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THE SCOTTISH LABOUR MOVEMENT AND THE REACTION IN ENGLAND

Nashe Slovo (May-June 1916), in five parts

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NB The words originally in English are underlined

I. The Scottish Movement in 1915

16 May 1916

The quick succession of repressions in Glasgow, the closure of newspapers, the arrests, the interning of Comrade Petroff and his wife, the recent trial of Comrade Maclean, which was unheard-of in its severity and resulted in him being sentenced to three years' penal servitude, the administrative deportations, a number of court proceedings completed or pending – all of these blows are aiming for the very core of the revolutionary class movement in England, for the splendidly and expansively developing Scottish labour movement. Since the latter, after the closure of the *Vanguard*, no longer has a literary mouthpiece to match its true dimensions, and since neither the cowardly *Forward*, which reflects the half-heartedness of the leaders of the Ind[ependent] Lab[our] Part[y], nor the narrow sectarian *Socialist* or the central periodicals of English Socialist parties or fractions which are bogged down in the insularity which characterises their upper circles and have some resolutely negative traits, are able to offer even the remotest impression of the nature of the Scottish movement, it would be appropriate to dedicate a small essay to the latter and to introduce, at last, the Internationalists outside England to this most remarkable phenomenon in today's labour life.

An exceptionally important role, as yet unparalleled on the Continent in this area, is played in the recent Scottish movement by the network of educational establishments created over many years of efforts by a large number of dedicated activists who had devoted themselves to this cause, of whom the most exceptionally talented, knowledgeable, energetic, enthusiastic and revolutionary-minded man is Comrade Maclean, Comrade Petroff's constant ally over many years of fighting fruitless sectarianism, circle diplomacy or downright depravity and criminality of the Brit[ish] Soc[ialist] P[arty]. The so-called 'economics classes' organised by Comrade Maclean and his friends in Glasgow number 481 students; similar 'economics classes' exist in Paisley, Lesmahagow, Clydebank, and the County of Fife. The attendees of these 'economics classes' do not simply study Marxist theory, political economy and history of the labour movement; in accordance with the tradition which is followed by all British educational establishments, the end of the year is marked by an exchange of opinions on current events and the questions and tasks of the day. The elements which congregate around the 'economics classes' belong to the most advanced and class-conscious vanguard of the movement. In trade unions, it is these progressive elements who are trying to breathe new life into them, as we can observe outside Scotland as well (another excellent example is South Wales), who are forming unofficial, non-formalised groups or cells within the trade unions by communicating amongst themselves and working together towards purging the trade unions of

mercenary elements and leading them to the path of consistent proletarian politics. The progressive elements of the Scottish movement are also the organisers of ongoing, continuous meetings and rallies at the gates of factories and plants, near mines, in the vast city and town halls, in town and village streets. It was these factory, mining and street rallies that nourished, expanded and strengthened that vigorous movement which has made the rulers of the British Empire tremble and caused them to try to smother it with harsh sentences.

In October, Comrade MacDougall wrote in the *Vanguard* that the influence of revolutionary Socialism amongst the Clydeside workers had reached a level higher than ever before. 'This was good time, worth spending several years in jail,' were the words of some of its more active members. The last months of 1915 in Scotland were the period of intense work, daily meetings, publications, lectures, travels between places, endless production of leaflets and proclamations, all in the heightened, intense atmosphere of a fast-growing mass movement. Against reaction, against Imperialism, against the growing repressions of the working class, against the stealing of its rights and freedoms, against the entire current bacchanalia of Capitalist leaders there came a mass organised resistance. Comrade Maclean gained a special rapport with the coal miners, and his strong and heartfelt speeches were often heard outside the entrance to the mines, with miners with their lamps lit standing in a crowd around him.

It turned out that there was a number of convinced Socialists who did not belong to any party ('The unattached'), since none of the currently existing English Socialist parties could satisfy them. And they, too, became involved with the growing movement.

The 'Clyde Committee' was created to protect the economic interests of the working class, in view of the entirely unsatisfactory behaviour of the trade union leaders. In an appeal to local workers published by the *Vanguard* in October, Comrade MacDougall wrote '...in connection with any action against the Munitions Act the workers need expect nothing but opposition from their paid organisers and secretaries. That will not matter much. At the moment, in the Clyde area, the officials are discredited and count for little, the real leaders of the men are to be found in the workshops.'

The executive powers are held by the shop stewards' organisation, but sometimes, committees composed of delegates have been formed to solve the key, most relevant questions and to address most important matters, sometimes numbering several hundred delegates. Some of the shop stewards, especially the main officials of this organisation, immediately displayed their customary propensity for opportunism, so that delegate committees had often had to engage in a typical English struggle against their own bureaucracy.

In December, one of these delegates' meetings adopted a resolution to [illegible] with the Zimmerwald Conference. This must be the first occasion when a mass of non-party members joined it.

The way in which the matter was raised by the *Vanguard* group differed from the way it was raised by the pro-diplomacy opposition from the B[ritish] S[ocialist] P[arty's] central bodies, which combined a recognition of Zimmerwald with support for Vandervelde's campaign. In December, Comrade Petroff's article in the *Vanguard*, which provoked the *Justice*'s anger, stated plainly that the Zimmerwald Conference had only taken one step in the right direction: it was unable to establish

itself as strong opposition to those who only saw the breakup of the International as a fleeting incident. Arguing, on the one hand, against the narrow Pacifist phraseology common in some Socialist literature and the 'quietism' of those who refrain from actual fight against reactionary and Imperialist forces, and on the other hand, criticising the ostentatious revolutionism of those who were talking about an imminent social revolution, without troubling to assess whether this could be accomplished without the necessary forces but resting content so long as it was stated in resolutions, Comrade Petroff sets out the following demands in the *Vanguard*: 'We must, therefore, purify our parties and immediately proceed to gather our forces, participate in all the chance encounters between the workers and the capitalists, sharpen the class struggle and make ourselves ready for drastic, revolutionary action'. He saw the achievements of Zimmerwald as but a first step towards the realisation of the objects of the proletariat, believing that the prolongation of the war would make the masses realise that drastic action was necessary to resist it and offered a sharp criticism of the simultaneous support of both Zimmerwald and Valdervelde's campaign by the Ex[ecutive] Com[mittee] of the B[ritish] S[ocialist] P[arty].

The slogan of 'purifying parties' was also highly successful. Treating Hyndman's clique with the utmost disdain and the diplomatic 'opposition' with suspicion, the elements close to the *Vanguard* were already thinking about creating a new independent organisation. On 3 January, on the very day when Comrade Petroff was sentenced to 2 months' imprisonment, the local conference of B.S.P. members took the decision to split from the party. However, subsequent events forced them to abandon this decision, so that later, the revolutionary elements in the B.S.P. chose to push the diplomatic 'opposition' to the left by putting pressure on it and demanding more drastic action from it.

In the period when the struggle against Government policies in Scotland took on the broadest mass character, voices were heard amongst the workers who were suggesting a general strike and suspension of munitions production in order to put an end to the war, but the leaders of the movement, including the most progressive ones, pointed out that war could only be stopped by an international labour movement rather than unilaterally by workers in one of the countries.

This was also when strong ties were forged with South Wales. The possibility of consolidated action by Scotland and Wales, by the mechanics and coal miners of different regions, gave a huge fright to the ruling circles of Great Britain. Later, in the Spring of 1916, at the time of the Clydeside strike and escalating repressions, the London reactionary press was hinting enigmatically at some grave danger that would threaten England if the Scottish movement joined with the Welsh one.

At the end of 1915, the *Vanguard* was quickly gaining popularity in Scotland. It was assiduously read and discussed at the workplace, and labourers were more and more used to seeing it as their mouthpiece. This was in essence an organ of a B.S.P. Regional Organisation, but there were already strong hopes that the meeting of the Clyde workers' delegates would soon declare it its official organ.

This was the time when the movement entered a new phase. An open battle with Lloyd George had begun.

II. Lloyd George and the Scottish Labour Movement

18 May

The first large-scale move by the munitions workers on the Clyde was a strike held in February 1915, which led to an increase in wages. Soon after that, the Munitions of War Act was passed in order to suppress all resistance among the workers and became commonly known as the 'worker slavery act', Lloyd George's favourite brainchild. This law, which tied the worker to the plant and left the door open for various sorts of abuse and oppressions on behalf of the entrepreneurs and their representatives, gave rise to never-ending conflicts and a number of small-scale strikes in Scotland which lasted for the entire second half of 1915. The first major battle broke out in the autumn of 1915 in connection to the housing issue. Revolutionary elements of the Scottish movement do not turn away from the current tasks of everyday struggle: on the contrary, they use the everyday tasks to involve the masses in the movement and revolutionise them. In his article about the housing issue, Comrade Maclean compared the class struggle to a game of football, in which the ultimate victory is the result of many moves and counter-moves: 'likewise, the game of life progresses from one move to another, on an ever-increasing scale'. As early as in the summer of 1915, the Glasgow Labour Party Housing Committee started agitating on this issue, and its Secretary, Comrade McBride, a member of the I.L.P., threw all his strength at this agitation. He was supported by the Women's Housing Committee, and subsequently, by the Scottish Labour Housing Association was formed with Comrade Maclean as Secretary. During the war, rent in Scotland was increased two- and threefold; the agitation on the housing issue resulted in large-scale rent strikes which moved from Glasgow to other Scottish cities, followed later by many big cities in England. The working population simply refused to pay the landlords who increased the rent. In Glasgow's working quarters, nearly every house sported a note saying 'we are not paying', 'we are not removing'. Processions were marching through city streets, mostly consisting of women and children, with the children carrying banners calling for a fight against the greedy landlords and their managers. An organised boycott was chosen as a way to deal with the landlords who tried to evict their tenants by force. When it came to mass evictions, the authorities themselves got frightened, especially in view of the threat by munitions workers to retaliate for this by stopping the work. The Government formed a commission to inquire into the matter, and since that dragged on interminably, as is the English custom, the munitions workers' strike broke out on 24 November following a trial of 18 labourers and frightened the whole of England. Ten thousand workers marched through the streets of Glasgow, and a deputation demanded that the judges release their comrades. The defendants were acquitted, and the Government introduced a bill (which became law in December) which limited small flat rent to pre-war levels.

This movement coincided with the overall escalation of the situation in Scotland. As the reactionaries' attempt to use lumpens to disrupt the rallies organised by Comrade Maclean and his associates had proven unsuccessful, the authorities launched their own offensive. As early as 2 September, Comrade Maclean had been arrested and charged with referring to soldiers as murderers, but released at once. On his initiative, a Free Speech Committee was formed and rallies and marches were organised to raise this issue. On 27 September, proceedings were started against Comrade Maclean because of his alleged reference to soldiers as murderers and his alleged saying 'I have enlisted in the Socialist army, and God damn all other armies!' The police understood this as a damnation on Her Royal Majesty's army. On 10 November, he was sentenced to a fine of 5 pounds

or 5 days' imprisonment for his contempt of the army; his trial turned into a mass celebration, with huge crowds of workers pouring into the streets of Glasgow and the square in front of the court building, which was also overflowing with people. After the sentence was announced, the courtroom filled with shouts of 'Long live Maclean!' and 'Long live the Revolution!' and singing of 'The Red Flag'. When Comrade Maclean emerged from the courtroom, the vast crowds of people waiting in the square greeted him with a grandiose ovation. On 16 November, the Govan School Board decided to strip Comrade Maclean of his teaching position, and a similar demonstration of support broke out again. The crowd even stormed the School Board premises, forcing Board members to seek refuge in the inner rooms, and the Board building was turned into a tribune for an improvised rally. Comrade Maclean served his five-day sentence, was released from prison on 24 November, on the very day of the rent strike. From early morning, workers had been standing in front of the prison waiting for him. Coal-miners had come straight from work in their mining clothes, with their lamps lit, and they were saying: 'Where is our Johnny Maclean? We want to see him'. Several huge mass rallies were held, and resolutions were adopted against the Government, against the School Board, against general conscription and the Munitions of War Act, and 'The Red Flag' and 'The Internationale' were sung.

As for the attitude to the Munitions Act, the mixing of skilled and unskilled workers (dilution of labour) and to all the key questions of the moment, all of these were the object of most serious disagreements amongst local workers, officials representing shop stewards, and progressive revolutionary elements which had leverage over delegate meetings. The officials were prepared to agree to anything provided the state had a larger role in managing the production and provided workers' representatives had a part in the governance and in the application of new laws, whereas the revolutionary elements were fighting against the working class accepting a share of responsibility for the waging of the war. The debate was centred on the very principle of 'war socialism' which included both state socialism always advocated by Hyndman and his associates and supported by the Independent Labour Party as 'conscription of wealth' and the so-called 'industrial organisation', i.e. moving each manufacturing industry to a greater or lesser extent under worker control, in the spirit of the teachings of 'guild socialism' and 'industrial Unionists'. Not even the *Vanguard* has always been free of singing the state socialism tune, although in the same paper, Comrade Maclean would offer a vicious criticism of such illusions. On the whole, Scottish revolutionary elements were arguing that such decisions would only result in a more solid organisation of the Capitalist society. Meanwhile, at that very time trade union centres were holding negotiations with Lloyd George regarding some proposed amendments to the Munitions of War Act and regarding the dilution of skilled labour with unskilled workers, setting the condition for increasing worker participation in governance. The meeting of Clydeside workers' delegates, on the contrary, stated its unconditional opposition to the Munitions Act and called for its complete abolition. As for dilution of labour, the delegate meeting, in a breach with the trade unions' aristocratic traditions, recognized that the interests of the working class as a whole were uniformly in need of protection and stated that it had nothing against unskilled labourers but would fight against their use as Lohndrücker or wage squeezers, which could only be avoided if this matter were to be handled by the workers themselves. In a leaflet distributed in 150,000 copies, the Clydeside workers announced that trade union officials' support of the Munitions of War Act was an act of treason.

Lloyd George, who was considered a charmer of crowds, finally visited Clydeside in late December. The revolutionary elements were preparing a fitting welcome for him. The fear of scandal forced Lloyd George to abandon plans for a rally scheduled for 23 December, but the cancelled meeting was moved to Christmas morning, despite protests from the majority of local trade unions. Since munitions factories worked without holidays and workers would lose their wages if they came to the meeting, they were paid 6 shillings to come to Lloyd George's meeting. Around 3,000 people were in audience. Arthur Henderson, who accompanied Lloyd George on his trip, was the Chairman. His introductory speech, explaining Lloyd George's appearance by the need to introduce a labour dilution plan that had been approved by some of the most prominent trade union leaders, was repeatedly interrupted by shouts of indignation, especially when he mentioned the leaders' names, so that he could hardly finish his speech. When Lloyd George rose to speak after him, he was met with prolonged jeers and singing of revolutionary songs. All the time while he was speaking, the meeting was so turbulent that he was only able to speak in snatches of sentences. A small majority in the audience supported him. He was met with shouts of 'You are not in the Commons here!' or 'You are not at a trade union congress with a bomb'. Lloyd George was saying: 'We need shells'. The response was: 'Not for the sake of exploiters'. Lloyd George mentioned Albert Thomas. 'Shame! Shame!' came the shouts from every side. 'Is it shameful to defend one's motherland?' Lloyd George asked. The workers replied: 'It is shameful to be a tool of capitalists'. Lloyd George claimed that Mr. MacDonald was his close personal friend. MacDonald's name was met with applause, but Lloyd George's claim provoked laughter. Trying to think of ways to appease his audience, Lloyd George called himself a Socialist. The reaction in the audience! It was no longer jeering but moaning... Lloyd George's explanation that state control over the munitions industry means socialism was met with violent protestations. Taking an elegiac tone, Lloyd George spoke about the unenviable position of the Minister of Munitions, who was carrying a heavy burden of responsibility. 'The money's good!' came the answer. Positively all of his attempts to catch the audience's tone failed entirely. He displayed a complete ineptitude when it came to talking to educated workers. 'Sit down, you have nothing to say to us,' people were telling him from every side.

After his unfortunate speech, Lloyd George began to answer questions. Since it was envisaged that he would try to dodge the unpleasant questions and prioritise the more 'innocuous' ones, the questions had been prepared beforehand. All of them were written down on the reverse side of the leaflet which was distributed on the day. But instead, Lloyd George started reading out a completely different set of questions. Everyone could see that they were written on different paper. A violent commotion broke out. Shouts of 'Fraud! Crook! He is reading the wrong questions!' were heard. It was at this time that Comrade Muir of the Clyde Workers' Committee (a B.S.P. member) rose and began to speak, addressing Lloyd George, of the scandalous stories in which he was implicated. Henderson and Lloyd George tried to stop him. 'No, you listen to our speaker now!' the audience shouted. At last, pale and dismayed, Lloyd George had to flee through the back door, followed by Henderson and his other followers. He also wanted to hold negotiations with shop stewards, but workers of one factory declined to listen to him, and at the other one, the shop stewards told him and Henderson a few home truths.

Rising on a wave of superficial demagoguery and ostentatious reformism, this political scoundrel, this would-be dictator supported by the yellow press, stumbled against conscious workers' resistance. His reputation as a wonder-worker able to tame the violent masses vanished into thin air. Revenge was to be expected. His career was on the cards; he had to retaliate with repressions.

III. Comrade Petroff's Case

20 May

Accusing Russian emigrants, especially Jews, of Germanophilia, was a typical move of the Hyndman clique throughout the war. As early as 1914, Mr. Green, Secretary of erstwhile very useful 'Society of Friends of Russian Freedom' (!), now the most vicious of chauvinists, accused in the *Justice* émigré Russian Jews of having German sympathies. On countless occasions did Hyndman explain the existence of a hostile trend in the Brit[ish] Soc[ialist] P[arty] by the influence of Germanophile foreigners. Activists from the chauvinist clique repeatedly printed statements on the 'anti-English cosmopolitan intriguers and Russian Jews with Germanophile sympathies' etc. in the B.S.P. Bourgeois press began to print denunciations of Comrade Petroff; he was presented as proof that the allegedly Germanophile trend in the B.S.P. was the result of schemes by foreigners 'acting on the instructions of Berlin'. During a discussion in the Chandos Hall, a B.S.P. hall, Hyndman replied to criticism from Comrade Petroff by saying that the Government should begin to persecute him.

In late December 1915, Lloyd George's trip to Scotland coincided with the start of persecutions against Comrade Petroff. On 20 December, searches were held in the office of the Russian Sailors' Union, at the homes of the Union Secretary and the Secretary of the [Russian] Political Refugees' Committee. On 23 December, the *Justice* printed the infamous denunciation of Comrade Petroff; a day before, Comrade Petroff was arrested for the first time after he travelled to a rally in the county of Fife. Although he had registered with the police upon arrival, as he had always done during all his previous trips to this and other 'prohibited areas', this time, the police found fault with the fact that he had not written from Glasgow beforehand to notify them of his visit. He was ordered to pay a fine and returned to Glasgow just as Lloyd George was holding his meeting.

The repressions expected after the grandiose fiasco suffered by the unfortunate demagogue of a Minister began with Comrade Petroff. On 29 January, he was arrested again. He had already travelled to meetings in 'prohibited areas' from Glasgow, where he resided, on numerous occasions, and neither the registration rules nor the local authorities had ever required him to register as a newcomer every time he returned to Glasgow after one or two days' absence. But on 29 January, he was arrested by the police for not registering again as a newcomer, after he returned to Glasgow from a 36-hour trip to the county of Fife. The Fiscal (Prosecutor) denied him bail on the grounds that he was a 'dangerous individual'. But the court freed him on bail.

His trial took place on 3 January. Once again, crowds of workers poured into the courtroom and filled the surrounding streets and square. All the while the case was discussed, there was an impromptu rally in the street; speeches were made, shouts and applause could be heard. Based on the precise text of registration rules and quoting everyday examples which proved that 36-hour suburban trips did not constitute a change of residence, Comrade Petroff revealed the complete incongruity of the charges; but he did not stop there and listed all the cases of repressions against Russians in England, to uncover the core fact: the union of English and Russian reactionaries which had resulted in all these attempts to curtail the activities of Russian political emigrants and cut the

ties between English and Russian workers. But he finished by stating that the united English and Russian Proletariat would emerge victorious from this struggle. When the judge interrupted him by remarking that 'the Russian Government is not on trial here', Comrade Petroff replied: 'Yes, the Russian Government is here in the dock, as well as the English Government'. When the sentence of 2 months' imprisonment was announced, one of the witnesses wrote that a dread fell upon the courtroom. And there was a dreadful silence when Comrade Petroff was led away, interrupted by shouts of 'Long live Socialism' and hundreds of young voices singing 'The Red Flag'.

It was at this time that the authorities first sought a compromise with Comrade Petroff. When he appealed for release ahead of his appeal being considered by the High Court, the Fiscal offered him release if he agreed to curtail his political activities, e.g. not to speak at public rallies. Comrade Petroff flatly rejected this illegal offer, and another judge who was appointed to deal with the case ruled that the Fiscal's actions had been unlawful and ordered Comrade Petroff to be released pending the High Court decision.

According to the decision taken by the local body of the B.S.P., Comrade Petroff would refrain from public speaking for the following period of time. Nevertheless, on 29 January he was again arrested and interned for the duration of the war following an instruction from the Secretary of State for Scottish Affairs, based on an article of the Defence of the Realm Act which concerned persons with 'hostile associations', i.e. somehow connected to the enemy.

After Comrade Petroff was jailed in the Edinburgh Castle, the authorities tried their best to impede his appeal to the High Court. Without required documents and without sufficient opportunities to consult with his defence lawyer, Comrade Petroff was left to contend primarily on his own. The Sheriff (judge) who had considered his case on 3 January had presented a perverted statement of the case; Comrade Petroff introduced the required changes, but the Sheriff once again changed the statement and submitted it to the High Court with a number of misstatements. Despite all this, Comrade Petroff was able to demonstrate that these misstatements had been introduced by the Sheriff during his appearance before the High Court. The Prosecutor General announced that the Government was prepared to refrain from carrying out his sentence provided Comrade Petroff's admission of guilt was to stay in force. Subsequently, Comrade Petroff supposed that this was required to provide legal grounds for handing him over to the Russian authorities. The High Court, however, did not agree to the Government's offer, and Comrade Petroff was acquitted. The sheriff's sentence was revoked.

As Mr. King M.P. said in his speech of 23 March, in Comrade Petroff's case, 'by all means available, by using this or that judicial institution, by altering and falsifying documents and charges, attempts were made to ensure Petroff's conviction by legal means, and when this failed, then, evidently acting out of malice and ignorance, the authorities achieved their goal by different means that I have referred to; Petroff was confined to the Edinburgh Castle although he had succeeded in having his conviction repealed; he asked why he was imprisoned and the answer was "because of hostile associations"'.

Comrade Petroff lodged an appeal against his internment with the Scottish Advisory Committee on Aliens and was invited to appear before it twice. The Chairman of the Committee, a liberal politician Lord Dewar, asked Comrade Petroff what his response would be if military authorities were to grant him freedom on condition of restricting his soc[ial]-dem[ocratic] activities, e.g. asking

him to refrain from public agitation? Comrade Petrov replied indignantly: 'To what state has the English Government been reduced if it issues a special law for one person! Judge me on legal grounds, and if I am guilty then sentence me! But a citizen's first responsibility is to protest against a violation of law.' Comrade Petroff refused point-blank to limit his soc[ial]-dem[ocratic] activities and buy himself a victory in this way.

A major role in the questions posed by Lord Dewar was played by the famous denunciation in the *Justice*; he asked Comrade Petroff about Hyndman's and Victor Fisher's attitude towards him.

For Comrade Petroff, everything paled into insignificance in comparison with the accusation of 'hostile associations' which had been flung at him. The English Government was worse than the Russian one, he stated to Lord Dewar: it tries to attack its opponents by means of shameful slander, trying to besmirch their good name. Lord Dewar replied that the authorities were well aware of his hostility towards the German Government; what they believed to be harmful was his soc[ial]-dem[ocratic] activity, and 'hostile associations' were to be understood as his associations with workers' organisations which are hostile towards the war.

All appeals to the Aliens Committee came to nothing. Lord Dewar's explanations which removed the shameful accusations were not given in public. Comrade Petroff believed his honour as a Soc[ial] Democrat and the honour of the party sullied by the dirty insinuation contained in the accusation of 'hostile associations', and demanding that the accusation be rescinded, he declared a hunger strike.

They sent a doctor to him to force feed him, but he declared: 'I'm not a suffragette, I'm a Russian revolutionary!', and greeted the doctor in such a way that the latter refused to force feed him. The news of his hunger strike spread across Scotland and caused great indignation. The mood in the area was such that after Comrade Petroff remained on hunger strike for several days, the authorities decided to move him at night. He was awoken in the middle of the night, given an hour to prepare and taken to London. He was so weak he had to be carried.

Meanwhile, soon after he was interned in the Edinburgh Castle, his wife was arrested too. As a German by birth, she had nevertheless not registered because she was married to a Russian subject. But since their marriage was illegal, the authorities regarded her as a German. For evading registration, she was sentenced to two weeks' imprisonment; this was even before Comrade Petroff went on hunger strike. He was released from the Edinburgh Castle and escorted by soldiers to serve as a witness in his wife's case, and he became the object of jubilant rallies in the streets of Glasgow. Groups of people congregated along his way and greeted him with shouts of support. His wife was interned in a concentration camp for the entire duration of the war. Like her husband, she was also offered freedom if she refused to engage in s[ocial]-d[emocratic] agitation. Like him, she also declined this offer. The authorities claimed that they were well aware that she was an enemy of German Imperialism (her articles sent to the *Berner Tagwacht* had been intercepted), but her international soc[ial]-dem[ocratic] activities posed a danger in their eyes.

After coming to London, where he was now interned together with German citizens, Comrade Petroff stopped his hunger strike when he learned about the steps taken to confront the offensive insinuation against him. All Russian Socialist groups in London and the Secretary of the Centr[al] Bureau of the R[ussian] S[ocial] D[emocratic] [Labour] P[arty] protested against this insinuation and his internment; signatures of Russian emigrants were placed under a similar protest. A left Liberal

and staunch fighter for democracy, Joseph King M.P. described Comrade Petroff's case with great fervour in Parliament on 23 March in connection to the matter of the administrative abuses of power that were rife in England, pointing out that the Secretary of State for Scottish Affairs McKinnon Wood had in a conversation with him interpreted Petroff's 'hostile associations' as his association with his wife, who was legally still registered as a German. In response, McKinnon Wood once again accused Comrade Petroff of being associated with an unregistered German woman, and characterised him generally as a man 'dangerous since he was very talented in defending views incompatible with the country's interests when it comes to conscription and production of munitions'. Such a flexible charge could evidently be brought against anyone at all. He characterised Comrade Petroff's wife as a very talented woman, but 'she has somewhat dangerous views: she claims that she believes neither in God or the Government or in legal marriage'.

The case of Comrade Petroff and his wife made a strong impression in England. Many resolutions were taken on the matter, and progressive labour and socialist press wrote about it a lot. There were occasional protest rallies organised specially to highlight Petroff's case.

Comrade Petroff did not follow the example or advice of those who prefer a live dog to a dead lion and by compromising with the Government or the patriots buy for themselves the opportunity of saying at least partially correct words bought with a dishonourable act. Acting in this case as a representative of the best traditions of Menshevism as a revolutionary Marxist movement, Comrade Petroff knew that an act was above words, that the best sermon on principles, if granted partial permission, would not eradicate the consequences of an act which contradicts it, and that the real impact of live action was the main weapon of the class movement. At the B.S.P. conference, he had more influence in his absence than if he had been present there; as a captive doomed to silence, he took a more active part in the movement, had more influence over the hearts and minds, made a bigger contribution to correcting those who were wavering, to clearing up the thoughts of those who had not yet found their way. The first victim of Lloyd George waging war on the Scottish movement had won a moral victory.

IV. The Start of Repressions and the March Strike

6 June

Scotland was posing the greatest danger to the British capitalist oligarchy, which used the fog of war to grasp position after position and strove partly to tame the labour movement and partly to throw it far back. Already the *Vanguard*, created as a Scottish Marxist body, had begun to win the sympathies of the most prominent Proletarian elements in other parts of England. Already the rent strike had spread to a number of Scottish cities and towns. The Scots' valiant struggle against oppression and restrictions of working class rights and democratic freedoms was finding a more and more lively response in the Proletarian masses all over the country. Finally, their open clash with the chauvinists' idol Lloyd George, the main domestic production organiser, was a resounding event which attracted everyone's attention and threatened to start the unravelling of the discipline of the masses and their submission to the ruling class, which was binding them in ever new chains.

In January and February, repressions rained upon the Scottish labour movement as if from a cornucopia. The *Vanguard* was suspended. The Ind[ependent] Lab[our] P[arty] mouthpiece, *Forward*, was at first suspended as well, and then its further publication was sanctioned on the condition that its leaders would pledge not to publish anything which could have an adverse affect on the production of munitions or could provoke discontent with the Munitions of War Act or against dilution of labour. An issue of the *Socialist*, published by the small Soc[ialist] Lab[our] Party, and its premises and printing presses remained in the hands of the police for three months. *The Worker*, a recently formed mouthpiece of the Clyde Workers' Committee, was banned.

On 6 February, Comrade Maclean was arrested, followed on 7 February by the chairman of the Clyde Workers' Committee, the editor of *The Worker*, and the head of its printing office.

However, the moment for dealing a major stroke had not yet come. Scottish working masses, strongly incensed by the start of repressions, with a threat of strike forced the authorities to free the arrested on parole.

As early as 28 January, Comrade Maxton, Chairman of the Ind[ependent] Lab[our] Party, could proclaim at the Bristol Labour Party Conference that any persecutions based on the Munitions of War Act were impossible on the Clyde: if one of the workers is due to be subjected to a punishment, several hundred of his comrades shall stop their work and appear before the judges alongside him, so that the fear of strikes forces the persecutions to stop. 'The workers on the Clyde have learned the lesson of independence which they were taught by the behaviour of Henderson & Co', Comrade Maxton said, 'they will show the world how to fight on the industrial field.'

The ruling classes were able to bide their time. The time came to introduce conscription, and that drew everyone's attention. 'Lloyd George wants to have a weapon against the Clyde workers,' said the opponents of conscription at labour conferences. Its introduction was made possible by the labour bureaucracy, which was fobbing off the masses with well-meaning platonic resolutions. But would the mass be susceptible to all this manoeuvring? This was the question. The Clyde Workers' Movement, this vanguard of the British labour movement, was facing this question as a priority. Would it choose the broad way of top-to-bottom political confrontation with Imperialism? Or would it run into a historical dead-end? Although the repressions had already started, there were enough revolutionary elements among conscious workers who were advocating a general strike against conscription and thus a fight along the entire frontline. But this wave broke itself up against opportunistic ruling circles of the Ind[ependent] Lab[our] P[arty]. Their tactic was to have rallies and more rallies, i.e. a circus, rituals without action. The trade union bureaucracy did not even want that, wishing to restrict itself to ostentatious resolutions. The Ind[ependent] Lab[our] P[arty] organised a rally campaign and thwarted the mass fight against conscription. In January, it had seemed that the Ind[ependent] Lab[our] P[arty] threw itself with uncharacteristic vigour into the struggle against conscription, but its politico circles used this as a shield to cover up their real aversion to the mass revolutionary movement. A one-day demonstration strike was held on the Clyde, followed by a campaign of massive rallies. But things stopped there. The Military Service Act was passed; the tide had turned; the Scottish working masses were in the grip of despondency. The anti-conscription movement fell under the influence of bourgeois organisations which seemed to have completely merged with the Ind[ependent] Lab[our] Party. It took the form of individual 'objection' on religious or social grounds; the 'objectors' appeared individually before special tribunals with appeals for exemption from military

service and engaged in more or less successful debates with members of these tribunals who posed treacherous or ridiculous questions to them. The anti-conscription movement was thus torn apart from the proletarian class interests. It was individualised and dispersed. The 'No Conscription Fellowship' and similar bourgeois and semi-bourgeois organisations were more of an obstacle in the way of a wider movement. The art of dominating the masses, perfected to a highest art, the English capitalism, unparalleled in its malice and cunning, was able to transform itself into its own opponents, manipulate the sincere religious enthusiasts ready to embrace martyrdom, and through the bourgeois non-resistance and its method to neutralise the proletarian vanguard movement.

While the early February Clydeside strike was a threat for the ruling class, six weeks later they were no longer frightened by it. Major repressions – large-scale court proceedings and harsh sentences – took place in the atmosphere created by the March strike on the Clyde. Of course, one cannot state with certainty that the authorities were deliberately and purposefully provoking the strike with their confrontational behaviour, but if they did have such intentions, they could not have realised them more successfully. The denial of a permission to Mr Kirkwell, the convenor of shop stewards at one of the largest munitions works (at Parkhead), to visit all parts of the plant and supervise the conditions of mixing skilled and unskilled labourers, including women's wages, opened the possibility of uncontrolled Lohnprücker policies and destruction of the gains made by the trade union movement. Anyone could see that the plant's workers would respond with a strike and that the workers at other plants would not want to do the strike-breakers' job.

During the March strike, it was a strange picture: Government representatives and the reactionary press were doing everything to present the Scottish strike movement as wide-ranging and having a major political significance and aims, to promote its wider political importance, whereas the MPs and Socialist publications were putting equal efforts into narrowing down its importance and pointing to its narrow practical immediate pretext. The Government was 'scaring members of the public', and the local labour officials such as Kirkwood were pulling out every stop trying to prove their innocuousness, while their defenders were successfully peddling the same theme. Indeed, the Government clamped down on members of the local working bureaucracy, whose opportunism delegate conventions had so often had to confront. Six of the most prominent shop stewards were arrested on the night of the 23-24 March and deported to certain areas of Scotland in an administrative procedure, where they are kept under police surveillance and nobody hires them. Naturally, greater masses went on strike as a result of their deportation. At a rally two days later, 4,000 strikers took a unanimous decision not to resume work until the deported were returned.

Speaking in Parliament on 28 March, Mr. Addison, Secretary to the Ministry of Munitions, tried to present the Clyde Workers' Committee as a criminal conspiracy aiming to delay the production of supplies required for the war in order to force the Government to repeal the Munitions Act, the Military Service Act, lift all restrictions on strikes and wage rises, and to abolish any form of state control. The persecuted shop stewards and sympathetic press organs were protesting that they were in fact holding the masses back from strikes and contributing to a rise in munitions production.

Repressions against six prominent shop stewards were seen by many as a personal act of vengeance on behalf of Lloyd George. At the Cardiff Conference of Shop Stewards on 24 April, the Glasgow delegate Comrade McCall, arguing for a note of protest against the administrative

deportation of Clydeside trade unionists, stated that there is more than a suspicion in Scotland that these people suffered because of Lloyd George's personal spite.

V. Under the 'Iron Heel'

9 June

After the Government had properly frightened the public with its exaggerated notions of the Scottish strike and fantastic tales of the intentions of its participants, Comrade Maclean's trial took place on 11 and 12 April. Members of the jury could hardly be found in Glasgow to accuse him, so his trial was moved to the reactionary Edinburgh, a city of respectable tenants and retired public servants and military men. The grounds for prosecution were provided by the speeches delivered by Comrade Maclean at six different meetings throughout January. The statements then made, as the prosecution alleged, 'were likely to prejudice the recruiting, training, discipline, and administration of His Majesty's Forces, and by which statements he attempted to cause mutiny, sedition, and disaffection among the civilian population, repair, and transport of war material and other work necessary for the successful prosecution of war, contrary to the Defence of the Realm Act'.

As always in such cases, the policemen who recorded the incriminating statements had ascribed various incongruities to the speaker. The prosecution witnesses were 18 undercover and regular police constables who had been present at some of the aforementioned six meetings, who did not always agree with one another but were always firm in their statements and often had a very dim understanding of matters addressed by the speaker. The clear and consistent statements of numerous (around 20) defence witnesses, who had been to the same six meetings and who in some cases were not personal acquaintances of Comrade Maclean's or even members of moderate trade union circles, make it possible to establish the true value of the accusations. Comrade Maclean did indeed say that general conscription would be a tool in the fight against the labour movement, but even some liberals were saying the same thing. As for incitement to strike, it turns out that at these meetings, only a one-day demonstration strike was discussed, which would be held if conscription for unmarried men were to be introduced.

According to the sentence, Comrade Maclean had allegedly stated that if the English army were to lay down their arms, the German army would do the same. It turned out that the following happened in reality: a member of the public had asked him if the war would end if the English army laid down their arms and the German army followed suit; Comrade Maclean replied that in that case, the war would surely be over but that the very thought was utopian. Another ridiculous notion was ascribed to him: he had allegedly said that Lloyd George had brought German gold for the workers of some factories. In fact, all Comrade Maclean did was make jokes about the claims, widespread in the yellow press at the time, that the Scottish labour movement was somehow supported by 'German gold'. There was another, entirely fantastical charge that Comrade Maclean had allegedly incited the workers to use guns against the Government. The very incongruity of this accusation showed clearly how unsubstantiated the police statements were.

The clever lawyers tried to throw Comrade Maclean, who was not sufficiently well-versed in logical subtleties, with their treacherous questions, to which he replied obliquely. He claimed that he had dedicated all his strength to the greatest of causes, the creation of a proletarian high school. He recognised that he had incited munitions workers to strike in the autumn, when the rent movement needed support.

It was absolutely clear that the prosecution's case was falling apart. But the jurors did not defy the Government's expectations and found him guilty on four out of six charges. Comrade Maclean was convicted for the speeches he had not made. A prominent opponent of the ruling classes had to be removed from the stage, and based on clearly absurd accusations from poorly drilled police officers, he was sentenced to a monstrous punishment, three years' penal servitude. The darling of the working masses of Northern Britain, the most remarkable figure of the fighting vanguard of English proletariat, the best practising Marxist in all England – was now picking oakum in the demeaning atmosphere of a hard labour prison. Any contacts with the outside world, even reading newspapers, was forbidden to him. His wife could visit him once, separated by bars, and she could not even hold his hand, let alone bring along the children – and he would not be allowed either to see her or to write to her for seven months. 'They want him dead,' say the English comrades who see the meaning of these events clearly and who have no illusions as to the current decision-makers in their country: 'they will be happy to get rid of him, they will make him rot slowly in the hard labour prison'. On the same day when Comrade Maclean fell victim to such a reprisal, a reception for French parliamentarians was held in Glasgow, which included Mr. Marcel Cachin, who addressed this company of lords and ladies, the clergy, city counsellors, magistrate, members of the University, the Chamber of Commerce, the Clyde Trust, and various fat cats, speaking as 'a representative of the Parisian working class' and talked eloquently of the fight to the death for freedom and humanism against the German militarism and welcomed the Clydeside workers' efforts to produce guns and shells in the interests of mankind.

The workers who were present at Comrade Maclean's trial tried once again, as they had done successfully many times before, to organise a protest, and after the sentence was announced, they shouted 'Stay strong, John!' and sang 'The Red Flag'. But these were different times. Arrests were made and four protesters were sentenced to minor penalties the following day.

On 12 April, there was also a turbulent meeting of the Glasgow Trade Union Council. Before that, it was decided to hold a rally on the Glasgow meadows with the demand for the return of deported shop stewards, but the rally was banned by the authorities. Speaking in the Trade Union Council on 12 April and seeking to oppose the local senior labour bureaucracy who offered nothing except for new appeals to the authorities, Comrade McCall, a close associate of Comrade Maclean's, demanded that a rally be staged despite the ban. Senior trade union bureaucrats opposed this with all their might, and the Chairman said that he would not accept any unconstitutional acts; some members called him a coward and demanded his resignation. Comrade McCall's resolution was carried by a majority vote.

However, the senior trade union bureaucracy still got their wish. The authorities remained deaf to all appeals and the ban remained in force. The reactionary Glasgow Herald challenged the Trade Union Council to hold the rally despite everything and dare to accept the responsibility for any consequences. The subcommittee suggested that the Trade Union Council's Executive Committee should cancel the rally. On 15 April, the Executive Committee unanimously took a decision to this effect. At the Trade Union Council meeting on 19 April, the Executive Committee spokesman said that he is not one for

breaking through walls with one's head. Following the customary tactics of reactionary trade union leaders who are supported by backward working class elements and make an exhibition of their backwardness, the spokesman was bold enough to say that the wide masses of workers were simply saying 'Fools! Why didn't they mind their own business?' after Maclean and others were convicted.

In the end, as usual, the Trade Union Council came to terms with the fait accompli and accepted the Executive Committee's report.

V. Under the Iron Heel (Conclusion)

10 June

On 13 April, Comrade Gallacher, ex-Chairman of the Clyde Workers' Committee, editor of the *Worker*, Comrade Muir and head of the Committee's printing office Comrade Bell were sentenced, also in Edinburgh, the former two to a year's imprisonment and the latter to three months, for printing an article in the *Worker* on industrial unionism which the authorities saw as sedition.

Arrests and trials of various individuals continued afterwards. The trial of Comrades MacDougall and Maxton, who were arrested during the March strike for speeches calling for a strike, did not take place until 11 May. They were sentenced to a year's imprisonment. Jack Smith, who was on trial at the same time on similar charges, was sentenced to eighteen months as his 'crime' was committed at a factory and Anarchist publications were found at his place.

Comrade Bridges Adams provided a list in the *Cotton Factory Times* on 14 April: Maclean, trial on 11 April; MacDougall and Maxton, remanded in custody; Petroff and his wife, interned; five of Scotland's prominent advocates removed in this way. When the Allied Economic Conference is held in Paris, she went on, capitalists will be discussing the British working class' attitude to protectionism, and one will ask another: 'And how do things stand on the Clyde?' The other will reply 'Five talented speakers each of them clear-sighted, have been neutralised'. 'Were they given higher offices?' 'No, they are not that kind of people. They are in prison.'

Comrade Maclean's harsh sentence made a great impression on England, and many resolutions have been adopted on this matter since. A strong-worded resolution was approved by the Stewards Union conference. The *Cotton Factory Times* reported on 28 April that coal miners from Fife County in Scotland and from South Wales agreed to a strike demanding the release of Comrade Maclean. It is curious that all the liberal publications, even left-wing ones, reported Comrade Maclean's conviction without any comments. Reactionary publications were gushing in their celebration of the sentence. The *Glasgow Herald* saw this and the subsequent arrests as proof of 'the end of leniency coming at last'. The *Scotsman* called Comrade Maclean 'a representative of that poisonous heap of parasites on the labour movement who talk treasonous talk instead of working with their hands and corrupt the movement by paying it, and the country's interests, the worst possible service they are able to pay.'

The period of repressions had come in earnest. 'The ruling classes do not want any more half-measures,' say observers of English political life. At the Ind[ependent] Lab[our] P[arty] conference,

Scottish delegates characterised the new regime on the Clyde as an 'iron heel' regime, with a ban on meetings, closure of newspapers, arrests, administrative deportations, harsh sentences, spies on factories and [illegible] at trade union meetings.

The Scottish victims are not alone. England, too, has become a land of martyrs. The tactics of individual 'objections' may be found unfeasible but one is humbled by the heroism of the 'objectors to the end'. Those who have mingled with the brilliant, talented, deeply conscious young men who form the fighting vanguard of the labour movement, who are its pride and joy, those who have heard their tragic stories of their closest friends and comrades who had already been arrested as draft-evaders and who had been subjected to a string of torments in the hands of the rough soldiery; those who have seen the grim determination of those who are facing an arrest and the same path of martyrdom; those who have shaken them firmly by the hand when parting with them, perhaps forever; those can truly understand the current historical moment.

Out of the numerous 'objectors', individuals are gradually being arrested, those who are deemed more dangerous are snapped up, one by one the flower of progressive youth is being eradicated. Newspapers have a lot to say about 'objectors' on religious grounds, but very little about those who cite class motives. The reaping is creeping on. Around 300 'objectors' have already been conscripted against their will. The result is the military's insane attempts to force them to comply, with isolation cells, shackles, threats of execution, hunger, humiliation, torture, and finally the trial and the hardest of hard labour, with some shipped to France as soldiers against their will, and a tragic question mark hovering over their subsequent fate.

What about Ireland? In early April, the Irish pacifist Skeffington wrote that England was to stop the imminent 'pogrom plot of British Militarist Junkerdom'. Not a single newspaper agreed to publish his letter at the time. The Fabian New Statesman only printed it on 6 May, nearly two weeks after Skeffington was shot by English soldiers. He was a consistent opponent of bloodshed and he had taken no part in the rebellion. Who and why needed to remove him remains a secret of the English authorities. Ireland suffered what even the left liberals are calling the 'bloody assizes'. Skeffington's widow wrote to Lansbury: 'All our friends and associates are shot dead or deported or imprisoned or vanished without a trace; many are in nameless graves, and we shall never know their fate. The majority of workers' leaders have been arrested...' Among these hecatombs, the Clydeside repressions are somewhat overshadowed.

In this nightmarish atmosphere, all the forces of violence, deceit and half-heartedness are deployed against the Scottish labour movement. The entire coercive state machine, the economic pressure, the bourgeois press are all against it; the chauvinist renegades like Blatchford who wrote that 'the people are tired of Syndicalist sluggards' are against it; Hyndman and all his agents are against it; the trade union bureaucracy is against it; moreover, calming down the revolutionary mass movement is the policy of the opportunistic circles ruling the Ind[ependent] Lab[our] Party which are filled with Anglican and Dissenter priests, Quakers, sentimental moralists and saturated with bourgeois political buffoonery which detests the revolutionary mass movement.

But this movement has now penetrated too deep and nothing will be able to stop it. It may have been stripped of its brave leaders and experienced chiefs; the time has come for the masses who have already undergone the initial education to learn to rely on their own strength, and elements of this are in evidence.

A smart, politically astute observer belonging to a working class of one of the Northern towns, has written: 'the industrial revolution is now happening very fast in England - labour traditions are being shattered against the distant roar of German guns. The earnings will be great, but workers' apathy will also go to hell. Not an atom of British self-confidence and self-assurance will remain'.

It is clear that the English labour movement is on the threshold of a new era. The Scottish movement is showing the way.

Orn.

P.S. I hasten to correct an unfortunate error in the article on Comrade Petroff's case. After Lloyd George's meeting, Comrade Petroff was arrested on 28 December (not on 29 January). His trial took place on 3 January, and he was released a week later and arrested again on 29 January to be confined in the Edinburgh Castle.

As for my account of rent strikes, a former Glasgow activist has pointed out that the normal rent increase would usually amount to several pounds a year, i.e. around 20%. These cases, and not extreme ones, should be used to characterise the situation.

Orn.