of the CPGB in particular.' (p.246) A view corroborated by Cabinet Reports: 'It is reported that Rothstein's recall to Moscow is connected with Miss Pankhurst's presence in that city. She claims that Rothstein has appropriated for his personal use money given him for propaganda and that he has mismanaged propaganda in this country.' CAB24/111/1805.

However, there is also evidence to suggest that Rothstein left for Moscow in 1920, not to report on unity, but because the Russian Trade Delegation was sending Milyutin to report on progress in the peace talks with Lloyd George, and Rothstein specially asked to be allowed to go. A letter from Lenin which missed him, dated 15.vii 1920, urged him not to go, believing the British Government might play some dirty trick on him! This would not have happened if Lenin wanted his report on unity. (See Lenin Collected Works 4th edition Vol.44 p.403.)

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Conclusion.

The CPGB, contrary to the claims made by Kendall and other historians, was not an 'artificial creation' 'prepared to twist and turn as its masters decreed.'¹ Moscow gold and instructions from the International were of secondary importance in the formation of the CPGB. The debates of 1919 and 1920, which were conducted in the Marxist press, at the foundation conferences of the CPGB, and in local groups, demonstrated that those concerned made up their own minds according to how they assessed the situation.

Moreover, the appeal of the Soviet idea to some sections of the British Left, as one historian has pointed out, was explained 'primarily by the fact that this idea answered to a real theoretical need felt by British revolutionaries as a result of their own domestic experience.'² The arguments over Sovietism in the columns of The Call, and at the 1919 BSP Conference, which led to Fairchild's retreat from the BSP support this conclusion. The main reason why Sovietism won such approval throughout the revolutionary movement was the need of that movement to save itself from fragmentation in post-war conditions: when there was 'no involvement in mass action equivalent to their war-time involvement with the engineers.'³ Sovietism promised to be the vehicle whereby a divided Left could achieve the long desired goal of unity, bringing both the industrial and the political wings of the revolutionary movement together.

More recently one historian has put the Bolshevik Revolution and the formation of the CPGB into its international context; neither event is taken in isolation and seen as a purely Russian or British phenomenon:

Russian in 1905, China in 1911, Mexico from 1911, to name only the most significant, were swept by revolution. In 1908 and again in 1912 the Socialist International threatened the ruling classes of Europe with dire consequences should they dare to plunge the nations into mutual slaughter. The war itself, far from abrogating these conflicts,

deepened and redefined them; at its conclusion there resumed yet another phase of escalating social conflict or full-scale revolutionary outbreaks around the world.⁴

'The Bolshevik Revolution was no isolated event', he continues, 'contingent upon the peculiar circumstances of an economically retarded and militarily defeated Russian Empire, but the watershed of a protracted international revolutionary upheaval which spanned the years preceding and following the war.'⁵ The Russian political emigre community in Britain was part of this process; contributing to developments in both the Russian and British labour movements. Theodore Rothstein's own contribution, spanning thirty five years, suggests that he was a British socialist as well as a Russian one. Moreover, it must be stressed that Rothstein on his arrival in Britain in 1891, was not a Marxist, but a supporter of Narodnaya Volya. The St. Petersburg Strikes of 1895 and the writings of Plekhanov may have introduced Rothstein to Marxism; but it was in London that he became a Marxist in theory and practice, studying and writing about the problems confronting the British working class. As Andrew Rothstein has pointed out in his 1969 review of Kendall's work, 'This was part of his work as a socialist internationalist not as a channel of 'Russian influence'.⁶ It was a natural progression for Rothstein, being domiciled in Britain for twenty nine years and an active British socialist for twenty five, 'to act on behalf of the Bolsheviks in defence of the Soviet Republic from 1918 onwards.'⁷

Apart from Kendall, Challinor's treatment of Rothstein has been positively harmful. Intent on portraying the SLP as the true originators of British Bolshevism, he repeats Kendall's attacks on Rothstein, and also suggests that he misinformed Lenin as to the true situation in Britain. In doing so he questions Rothstein's political credentials. His clumsy attempt to show that Rothstein backed the entry of the Mensheviks into the Provisional Government and was a late convert to Bolshevism, has been exposed by John

Saville as loose historical writing.⁸ Indeed, when Challinor repeats allegations made by John Maclean against Rothstein, he alters the timetable of events in such a way as to suggest that Rothstein's differences with Maclean were a deliberate attempt to exclude Maclean from the unity negotiations. Discussing the failure of the five organisations invited to join the Communist International in April 1919 - the SLP, The IWW of England, the International Workers of Great Britain, the Shop Stewards' Movement and the BSP, 'particularly the tendency represented by John Maclean'⁹ - Challinor claims that Lenin had been informed of Maclean's 'secret expulsion'¹⁰ from the BSP by Rothstein in February 1920, when in fact Maclean made these allegations precisely one year later in February 1921, after Rothstein was barred from re-entering Britain:

While it must remain a matter for speculation as to the exact extent to which Rothstein himself was responsible for the outcome, the strange fact is that none of the above organisations, (the five initially invited to join the CI) with the exception of the BSP, actually came into the Communist Party. And even in this instance, the group specifically mentioned, that around John Maclean, appears (my emphasis) to have been debarred. In his 'Open Letter to Lenin', Maclean alleged that Rothstein arranged his secret expulsion from the BSP.²⁸ When the last BSP conference was held, Maclean tried to attend as the delegate from Tradeston branch, but Ernest Cant and the conference arrangements committee would not accept his credentials. From then on, Maclean was effectively debarred from participating in the negotiations that led to the formation of the Communist party. This may (my emphasis) have been because of Rothstein's influence behind the scenes.²⁹ 11

The footnoting 28 & 29 are Challinor's. Despite the fact that 'appears' and 'may' are not conclusive evidence, Challinor has dated Maclean's 'Open letter to Lenin' as 3 February 1920 (footnote 28) and not 3 February 1921. Footnote 29 is dated Vanguard August 1920. This publisher's error creates the impression that the dispute between

Rothstein and Maclean had been a dominant feature in the negotiations leading up to the formation of the CPGB and that Lenin had been kept informed. This flies in the face of the evidence. The cause of the disagreement - an offer of a full-time post in 'Hands Off Russia' made to Maclean in 1919 - was not intended to keep Maclean from playing a full role in the unity negotiations, but to bring him more securely into the fold. Maclean was very badly off, physically as well as financially, when he came out of jail. That Maclean came out with persecution mania was well known (a possible legacy from his dealings with Petrov?); to offer him a post in the 'Hands Off Russia' campaign was not an attempt to "neutralise" him, any more than others were "neutralised" by such activity.¹² Over the course of 1920 there is evidence to suggest that Maclean's health was deteriorating. Cabinet Reports are clear on this, and highlight the detrimental effect Maclean's health was having on those working closely with him:

It has long been obvious to the ordinary observer that John Maclean is insane; his colleagues have now come to the same conclusion as a result of his constant references to "spies" being present at public and private meetings: The decisive point was his severance from the Labour College at Glasgow and his abuse of former colleagues.¹³

The Executive of the BSP, no doubt through Rothstein, did warn Lenin of Maclean's mental state which undoubtedly affected Moscow's view of Maclean.¹⁴ But this was not a conspiracy against him - as Cabinet Reports suggest the BSP was reluctant to abandon Maclean:

The Communists have been slow to realise, what was patent to everyone else, that John Maclean is the victim of the monomania of the "hidden hand", and they are now reaping a harvest of suspicion from their loyalty to him. Maclean's obsession is quite likely to break up the Communist movement, for he has a large following in Glasgow and in season and out of season he gives vent to these denunciations. The Executive of the British Socialist Party has warned Lenin of John

Maclean's mental state and in future the Soviet Government will not have relations with him, though he is still their official representative in Glasgow. He is of that temper which will become more uncompromising if any attempt is made to silence him.¹⁵

Challinor's awkward attempt to show that Rothstein had continually 'sided with the right-wing and against the Bolsheviks', was intended to compromise the revolutionary nature of the CPGB.¹⁶ From its foundation the Party (apparently Rothstein's creation) was seen as a reformist body anathema to the revolutionary socialism of Maclean and the SLP:

In Maclean's eyes, reformism would never overthrow the existing system, but Theodore Rothstein took a much more optimistic view. He backed left reformists in the Labour Party and trade unions in the hope that he would eventually win them over. Criticism became muted or was dropped altogether. Instead friendly offers of financial assistance were made. While the precise figure remains uncertain it appears that the Daily Herald was offered between ~~£~~75,000 and ~~£~~125,000.¹⁷

We have travelled full circle. Moscow gold reappears as the motivating force behind British communism. Rothstein has the 'ability to bestow largesse upon pliant individuals and organisations'. The 'living embodiment of the first successful workers' revolution', Rothstein, we are told, possessed 'tremendous moral authority.'¹⁸ From two very different political standpoints Kendall and Challinor have arrived at the same conclusion: that financial considerations helped form the political opinions of British revolutionaries in the negotiations leading to the formation of the CPGB in 1920.

Clearly Rothstein, largely under the auspices of the Russian trade delegation, did provide funds for Left-wing groups and individuals during these negotiations. However, these 'subventions' must be seen in their proper context. Kendall, by combing the Cabinet Reports on revolutionary organisations in Britain, has quite rightly shown that

through Rothstein and other members of the trade delegation, the BSP had (in the two years before the CPGB was established) some ~~£~~3,000 at least; Sylvia Pankhurst's WSF no less; the SLP in 1919 'nearly ~~£~~300'; the People's Russian Information Bureau, which circulated facts and documents from Soviet Russia in 1918-1920, about ~~£~~1,000; the shop stewards' movement 'a considerable subsidy' (put by one ex-Communist at ~~£~~4,000) - a total over two years of perhaps ~~£~~15,000. The war of intervention, on the other hand, according to Lloyd George's own estimation in a speech delivered at the Guildhall on 8 November 1919, cost Britain ~~£~~100 millions.'¹⁹

Moreover, one needs to consider the way the money from Rothstein was spent. These funds kept four-page or eight-page weeklies from disappearing altogether. They published information on the RSFSR largely ignored by the commercial press. Above all, this money went for a time to pay a 'handful of organisers and political staff who, on Mr. Kendall's own showing (p.305) got some ~~£~~5 a week - less than such skilled workmen as Tom Bell, Arthur McManus, William Gallacher or Harry Pollitt could and did earn in their own trade with far smaller discomfort, . . .'²⁰ Clearly - despite the input of the Comintern, the cautious effect on the Communist Party caused by Lenin's need for a trade agreement and de facto recognition of the Soviet State - those who came together to form the CPGB 'were for the most part deep-rooted in the native soil of the labour movement.'²¹ Arthur Horner, writing in 1960, effectively summed up the sentiments of many of those who joined the early Communist Party:

Above all the Russian Revolution had inspired millions with the idea that the working people could take power and create a classless society. We did not think of Soviet Russia in those days as a State but as the first Socialist Government set up by the working class.²²

Theodore Rothstein, who died in Moscow in 1953, would have endorsed those sentiments.

Notes.

1. Walter Kendall The Revolutionary Movement in Britain 1900-1921 (1969) p.xii; Raymond Challinor The Origins of British Bolshevism. (1977) p.253.
2. James Hinton The First Shop Stewards' Movement (1973) p.307.
3. James Hinton 'A Review of Walter Kendall's "The Revolutionary Movement in Britain 1900-1921", Bulletin 19. Society for the Study of Labour History (1969) p.48.
4. Willie Thompson The Good Old Cause. British Communism 1920-1991 (1992) p.2.
5. ibid. pp.2-3.
6. Andrew Rothstein's review of Kendall in Labour Monthly, Dec. 1969.
7. ibid.
8. John Saville Introduction Th. Rothstein From Chartism to Labourism (Lon. 1983) pp.xiii-xiv.
9. Jane Degras The Communist International, 1919-1943. Vol.1 p.4 (Oxford 1956)
10. The Socialist 3 Feb. 1921.
11. Challinor op cit. p.227.
12. The most obvious example is Harry Pollitt; others include J.T Walton Newbold, Zelda Kahan and W.P. Coates.
13. CAB 24/99/523 Report on Revolutionary Organisations in the United Kingdom. Report no.39 circulated by the Home Secretary 29/1/1920.
14. Maclean in his 'Open Letter to Lenin' wrote that Wm. McLaine and Gallacher were 'selected' to appear before Lenin to inform him that he (Maclean) was suffering from 'hallucinations.'
15. CAB 24/103/1039.
16. Challinor op cit. p.226.
17. ibid. p.228.
18. ibid. p.241.
19. Cabinet Papers (CAB 24) from 1920 onwards draw attention to Rothstein financing several Left-wing groups, and paying sums of money to individuals. Most of these sums were small, apart from the subsidy to the Daily Herald whose overtures to the Russian Trade Delegation for funds were, in fact, initially rejected. See CAB 24/111/1804. Also Andrew Rothstein's 1969 review of Kendall in Labour Monthly.
20. ibid. The quote is from Andrew Rothstein's review.
21. Hugo Dewar Communist Politics in Britain: The CPGB From Its Origins To The Second World War (1976).y See also Martin Crick The History of the Social-Democratic Federation (Keele University Press 1994) p.286.
22. Arthur Horner Incorrigible Rebel (1960) p.38 cited Crick ibid.

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Unpublished (All the documents listed below are located in the Public Record Office, London)

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F.O. 371.

H.O.45. (provided little information outside of the 'siege of Sydney Street and the Houndsditch Murders.')

W.O. 32.

Published

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(ii) Political Organisations:

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SDF/SDP/BSP

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John Bryan 'The Struggle of Classes in Russia,' Plebs Magazine Vol. 1x, No.7 (Aug. 1917).

Th.Rothstein The Decline of British Industry: Its Cause and Remedy (1903)

Th.Rothstein The Russian Revolution (1907)

(b) newspapers and periodicals:

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(c) Conference reports:

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Report of the Social-Democratic Federation presented to the Delegates attending the International

Socialist Workers' and Trade Union Congress.
 (Twentieth Century Press Lon. 1896)
 The Stuttgart Congress of the Second International.
 Militarism and International Conflicts 1907.
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(b) Conference Reports:

ILP Conference Reports.
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(a) newspapers and periodicals:

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