



Starts life as a political agitator. Shop assistants' strike in Cumberland. Becomes blind workers' representative. McLean's illness intensifies. Start of unity negotiations for formation of Communist Party. Leaves for Leningrad for Second Congress of Communist International.

IN 1918, John Wheatley booked the Shettleston cinema for a series of winter meetings for his Catholic Socialist Society. Like James Connolly, he was opposed to the Encyclical of Pope Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum*, which I have already mentioned, and venomous attacks were made on him by the Glasgow hierarchy. It wasn't only the clergy who were after his blood; so was the Parkhead branch of the Socialist Labour Party. This party had been formed in Detroit by Daniel de Leon, who wrote a series of pamphlets with titles such as *What Means this Strike?*, *The Burning Question of Trade Unionism* and others, all of which were widely circulated by his disciples in Glasgow. The gist of de Leon's teaching was: reforms were a snare and a delusion; all trade union officials and moderate socialists were "fakers" and would have to be swept away by the class-conscious workers who would, at a signal from a parliament of class-conscious socialists, "take and hold" the industries. To the Parkhead-Shettleston Socialist Labour Party, the "faker" of all fakers was John Wheatley.

I agreed to speak on John's opening night, the first Sunday in November. When I arrived, the cinema was filled to capacity, and I was told that the leading members of the S.L.P. were lined along the back seats. After I had spoken for over an hour the meeting was thrown open for questions. Up jumped Jock McBain, right at the back. Jock was a moulder and a good friend of mine (he later joined the Communist Party). Here he was asking me a question. Did I agree that the emancipation of the working class must come from the workers themselves? I felt pretty sure I knew what line they were going to take, and when I answered yes, the next question made it crystal clear. No sooner had I answered than Dennison, an electrician, was on his feet.

"In view of that answer, would you not agree that middle-class men are a menace to the working-class movement?" I could see their third man, Ness, ready to jump to his feet with the clincher. I rose and walked slowly forward to the footlights.

THE LAST MEMOIRS
OF
WILLIAM GALLACHER

1966
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and directed us to a Salvation Army lodging-house in, I think, Pilgrim Street.

When we got there we found one of those concertina-gates—closed and locked. But there was a half-glass door beyond and a bright light was shining through. With keen anticipation I rang the bell. A surly-looking lad came out towards the gate and gave us a hard look. He was no Samaritan. He simply refused to admit us. We must have looked really villainous! We tried all the arts of persuasion but it was no use. He just turned and went back, leaving us there on the outside.

We made our way to Market Street and got admitted to a small hotel where, in the basement, we got ourselves stripped, washed and—after cleaning our clothes as far as we could—went upstairs. Here we got a pot of tea and what goes with it. That was a feast, that was! Try it some time. A diet of bread and coal for two days and two nights, and you'll know what it is to enjoy a meal.

After resting a bit, we went to the station where we parted. They were off to Edinburgh, I to Glasgow. At the Central Station in Glasgow I got a train for Paisley, where I found sad news waiting for me. My oldest sister, very dear she was, had died while I was away. It was unexpected in a way. I had known for some time that she had not been well; her illness had taken a serious turn and she was taken to hospital for an operation. She came through the operation and lived for several days. My brother-in-law had spent most of his time at the hospital. She had been his boyhood sweetheart and he had been devoted to her. As he sat by her bedside, she would whisper: "Is Wullie no back yet?"

When I heard that, and thought of her lying there waiting for me, I couldn't keep the tears from my eyes. It was my own Jean who broke the news to me. She understood, and was very gentle and understanding. She had also been very fond of my sister Flora.

That evening we went to see my brother-in-law, who was left with two sons and a daughter. The following morning Jean gave me another piece of news. One of the lads had come down from Glasgow to find out when I was likely to be home; it was before she had received my telegram so she could not tell him. But he had let her know that a conference was being held on the following Saturday afternoon in the City Hall, for the purpose of setting up a Communist Party independent of the Party formed in London.

This was startling news, and it meant I would have to be there and try to swing them over in favour of uniting with the Party already formed. When I got there, I learned that John McLean and his

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plenty to go on. The second—and last, though he did not know it was going to be the last when he wrote it—was a sizzler. The Clyde Workers' Committee got the full treatment, with me as the arch-villain. At the end of the article he added a teeny-weeny final paragraph. Don't spoil the ship for a ha'porth of tar, I think the saying goes; but this had ended his career as an authority on Bolshevism by adding just a bit too much tar. He presented me as a new form of the Trinity: "Gallacher is chairman of the Clyde Workers' Committee, a Music Hall comedian and a member of the Scottish Co-operative Wholesale Society's Board."

There was a comedian called Gallacher: he had gone to the United States and apparently never had his attention drawn to the article. But Willie Gallacher of the wholesale Board was right home in Scotland and in no time his lawyer was after the writer and the paper. The case was settled out of court. The publishers agreed to print a long apology in every daily and weekly paper in Scotland and to pay £200 to each of two co-operative homes. When I saw the apology I was in Kirkcaldy. I wrote to the Editor and told him he had severely damaged my revolutionary reputation by associating me with such a respectable citizen as the other Gallacher; however, I didn't want to be too hard on him and if he would just pay me the same amount he had given my namesake I'd be quite satisfied. I didn't get even an acknowledgment.

To get back to the Reform Movement. In Fife there were some very active, not to say fiery comrades, with what might be called their storm centre at Bowhill. Bowhill was the one branch of the Fife Miners' Union that had taken the decision to allow women to occupy the gallery when a branch meeting was in progress. They were expected to keep quiet, but they did not always come up to expectations, particularly when they thought Willie Adamson, the secretary of the Fife Miners' Union and member of parliament for West Fife, was trying to put something across. There was some trouble at the Bowhill pit, and Willie had come to address the branch and if possible smooth things over. I was in Fife at the time, and the Bowhill lads sent me an urgent message to get there without delay. I was met by John Bird, a fine lad but a bit erratic, and Willie Kirker, a real grand comrade. They wanted me to attend the branch meeting, and said they would see that I got the opportunity of countering anything Adamson might be trying on. I was reluctant to put myself in the position of participating in an official branch meeting, but they wouldn't accept

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I entered the Chamber of Dread and toed the line. The governor gazed at me for a moment. "I'm surprised, Gallacher, that a man of your experience, after the arrangement we made, should have stepped out of the exercise and threatened a warder."

"I can only express my regret," I told him. "It happens that the prisoner he shouted at is a special friend of mine; I've known him since he was a boy, and he got crippled in the war. I ought to have held myself in check and asked the chief to have the warder transferred to other duties."

"That would have been the proper course," he agreed. "I'll accept your word that you will follow that course in future. And you may now talk over the question of the exercise yard with the chief."

And so it ended. It has only to be added that the two warders in charge of mailbags were very pleased at what I had done. They were ex-Artillery men; the other had been in a Guards regiment, and there was a tendency on the part of Guardsmen to think themselves a bit superior. The lads that fired the big guns were delighted that I had done something to knock this one off his pedestal.

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SCOTTISH UNIVERSAL

Scottish Universal—but not Hugh Fraser's!
My theme's a better one in every way, sirs.

One of the few decent politicians in Britain today!
That does not prevent a man having enemies,
On the contrary, the more unswervingly upright
The more powerful the hatred he arouses,
The deadlier the enmity combining against him.

So we have had it here—a man indefatigable
In his attention to affairs, serving his electors
With sustained ability and scrupulous devotion.
A genial man, exemplary citizen and loving husband.
Not many men tested in the acrid fires
Of public life come through so intact and unsullied.
Pure gold thrice refined. I remember as a boy
Searching a wide Border moor, acres of purple heather,
Looking for white heather—and suddenly
I saw it, hundreds of yards away,
Unmistakable—so in the hosts of men I've known,
Willie Gallacher shines out, single of purpose,
Lovely in his integrity, exemplifying
All that is best in public service—distinct,
Clear-headed and clean-hearted.

A great humanist, true comrade and friend,
Without variableness or shadow of turning,
Eighty years young in his sterling spirit
And the immaculate courage of his convictions.
A spray of white heather in the future's lapel,

A wave and cheerful handshake for all mankind!
But surely he has some fault? Yes, of course.

The worst of all, the unforgivable knack of being always right.

HUGH MACDIARMID

A poem written for and spoken on the occasion
of the 80th Birthday Celebration of William
Gallacher in St. Andrew's Halls, Glasgow, on
24th December 1961

I

Childhood in Paisley. Old Paisley and some of its early radicals. Apprenticeship. The temperance movement. "The barras" and socialist literature. Beginnings as a platform orator.

ONE evening, in the House of Commons, a virulent anti-Communist Catholic factory-owner was making a particularly venomous attack on the Soviet Union. I interrupted him by shouting: "He's not speaking for the working class, he's speaking for the 'black international'."

"That's what you get from a renegade Catholic," was Mr. Stokes' retort.

I was born into a little Irish colony; some were Catholic, some Orange; the Gillespies and Bartons were Orange; the Creightons and McArthurs were Catholics; these, with the Campbells, the Retsons and the Richmonds, provided me with my boyhood playmates. Jimmie Gillespie, a year or two older than me and a quiet pleasant boy, was a special playmate and I often liked to go with him, along with several of the others, for a walk to the River Gryfe or as far away as the Erskine Ferry on a Sunday morning, when I ought to have been at Mass.

On Monday mornings when I got to school I often had to stand up when the head teacher, Mr. Tom Maley, stood out in the middle of the floor and called out: "Stand up any boy who didn't go to Mass yesterday."

As I remember, there were four classes in the one room, with only a narrow passageway in between. Sometimes I had to stand alone, sometimes there would be some other defaulter. Mr. Maley had a cane, burnt at the end to give it a nip, and out the absentees had to go and listen to the swish as it came through the air.

I told Maxton about this on one occasion and we had quite a laugh about it. Later on he told me he had been having a chat with Willie Maley, Manager of Celtic F.C., who was proposing to pay him a visit at the House of Commons. "Watch out that Willie Gallacher doesn't see you," Jimmy warned him. "He's got it in for you from his school days." "Not me," grinned Willie, "that was my brother Tom."

One day I came home from school at the midday break, after a particularly savage application of the cane, and I told my mother I wasn't going back. My mother made no objection to this; she was

what might be called a nominal protestant; but like most working-class mothers had too much of a struggle to maintain her family to bother about religion. My mother was a Sutherland and came from Islay; my father was Irish and either he or his parents came from Ireland. Who my grandparents on either side were, I never knew. My father died when I was seven years old. I always heard him referred to as "a dacent wee man". But dacent or no, he was heavily addicted to drink; he was a baker, but had to give it up for health reasons. He took a job as labourer to a local slater, with very small pay. When he died I had two older sisters and an older brother, all regular attenders at the church, and two younger brothers and a younger sister. My mother had to go out washing every day. I was nine years old when I objected to going back to school and, as my mother considered I wasn't getting a proper education and as I always hurried home from school to get the kettle on for her homecoming, she was always willing to approve of anything I might do. After I had remained away from school the next day, we were visited by Big Taylor the truant officer. When my mother explained that I wasn't going back to school he told her I must; but if she was determined that I wasn't going back to St. Mirren's he could arrange for me to go to a Board School. I was fixed for Camphill School, but when I got there they put me back a standard; I had just entered the fourth at St. Mirren's and they put me into the third at Camphill, because the standard of the Catholic schools was very low. They were self-maintained at that time, with no support from local or government funds, and as the majority of the Catholic families were very poor, it was a tough job getting qualified teachers for the schools. They now have the same standard of teaching as the others. But there I was, in the Camphill school, in Mr. Stokes' words a renegade Catholic. Relatives on my father's side were very upset; this can be understood. My father had two married sisters who lived near by while my mother's two sisters and three brothers were settled in the Cowcaddens, Glasgow. My mother was blamed for the defection and some hard things were said about her. But my sister and brother, who were working at very small wages, rallied round her, and ultimately also gave up "the faith".

When I was ten years of age we moved to a better house in a side street off "The Wee Back Sneddon" where I was born. There was a dairy opposite and there I got my first job, carrying milk from six in the morning till half past eight, and again in the evening from five till six. For this toil the boys were paid the handsome sum of 1s. 6d.

weekly. But 1s. 6d. went quite a way eighty years ago as a contribution to the domestic kitty.

Compton McKenzie has told us of his amazingly retentive memory; I can only go back to when I was three years old, and my earliest memory gives me a feeling of regret or shame. An old slater friend had visited my father; he had a large, bulbous, pitted red nose and, as I sat on my father's knee and listened to their talk I suddenly broke in with, "Where did you get the strawberry nose?" My father drew me close to his breast with his left arm and smoothed my head with his right hand, and the unpleasant moment passed. That was seventy-eight years ago and this is the first mention I have ever made of it. Somehow my father, without the use of Tom Maley's cane, was able to make me feel I had said something very wrong. Years afterwards, when I was a young man working at my trade, there was an elderly tinsmith with a very prominent, very red nose, a white moustache and pointed beard; his mouth, as a result of his working with acids, was a bright green colour; the others always spoke of him as "Old Rainbow", but I never at any time used that name.

Well, Compton can go much farther back than my three years, but in one thing I'm certain I can beat him. The dairyman with whom I worked was noted for his meanness; he got me over very often in the evening to do all sorts of jobs around the yard and byre; for this work he rewarded me with a smoke from a clay pipe and thick black tobacco. There was me, sitting like a wee man, puffing away at the noxious weed; for seventy years I have been at it; I have changed my type of pipe but never changed the tobacco. Of course, my family didn't know about this early start or the cane would have descended on Sammy Walker the Dairyman.

But now I was not only going with the milk, I was also going to a Protestant Board School. Although this was an odious offence in the eyes of a Catholic, my relatives never shunned me and after a brief time were quite well disposed towards me. In fact, a cousin, John McBride, who gave great and unstinted service to the Catholic community in Paisley, remained my very dear friend to the end of his life.

Instead of coming out of school when I was eleven years old, owing to having been put back a standard I didn't finish until I was twelve. The day after I finished I started work as a message-boy for a grocer around the corner from where we lived. The grocer, John McLean, was of medium height, very straight, with reddish hair, moustache and pointed beard. His daughter, in her early twenties, and his nephew,

also in his early twenties, with a thin strip of a moustache, made up the shop staff. I was continually in trouble because of my off-hand way with the all-important master of the establishment. One afternoon he came round the counter and glared sternly at me. "Who is master here?" he barked, as I stood, a very little fellow, gazing up at him. "You are," I solemnly replied. "I'm glad you know it," was his retort, followed by a lecture on what was correct behaviour for a boy towards his master. I was quite humble after that—until one Tuesday afternoon. Tuesdays we stopped at two o'clock for our weekly half-day. On my way home, every Tuesday, I carried on my head a large basket of provisions for the nephew's mother. We had flitted the year before to the east end of the town and were now quite a bit away from the shop, but I passed Mrs. McLean's door on my way home, so it was no trouble to take her provisions. We had another customer, Mrs. Thomson of Gateside, who always ordered a whole ham at a time. She had one on order, and just at quitting time a lorry came to the door and the lorryman dropped off a barrel of hams. It was rolled into the shop, opened up; a ham was taken out which the boss himself started boning and stringing. It was twenty minutes past two and I was standing beside the basket I had to carry, waiting to go. Round he came with the ham and dumped it into my basket.

"Take that to Gateside," he ordered me.

"Are you aware," I asked him, "that it is my half holiday and it's now about half past two?"

"Don't talk back to me," he said. "Get the basket on your head and be on your way."

"No," I told him. "I'll take Mrs. McLean's but I'm not going away to Gateside."

"Alex!" he called to his nephew, "go outside and get a boy!"

I wasn't taken in with that one. "Another boy wouldn't know where to take them," I said.

"Will you do what you're told!" he shouted at me.

I repeated: "I'll take Mrs. McLean's messages but I'm not going to Gateside."

"Get out of here!" he said, blazing mad.

I walked out, and there was Alex waiting for me. He pleaded with me to take the ham and the other goods. If I didn't take them he'd have to do it and it would look terrible for him to be carrying a load of groceries. But like Luther, I had taken my stand, and I could do no other. Once again I had to go home and tell my mother I had revolted.

But she always had great faith in me, as I had in her, and as she said later on in life: "Oor Wullie will no gae faur wrang." When I heard that it made a deep and lasting impression on me, and if ever I was tempted, I would remember what my mother said of me.

That evening when my brother and my sisters came from work and heard what had happened they looked at me, wondering what sort of boy I was. The next morning my mother wakened me at the usual time; she had to go out washing and I had to make a cup of tea for myself and my younger brother and sister. Before going out, she said: "Willie, ye'll have tae go and see if the puir man has ony yin tae go for his orders; ye cannae jist leave him an' his customers wi' naebody." "But," I protested, "he won't let me intae the shop." "Mebbe no," she urged, "but he may need you till he gets anither boy. Ye ken that's richt, Wullie."

How could I argue against her? I said: "All right, I'll go, but he'll likely throw me oot." She just gave me a pat, and went off for a hard, heavy day's work. Away I went, after my house chores had been got through, and arrived just as the shop had opened. In I went, and the three of them were there behind the counter. They gazed at me for a moment, transfixed. Then the boss let out a shout. "What do you want here?"

"I though you might need me to go for the orders till you get a new boy," I answered.

He looked at his daughter and his nephew, both of whom were trying to restrain a smile. "All right!" He was very gruff. "Go and get the orders!"

I got the orders that day, and many days after—in fact till I was fourteen, when I left the grocery to take a job as an apprentice brass-finisher in a sanitary engineering works.

Paisley was a thriving semi-market town when I was born, with farms surrounding it on all sides and with farm-servants congregating every Saturday evening in Moss Street just off Paisley Cross. The men wore trousers so tight we used to say they must use a shoe-horn to get them on and off; the women wore blouses with balloon sleeves reaching to just below the elbow, and short skirts, at a time when all the others of their sex were wearing skirts that trailed the ground. These long skirts plagued our womenfolk right up to the first decade of this century. I remember a Music-hall turn, billed "The Penny Whistler" singing a song one verse of which went:

Now mud in the mind of a girl always rankles;
You see one cross the road on a very wet day;
She tucks up her skirt and shows her pretty toot-toot
Toot-a-toot, toot, toot—

If she happened to lift her skirt a little too high and show a bit of her leg all eyes were turned upon her. I remember those long skirts only too well. When I was a little fellow my sisters could always get me to do the job of scraping and brushing the mud off the hems; I did it, but never liked it. There is still a cattle market in Paisley, but it is a small affair compared to those earlier days. The summer holidays were always known as Paisley Fair holidays, but the start of them was a horse fair, with horses large and small, fat and thin, being paraded up and down St. James Street showing their points to prospective buyers. As a small boy I was entranced watching them.

The principal industries were starch and thread. Of the five starch works, one, Brown and Polson's, discovered that starch could be made into flour and so launched (the first in the country) the well-known corn flour. Five starch works consumed a lot of water, and as they sought to expand, the question of water became an urgent problem. Neither individually nor collectively could the starch firms face the cost of a great water undertaking, so "mixed economy" was the answer. To hear some of the present-day Labour leaders talk, you would think a mixed economy was something entirely new and daring, but here was one of the many examples that were to follow. The local Council presented a Parliamentary Bill seeking powers to raise a loan for carrying out a very ambitious new water scheme, known as the Rye Water Scheme. Already the town had a fairly good water supply for ordinary purposes, but this new undertaking was a really big affair, calculated to satisfy the greediest maw in the largest starch works. Anyone travelling from Paisley to Largs by bus will have a fine view of the Rye waterworks. The starch works have gone but the water is now so plentiful that it allows Paisley to help out surrounding areas when there is an exceptionally dry spell and, if I'm not mistaken, one or two neighbouring places get supplies all the time.

The story of thread is particularly interesting. In 1696 the young daughter of the Laird of Bargarran, an estate near Bishopston, was bewitched. Seven people—three men and four women—were found guilty and condemned to be throttled and burned. In 1718 the girl,

now a young woman, got married to a clergyman, who died three years later. She became restless, and with her mother went on a tour to the Continent; in Holland she found that the Dutch had a machine and a method for the manufacture of thread. She studied how it was done, smuggled the essential parts of the machine out of the country and when she and her mother got home to Bargarran they set up in business as thread makers. For convenience they moved the machinery from the house to a small place in Johnston. Soon other families were able to get machines and enter into the thread business. One of these, named Pollock, got the idea of opening up in the bigger centre of Paisley. By 1744 there were about ninety families operating machines in Paisley and by 1828 the Coats family had established a thread factory in the west end of the town; about the same time the Clark family set up theirs in the east end. Both families realised the advantage of cheap labour, so they employed children and young girls. Children went to school for half a day, to the thread mills for the other half. Young women, like my two sisters, had to work in a heated atmosphere until they were exhausted. They would come home at night with splitting headaches. Such was the common experience. They didn't get more than their bare keep and if they wanted more out of life, a theatre or a dance, they had to look to the superior male to do the honourable.

Both cotton families became extremely wealthy—the wealthiest families in the town. Out of their wealth, distilled from the sweat and health of their many workers, they prepared their way for preferment among the “mansions in the sky” by building churches and making donations toward other more useful institutions in the town. One of these was the Paisley, or George A. Clark, Town Hall. This member of the Clark family left a considerable sum for its construction and after his death a brother said he would make up whatever extra was required to ensure a monument worthy of him. For its time, it was quite an imposing building, standing on the south-east bank of the River Cart. It was scheduled to be opened on Christmas Day, 1881, but the opening was postponed until February 1882. Why the postponement? I cannot answer that, but I have often wondered if someone told the patrons that I was going to be born on that Christmas Day. Just fancy how they would have felt if, in after years, the date of its opening had been indicated by: “Yes, the Town Hall was opened the day Gallacher was born.”

The postponement was, I suppose, an intervention on the part of a

merciful providence. There were great speeches and great doings in the old town on the day and evening of the opening. "Our handsome new Town Hall" was featured in glowing terms in the local *Paisley Daily Express*. As it happened, the Town Council was considering the advisability of moving into new premises. What could be more suitable than to erect a handsome structure on the south-west bank of the river, to match in elegance the new hall of which they were so proud? Architects, the best in the land, got on the drawing boards without delay and provided an edifice to delight the heart of townsman and artist. Such a beautiful building, with superb shops at the bottom, and above the Council Chambers, the Provost's and Magistrates' rooms, a lounge for the Councillors and, above that, offices for the various departments; crowning all, a tower with a spire reaching to the sky.

But there's more yet; the river would be covered from St. James' Bridge, which spanned the Cart nearby, to the Abbey Bridge several hundred yards to the south. A covered loggia would lead from the east end of the Civic Centre down to a flower-decked promenade. Great, said the folks in Paisley, for the river was an eyesore and a heartsore to all in the town. Across the road from the new Town Hall is the front of Paisley Abbey; when this was built around 1170 the town of Paisley, if at that time it could be called a town, lay on the other side of the river. From the Abbey a sloping, sandy shore led down to the clean, smooth-flowing river where the monks spent many happy hours in the role of fishers, not of men but of fish. An idyllic scene the Cart must have presented then; but at the time when the Civic Centre was being considered—what a change! It had become a sewer, and a filthy sewer at that. The soap works discharged their refuse into it: masses of soap waste, mostly a dirty grey, floated down river in great chunks; to help on the good work the dyers sent streams of waste colours to mix with the soap-suds; add to this an occasional dead dog or cat, and you will understand the reason for planning the covering of the river. The properties on the site were purchased. The demolition squads were put on the task of clearing it for the new structure. Down went the old properties. The rubble was removed—and that was as far as they got. Questions in the Council; letters in the local press: What is this grandiose scheme going to cost? What will it mean on the rates? and so on, until the sponsors were overwhelmed, and the Council remained where it was—and where it still is.

But once again the town is involved in a battle for a new and

grandiose Civic Centre, not facing the Town Hall but across the way from the rear of the Abbey. I almost said "ancient Abbey", but I remembered that it has gone through such a series of rebuildings and face-liftings that there is, I believe, only one column of the original edifice left. I am writing, at the moment, on April 25, 1963, and in the issue of the local paper for that date are the remarks of a Labour candidate seeking re-election: "When the idea of a Civic Centre was first put forward it had the unanimous support of Paisley Town Council. Then, overnight the plan became 'a most wasteful extravagance'." The candidate goes on to ask why, and suggests that there is dirty work somewhere, and that if they knew where his opponents were getting their money, maybe they would understand. It looks as though history were making an effort to repeat itself. For myself, I hope it does not succeed: I think the new Civic Centre should be built whatever the cost.

To return to the river. When I was a little fellow the original harbour, adjacent to the Sneddon Brig, had become the Sand Quay; shallow-drafted scows used to come up with loads of sand for *War-nock, the sand merchant*. *Down at the foot of the Sneddon was the* Carlisle Quay, a busy place; what were known as lighters came there with India beans for the starch works, spoolwood for the mills, large rectangular paving-stones for the footpaths, and other goods picked up at Greenock. When the tide was out a small mud bank was visible in the middle of the river opposite the Quay. Now, when the tide is in, the mud bank takes up most of the river and not even a rowing boat could get in to what was once the dock. But another harbour has been constructed down the river.

Off Inchinnan Road, that runs from St. Mirren's football field to Abbotsinch, there was an open piece of grassland which we knew as "the sheep's park" although none of us had ever seen a sheep on it. On the south side this piece of ground was bordered by Ronal & Jack's carpet factory and on the north was a rough-cut new road leading to the "new" harbour on the west side of the river. The new harbour is still doing business, but on the east side of the river. All that by the way; between the rough road and the factory was the open ground, attracting wee football players—against their parents' wishes. It was for the most part flat, but down near the river bank there was a fairly steep gradient and if once the ball got on to that it meant a swift run to keep it out of the river.

We were having a great old time there once; I was then seven

years of age, I suppose. Jeemie Gillespie, about eighteen months my senior, who had a really delightful command of the ball, made a rush for the ball on the gradient and plunk!—there he was in the river. We had a tough job getting him out. I had to lie down with a lad at each leg holding on to me, enabling me to get a grip on him and get him up on the low bank. But what a hell of a licking he would get when he reached home! Had we not all been warned to keep away from the sheep's park? Jeemie was crying, wet and miserable, soap-suds and dye outside, and a portion of each inside of him. The rest of us felt like "greetin'" along with him.

Then someone had an idea. I cannot remember whether it was Jeemie himself or one of the others, but this I should say: when there was anything to be done like going into an orchard and getting up a tree for apples or pears, or if anyone had to be taken up a dark stairway, Wullie was always chosen. So Wullie was chosen, as we got near our homes, to go up and break the sad news to Mrs. Gillespie. Up one flight at 27, Back Sneddon Street I knocked at the door. Mrs. Gillespie looked at me, a pathetic figure, rubbing my eyes as I broke the tragic news that Jeemie was "droont"—we had tried to save him but we were too late. "They're bringing him up" I told her. Oh! what a business! What a wailing that poor mother and her other children sent out from their hearts, for Jeemie was a grand lad and dearly beloved in his family. In the midst of their passionate grief, Jeemie came crawling in, wet and dirty. Did that matter? If he had been clothed in white robes like the Elect visioned by John, he could not have been hugged with greater fervour. Get his wet clothes off, get him a cup of tea, oh my dear lamb, nothing too good for him. Then the mother remembered. "That Wullie Gallacher! wait till I get my hauns oan him!" But I kept out of the way, and the next day she just gave me a wee bit "flight". Jeemie lived into his eightieth year. We often recalled boyhood pranks together, but Jeemie always remembered the day he fell into the Cart.

But the Gillespies had nothing on the Bartons, about ten years later. Another playmate of mine, Matthew Brown, a very quiet lad, had started to serve his trade with a slater—as it happened the same slater my father had worked with. After he had been with the firm a couple of years his boss, Mr. McIntyre, told him if he wanted to sweep any of his friends' chimneys in the evening he could take the equipment home with him. Very good. His girl's mother wanted her chimney cleaned out. What a chance for him to show that he was

right on top of the job! "Wullie, you go up on the roof, and I'll fix things below!" Would I go up on the roof? Yes sir, I was always ready to do a bit of climbing. I finished work at five in the evening when there was no overtime. That evening, at about six-thirty, I clambered up on to the roof and shouted down the sweeps' password: "Beep!" I heard Matthew return the magic word. So, down went the ball and brush, then up, then down, then—Holy Jesus! the whole Barton family were out on the street: father, mother, sons and daughters, and the names they were calling me would have shocked the author of *Lady Chatterley*. It was an occasion for discretion. I got the ball and brush wrapped up, made my careful way along the next roof, managed to get to a lower one and from there did a long drop to the coal-cellars in the next backyard, then over a wall and out of the New Sneddon into the Back Sneddon.

"For me, for me, they're waiting there for me", one of the old-time comedians used to sing, and surely the Bartons were waiting there for me; but I was over the roofs and far away.

"What's the matter?" a neighbour asked them. "It's that damned Wullie Gallacher"—and that seemed to be explanation enough.

As I have said, Paisley was a thriving town, but like all others at that period it had its problems: street and stairhead lighting, paving and sewerage. On this latter Bailie Eaglesim, strongly backed by Bailie Cochran ("Auld Clearheid") was a vigorous agitator. There was already a measure of sewerage in the south-west of the town, and now the Councillor had got a motion accepted by the Council to proceed with sewerage in Newtown, to be followed by the Sneddon area. All of present-day Paisley to the east side of the Cross was in former times inhabited solely by the monks; there was the Monastery, all the rest was its grounds. It was only towards the end of the 18th century or the beginning of the 19th that any building was carried out in that part of the town, and it was well into the 19th century before it was actually recognised as part of Paisley and as Newtown. At that period the feuars (property owners) had to make a contribution towards the cost of such work, and so a feuars' meeting was called in Newtown to decide for or against contributing. Clearheid had a small shop in Newtown (it is now one of the finest soft-goods shops in the town), and he put a motion favouring the scheme. A feuar named Anderson thought it might be better "tae wait a wee while. There's fever yet whaur the George Street drain is, and there will be fever for a' the drains that were ever made. We should delay an' see if the

folk here dee ony mair than whit dee in ither places. Don't pay yon attention tae the Cooncil or tae Eaglesim!" (loud laughter). But it was no laughing matter for Newtown, as an amendment for delay was carried.

Bailie Robert Cochran was born in 1806, and from his youth, as will be seen in a moment, was actively engaged in the progressive and radical movement. He was small-made, but of a very neat build, with a good head and a very active mind. Before the Chartist period the incumbent of the Abbey, Rev. Patrick Brewster, was so attracted to the young lad, as he was then, with his quick mind and ready perception, that he named him Clearhead, and that name followed him until his death in 1897 in his ninetieth year. He was a weaver and his wife was a milliner. They had a little hat shop just above the Paisley Cross; legend has it that when she was making a hat to order she would be heard to call to her spouse: "Rubbert, come ben here tae try oan this hat." As I have said, he was of neat build, and I'm sure his head would suit the purpose. He had given notice of a motion in the Council proposing to petition Parliament in favour of equalising the franchise between the county and the boroughs. Moving it, he said: "There are some people who think that on the Council we should confine ourselves strictly to local matters and take no part in national affairs. I don't agree to that. Take such an important question as the land. Think of the Duke of Sutherland with 100,000 acres, others with 50,000 or 100,000, all of them basking in the sun in southern France or Italy. Or consider the representation in the House of Commons, the aristocratic landowners and the military preponderate—we can never hope to make progress with such representation. Only when the people take power into their hands will we get the reforms we so much desire. And this motion to give the ordinary people in the country the same voting rights as the people in the towns is but a small step towards that." The motion was carried, but Bailie McKenzie lamented his fellow Bailie "introducing politics into local affairs". It's an old, old complaint.

In 1882, in an election for the School Board, Bailie Cochran came out, as usual, at the top of the poll. On this occasion he was particularly pleased for, as he said, "The most influential people in the town are the Clarks and the Coats and I had one of each to win against." There had been a lot of excitement at this election and a great crowd gathered at the Bailie's headquarters; when the result was declared with Clearheid at the top of the poll, the enthusiasm knew no bounds.

As he came out to say a few words of thanks the crowd cheered, and cheered, and cheered again. All through his active life he was the most popular and best-loved public man in Paisley. Of course he had his enemies, not least being the Churchmen. He put down a motion supporting the Bill for the Disestablishment of the Scottish Church. He declared that "religion was responsible for the Bartholomew Massacre, for the Thirty Years' War and many other similar offences against humanity". When he finished speaking, one of his colleagues remarked: "You've laid it all on the table." It was carried. Next day his old and ever-faithful supporter, "The Old Infidel" (the superintendent or gardener in charge of the Fountain Gardens), had a letter in the local press associating himself with all that Clearheid had said but adding the joyful news: "I am pleased to know that Mr. Bradlaugh will take his seat in the ensuing session of Parliament in spite of all the Tories and false Liberals in the House, and that Mr. Holmes' [Paisley's M.P.] poor, petty bigotry will avail nothing to impede a man whose intellectual strength, moral worth and service to his fellows will be prized and remembered when Mr. Holmes, M.P., has passed into oblivion." Not bad for the Old Infidel!

Clearheid had another doughty lieutenant in the person of J. S. Mitchell, maternal grandfather of Thomas (Tom) Hunter, a solicitor, one of the best known and most warmly respected citizens of Paisley. Just before the summer recess in 1884 the Lords threw out the Liberal government's Franchise Bill, and Gladstone and Joe Chamberlain were rampaging up and down the country condemning the gilded Chamber in *no uncertain language*. A *terrific demonstration* was organised in Glasgow with Gladstone as the principal speaker. Auld Clearheid was there, and half of Paisley. But the old town had its own procession and demonstration in September of the same year. The procession was led by the veterans of the earlier Franchise battle and in the evening the veterans were invited to a dinner in the Globe Hotel. J. S. Mitchell, the chairman, commented on the burning issue that had brought them together once again. "Do we not live in the freest country in the world? I am sometimes asked. I do feel that there is freedom of a kind, in some quarters not advantageous to the nation's welfare and that is the freedom and power that has been given to, or usurped, by the irresponsible House of Lords, men who are as little use to modern society, either in its moral, industrial or scientific pursuits, as the meanest parasite that ever tormented the human race. What has been my life's experience? What has been my reading of

the past? It is that the progress of the working class has been a weary struggle, age by age, to undo the chains that bind them. We have been slowly striking off the fetters one by one, and now the descendants of those who forged the chains have the audacity to proclaim that they are still our masters. We'll show them different!" (loud cheers).

I was only three years old when that gathering took place so I wasn't present, or I'm certain I would have cheered with the others.

In 2nd Corinthians, Paul the Apostle gives a brief outline of his activities in defence of himself against his critics and we can allow Auld Clearheid to do the same. "I am considered by some to be a democrat, by others to be a firebrand, but I am getting old and it is thought perhaps I am repenting. I tell you I'm as a great a democrat as ever; misrepresentation and abuse I have been subjected to time and time again but they are harmless creatures who use it, even though they are backed by millowners. When I was a lad I went round from door to door getting signatures to a petition for the repeal of the Corn Laws. I was in the ranks of the Reformers in 1832. I was engaged in the Reform Cause in this town in 1837 when the National Convention met in London. I was a delegate myself to the National Convention of 1848. It was at my suggestion that the great demonstration was organised from Glasgow Green in 1868 when John Bright and other Reformers spoke. And I was chairman of the great meeting of Reformers of the County of Ayr held in Kilmarnock."

Quite a busy life, but it wasn't until 1885 that he was made Provost of his native town. Nearly eighty years of age he was then, but he was Provost in time to meet and greet the old hide-bound reactionary Victoria who was celebrating her Jubilee. The strangest couple, I'm sure, ever to drive together through the town of Paisley. The old lad died in 1897.

"A man without a creed," Dean Chisholm had dubbed him during one of their battles. Methinks he had a better and loftier creed than the Dean.

To conclude these rambling remarks about Paisley in my childhood, what could be better than to go with the staff of the local paper on a happy afternoon's outing, as reported in the *Paisley Daily Express* in May 1881. "Yesterday afternoon the staff of this paper went out merrymaking, seeking in vernal glades a short relief from the strain and labour of the daily press. Mr. King's new brake, which was mentioned yesterday, was the vehicle on which we sat aloft and were

borne, like warriors bold, throughout the principal thoroughfares. The splendid new vehicle and the four gaily caparisoned steeds being the subject of comment and admiration, merrily we bowled along until, leaving houses and smoke behind, we looked on nature's smiling face. Through the Slates, that somewhat prosaic rendering of Elderslie, we drove with speed to the astonishment of the natives. As we passed through the villages many an eye glanced upward and perhaps the best compliment was the exclamation of one auld wife who said to her mutched neighbour: 'Hech, bit that's a sicht fur sair een; Paisley weavers in sic a braw coach!' " And on they went to faraway Lochwinnoch, where they spent a happy afternoon and evening.

Elderslie, at the time of the happy outing, was a small Renfrewshire village separated from Paisley on the one side and the smaller town of Johnstone on the other by a stretch of open country. Nowadays, with all the building that has gone on, it is difficult to say where one ends and the other starts. But Elderslie still remains a village with a great place in Scottish history, for it was there that Scotland's great patriot hero, William Wallace, was born. A memorial column has been placed there by the Scottish Nationalists, where an annual meeting is held to commemorate the patriot's memory and to give a pledge to carry on his work for Scottish independence.

But the finest monument to Wallace, or any other, that I have seen is in Aberdeen. Several huge granite blocks topping one another, cape and corner, set on a plinth, from which I have often spoken in the days before motor traffic made such meetings impossible. There, high above me as I spoke, stood the mighty figure of Wallace with his huge two-handed sword. I walked around the plinth and saw on each side inscriptions, one of which I had occasion to use in the House of Commons. *On the front:* "Renewed attempts by Edward to conquer Scotland were heroically resisted by Wallace, till he was treacherously deserted by the Scottish nobility and betrayed by Sir John Menteith. He was thereupon seized, conveyed to London and there arraigned as a traitor to the English King, amid mockery and indignity which, conscious of his integrity, he bore with dignified composure. On August 23, 1305, this great hero was led to Smithfield and, with Edward an eye-witness, was there put to death, solely for his love of liberty, his effectual resistance to aggression and his fidelity to his native land." *On the right side:* "To Edward, King of England, I cannot be a traitor; I owe him no allegiance; he is not my sovereign; he never received my homage, and whilst life remains in this poor persecuted body he never

shall receive it." That was in his speech at his trial in Westminster Hall.

In an adjacent hall, to wit the House of Commons, a Tory once shouted across at me as I was defending the Soviet Union against attack the one word "Traitor!"

I grinned at Lord Winterton (an Irish Peer)¹ who had hurled this dummy thunderbolt at me, and quoted what Wallace had said (it can be seen on a brass plate in Westminster Hall as well as on the plinth of the Aberdeen statue). I said that I might be in order to make a somewhat similar claim. "I can never be a traitor to capitalism. I never at any time gave it my allegiance", and I could assure him that so long as there was breath in my body I never would.

When I started my apprenticeship I was a round-faced chubby boy always in a state of wonder as I watched the men around me and listened to what they had to say. They watched me as I watched them, and they soon found out that I was ready to listen to anything they cared to tell me, and they told me plenty. They would ruffle my hair and treat me like a godsent plaything. Maybe that made me somewhat precocious, I don't know; but I remember when one of them slapped another lad, a couple of years older than myself and with all the airs of an old man, I remarked to Sam (Cool) Kennedy: "Big Rab shouldna hae hit Pollock!" Cool replied: "But Wullic, that boy Pollock is awfu' impident." Then with a twirk of his mouth he added: "Ye know, Wullic, you're a cheeky boy bit ye're no impident." Work that one out if you can.

For a boy I was very strong, and the men used to get me to swing 56-lb. weights over my head or lift heavy bars of pig-iron. A tall, thin lad who worked the next machine to mine, Willie Macfarlane, was very withdrawn and sensitive. On one occasion I must have said something careless that hurt him. He didn't say anything, but when I returned to my machine after grinding a tool I found a note. It read: "To the strong boy. If thine enemy hunger, give him food. If he thirst, give him to drink, and by so doing heap coals of fire on his head." Then the appropriate chapter and verse from the Epistle to the Romans. I was always careful after that when I spoke to Willie.

Early in my apprenticeship I joined the Independent Order of Good Templars. I took a solemn pledge never to touch, taste or handle

¹ Irish Peers were allowed to select a few Lords to attend the House of Lords and others were free to stand for the House of Commons.

the liquor. I kept this pledge, for I had a terrible hatred of pubs and strong drink. My father drank too much and my mother had to slave to keep a home for the family. My older brother started drinking when young, and that almost broke her heart. But for me there was so much of interest in life it seemed that the last thing anyone should want to do was drink himself unconscious. As a shop-boy I used to go round with a basket balanced on my head and one of the popular boys' weeklies held up before my eyes. *Handsome Harry of the Fighting Belvedere* and *Wearry Willie and Tired Tim* were special favourites. But now, at sixteen, I was going round the bookshops, looking round the outside displays. Burns and Scott attracted me for a time, as did others like the Brontës, Mrs. Gaskell and one or two of the "Kailyaird" stories. But from the first of his books I read, *Oliver Twist*, my heart went out to Dickens, until I had bought—always very cheaply—all I could find of his works. From Dickens it was an easy transition, a few years later, to socialist literature.

I had not been a Templar long before I was made minute secretary of the Christopher North Lodge. Going out with parties to other neighbouring lodges I would contribute a song and occasionally tell a story with a moral. One of my favourites was the story about the drunkard whose hovel lacked everything to make a home, while his wife and poor wee children had to cover their nakedness with rags. Always when he finished work the drunkard would make for the same pub and stayed drinking until his already inadequate wage was gone. On one such occasion as he entered the pub he saw a dish of cherries that had been left on the counter. He stretched out his hand to take one but the publican's wife shouted: "Hey! buy your own cherries!" He gave her a look, and then said: "That's a good idea, Missus; I've been buying yours long enough!" He walked out of the pub for ever, finished with the "cursed alcohol", got a new house and made it a home for his now well-dressed wife and family. (I told that story a few years ago at a social gathering of the Communist Party where a limited amount of fiery liquid was going the rounds. I can't say it was received with rapturous applause.)

I must have been eighteen or nineteen when the older lads would have me take a programme for a *Conversazione*, a high-falutin' name for a social and dance. They told me I would have to get a shave before the big night. Allan Frew had a brother-in-law who was a barber, Steve Milton by name. So I was duly presented to Steve who passed me over to—whom do you think? His daughter, the first lady-barber

in our town. She had an easy job, getting rid of the few soft hairs I had around my chin.

I was also in the Christopher North Cricket Team. One very hot Saturday afternoon I was fielding at square leg. There was nothing coming my way, and sure as sure, I started dozing on my feet. Suddenly something rushed at me. Instinctively I threw up my hands to protect myself—and somehow hit the fast ball in such a way that it went upwards; fully awakened by the pain in my hand, I looked up and caught the ball coming down. It was a complete surprise to me, but the following week our *Paisley and Renfrewshire Weekly Journal* made mention of Gallacher's splendid catch: a case of honour where honour is not due. V 5647 M76 K6

One evening we were practising and I was fielding in the slips. We had two bowlers. George MacIntosh was a slow, tricky bowler, and he put down a twister that the batsman only just succeeded in keeping off the wicket. I stopped to pick it up just as the other bowler, Alex MacKay, put down a fast one. It caught the toe of the bat, came off with terrific force and got me fair and square on the right eye. Had it not been that my eyes are deep set I think I would have lost my eye. As it was, the crack on the bone tore my eyelid and laid it down over my eye. As I lay on my back I heard one of the lads exclaim: "Christ! He's lost his eye!" With the top lid hanging down it must have given the impression of an empty socket. I got to my feet and with a handkerchief tried to staunch the flow of blood while Alex MacKay led me to Dr. Richmond's house in St. James' Place. When we got there the doctor was out. We went up Moss Street to the Cross, and there on the far side was the nameplate of Janet Kay, the first woman doctor in Paisley. She was on the job, and put a couple of stitches in my eyelid. Alex and I went away quite contented. So my first doctor, like my first barber, was a woman. 105344

I hadn't only joined the Templars, I had also joined a choir. The conductor was a pleasant, friendly sort of man and we soon became good friends. It met in a small Mission Hall in North Street, just off the Wee Back Sneddon where I was born. It was the Mission Hall of the Free Middle Church, whose incumbent was a real character of the old school. He had come from the Highlands to take charge, and had occupied the pulpit for many years. He had a square, well-coloured face and long white silvery hair—I used to think he had been used as the model for the Quaker Oats packet. He was no lover of innovations. Dancing or any other form of frivolity was anathema to him. Out-

spoken as to his likes and dislikes, he offended many people, but he was so earnest and such an able preacher that he won a large circle of admirers in the Church and in the burgh. Yes, Rennie Caird was a weel kent clergyman. One evening, the choir was giving a concert in the Mission Hall to a large and appreciative audience. An Elder of the Free Middle Church, Mr. Thomson, who had an ironmonger's shop two or three yards up from the Cross in the High Street, was a "guest artist". His contribution was something unique. He had become the proud possessor of one of the first gramophones to appear in the town, one of the early sort with a huge trumpet and screeching records. It was playing *Onward Christian Soldiers* when who should come on to the platform but Rennie himself. As soon as it stopped, he growled in a voice audible throughout the hall: "What's this?" "A gramophone," half-whispered the proud owner. "Gramophone!" repeated the clergyman. "Agony-phone! It should have been playing *Here we Suffer Grief and Pain!*" Mr. Thomson left the hall in a fiery state of indignation, and severed his connection with the Free Middle Church.

By the time I was finishing my teens I was well known to most of the young people in Rennie's Bible Class. Each year the class had a social—tea and unexciting games in the Church Hall. A feeling of revolt grew among the members. Two of them—one of whom became a prominent lady in the town and a very attractive one at that—had a talk with me and got me persuaded, without much difficulty, to book the Royal Oak Hall for a social and dance. Rennie was to know nothing about it. As he never appeared at the socials, no trouble was expected.

Alas, his young assistant decided to come! There he was, sitting on the platform with several of the leading lights of the Church who were privy to what was intended. The platform party was not troubled. The tea and concert would take us up to ten o'clock and the young cleric would be feeling ready for his bed by that time—he need never know that a dance was to follow. John McLachlan, a blind piano-tuner, was the accompanist, and when the dancing started he was to be joined by one of the McCluskies with a fiddle. He, as a pillar of the Church, was on the platform. So was the lovely lady to whom I have already referred. The tea was enjoyed by all, and the musical items were highly appreciated. But when the hour approached for the young cleric to bid us goodnight, he was still sitting as though glued to his seat. The concert programme was finished, so we had to improvise.

Maybe I should mention here that a "social and dance" started as a rule with tea at 7.30 and the dancing would begin around 10 o'clock and continue until three in the morning. About sixty people were present and all of them knew there was to be a dance. There was a general fidgety feeling in the hall and on the platform. The lovely lady came down to me and put the question: "Gallacher, do you know a *blue* song?" I had to confess that I'd nothing of the sort in my repertoire.

"Something's got to be done," she said. "If he doesn't go soon, will you call a dance?" "As soon as you give me the sign," I answered. After two or three reluctant vocalists had occupied the platform, I got the sign. I mounted the platform and announced that the musical part of the programme was complete, and I invited the company to take their partners for a waltz.

If a bomb had fallen there couldn't have been a greater scatter. That young clergyman was off the platform as if he were jet-propelled. And the whole damned lot on the platform—pianist, fiddler, the lot!—went scurrying after him, and most of those in the hall followed. When the dust settled we had seven lads and twelve lassies left in the hall. One of the lads, Robert Catterson, a well-known local entertainer who is still at this late day a near neighbour of mine, agreed to take the piano, so we began with the waltz. We had just got on the floor when the proprietor entered and began putting out the lights. I challenged him, whereupon he informed me that he had been told that the social was over. "Who booked this hall?" I asked him. "You did," was the answer. "Very well," I told him. "I'll let you know when we're finished." He bowed out, and we went on with what could only, in the circumstances, be a very quiet and decorous dance. Yet the following weekend the weekly paper came out with a story. It gave a graphic and imaginative account of what had happened, leading up to the great dispersal and ending up: ". . . and the wild dance went on."

Rennie never heard of it. The young clergyman was discreet. He was intelligent enough to know that others were involved.

Apart from such small events as these, life was going fairly smoothly for me. Dave King gave up the conducting of the Mission choir and the choir broke up. I was then invited to join the choir of the Wallneuk Mission, a Sunday morning meeting for children, sponsored by Peter Coats, a member of the millionaire thread-mill family. He was a silent, somewhat melancholy man, who had no interest in life outside this particular Mission, which included a system of supplying coal

and other necessities to the poor of the neighbourhood. Of course, he didn't distribute his charity in person. He had a secretary who attended to it, and rumour had it that a considerable portion of the charity failed to circulate. The secretary was a well-groomed, pleasant-mannered gentleman with whom I had to deal when the choir was faced with any financial difficulty, and particularly when it came to a donation for the annual picnic. Besides this picnic there was an annual outing for the children, to which we older ones were invited as marshals and helpers. Some years later when I had become a socialist, this secretary was chairing a meeting in the Y.M.C.A. hall and got the shock of his life when I made my way to the platform and demanded the right to make a statement in reply to some remarks on socialism that had been made by the speaker of the evening. But I couldn't see as far ahead as that when I was singing in the Wallneuk choir. I wasn't long in it before I became friendly with one of the "monitors", a girl of my own age. Annie Robertson was a very attractive girl and very intelligent. Soon after I joined the choir we "mated up" and when the service was over I would walk with her to the west end of the town where she lived with her widowed mother, two brothers and two sisters. I gathered early on that she was supposed to be the sweetheart of Hugh Stewart, an acquaintance of mine. But I also found that she was very dissatisfied with life. She did not want to marry a working man. She never wanted to go through the round of drudgery that had been, and was, the life of her mother. She invited me up one Sunday to meet her mother; a very fine woman, a good mother and a good housewife, I found her. But I could also see that she was sorely worried about this daughter Annie. For several years Annie kept on and off with Hugh Stewart, but nothing came of it. After I had parted from my former friends I still met her occasionally, but she was sadly changed. She went drifting from one to another until, late in life, she went out one bitterly cold February morning and, like the fair Ophelia, ended it all by throwing herself through a thin sheet of ice into a dam along the border of which she had used to wander with Hugh in their younger days. But again, this was something I could not foresee when I was contributing to the melody of a Sunday morning.

While I was singing, the Boer War was drawing to its close, and what I was hearing and reading about it was creating a restlessness I could not control. There were meetings in the Gaol Square in Paisley on Sunday evenings. There were meetings every evening at the entrance to Glasgow Green. There were park gate meetings at

Alexandria Park, Bellahouston Park and others. In the Dog Market, opposite the entrance to Glasgow Green (a mortuary now occupies the site), there were debates every Sunday evening. I started wandering around, listening here and there. I got into the habit of talking to those responsible for the meetings, socialist and Secular Society meetings, arguing and maintaining that drink was a curse and if we had an end to the drink problem it would not be long before all the rest was sorted out. One of the early socialists and Secularists in the town was John Docherty, who later went to New Zealand. His widow, Mary Docherty, has ever been a loyal member of the New Zealand Communist Party and a grand fighter for the cause of peace. Along with John Docherty was J. Stirling, who became my close friend in later years. These and others who came to the Square provided me with much to think about.

In the Dog Market I heard some noisy debates on Ireland between Quinn, an Orangeman, and Cottrell, a Catholic. At one such debate I bought a ticket for a meeting in the Diamond Hall, to be addressed by John Redmond. What a meeting that was! Did you ever hear *The Boys of Wexford* sung by about a thousand Irishmen packed into every corner of a moderately sized hall? Jesus! but the Irish blood in me leaped as I listened to them! Redmond, with no more knowledge of what lay before him than I, tore into the subject of Home Rule like a man inspired. I didn't realise at that time that what I was listening to was demagoguery—as was proved when the Irish crisis developed during the first world war. Coming from that meeting, I remembered how when I was about six years old my father liked to put me up to sing *The Irish Patriots*. This song was written in honour of the "Manchester Martyrs"—three men who attacked a police van that was conveying a Fenian prisoner to gaol; they secured the release of the prisoner but a policeman was shot in the struggle. The three men were put on trial and sentenced to death; when the death penalty was pronounced they cried in unison from the dock "God Save Ireland!" The chorus of the song goes:

God save Ireland, cried the heroes;
God save Ireland, say we all.
Whether on the scaffold high,
Or on battlefield we die,
What matters if for Erin dear we fall.

In Glasgow shortly after the first world war, three men attacked a

police van to rescue an I.R.A. prisoner. The prisoner was released but in the struggle a policeman was shot. Just a repeat of the Manchester affair, but what a different ending! Three men were arrested, tried in the High Court, and found—Not Proven. They walked out of the Court free as air.

Meetings and the "barras" were taking up more and more of my time, with an occasional night at the theatre, and this meant that I was taking less interest in the Independent Order of Good Templars, although my abhorrence of pubs still held fast. Barrows with second-hand books were to be found, and still are, at different street corners, where all kinds of literature could be picked up cheap. I remember going to hear Robert Blatchford in St. Andrews Hall, and coming away disappointed. Such a fine writer and such a flat speaker! The two could hardly be reconciled. I went to the same hall to hear H. M. Hyndman. He could speak all right, and I remember he spoke as one having authority. His subject was "The First Monday after Socialism". The week before, a Socialist majority had elected a socialist government and now, on a Monday morning, what a change along the Clyde! It went down very well, but it was the sort of thing that aroused thoughts afterwards, thoughts about everything being too easy and change being too automatic. I did not, at the time, think this out clearly, but I know that a few years later when I became associated with John McLean I fell into his mood of opposition to Hyndman without any difficulty. I went to hear Keir Hardie of course, and Smillie, with Martin Haddow or Jon Taylor as their chairmen. John S. Armour was, I think, the first Glasgow Marxist I heard speaking. He was an organiser or district secretary of the Stonemasons. In Paisley, apart from those I have mentioned as speaking in the Square, there were Councillors Bill Brown, Harry Baird and, a little later, John Kent. With all of these I later became acquainted and friendly.

In the Independent Order of Good Templars we must have operated according to the injunction of Paul the Apostle, that women should remain silent. I cannot recall ever having heard a woman speak at a Temperance meeting. Mrs. Arthur of Barshaw was the leading figure in the Women's Christian Temperance Association, but she and her colleagues met and prepared petitions or delegations to licensing magistrates and others and never, as far as I remember, appeared as speakers on the Temperance platform. So when I saw a woman advertised to speak in Glasgow on the subject of socialism, or some topic related thereto, I went, with one or two other lads, to hear this

phenomenon. She seemed to me to be very genteel, even delicate, but if she didn't look strong she certainly sounded strong; she had, a very fine voice, almost a baritone, and she made a strong sentimental appeal for socialism as the remedy for all the poverty and suffering we saw around us. Her name was Enid Stacy. She was a grand girl, but alas, her useful life was cut short; she died just a few years later. Another woman speaker—quite the opposite in appearance—was Dora B. Montefiore. I should mention that when any important speaker was coming from Glasgow one or other of the lads I have mentioned would come and see me and tell me how important it was that I should hear him or her. They were determined to make me a convert. Dora B. was a robust woman and a robust speaker. I can remember her saying that capitalism made the criminals and then the capitalists put them into appalling prison conditions to make them hardened criminals, and that the sooner women became legislators the better it would be for the country. She was the first I heard put the case for women.

By the time I was seventeen I was earning a fairly good wage on piecework, with regular overtime, so much so that my wage and that of my two sisters enabled my mother to quit working altogether. She had persuaded my elder brother a year earlier to take up a trade, thinking that this might steady him; this meant that he was getting a very small pay packet while his thirst remained unabated. Alas, my mother had a very short retirement. When I was in my twentieth year she died of a stroke, and this sudden bereavement hardened my hatred of alcohol, and of the system that had imposed such slavery on her.

The brother next to me had died six years before. My oldest sister had got married and that left my Wee Sister, as I called her, to keep house with a problem older brother and a young brother and sister. My wee sister, a bonnie wee lass, had got joined up with the Bethels and had a kitchen prayer meeting held in our house once a week. As I used to work until 7 p.m. I would get shoved into the parlour on such occasions; a pot of tea, some bread and jam, soap and a towel would be passed in and I'd be told to make the best of it. The problem fellow made things very difficult for her. He grumbled about her method of sharing out the food. When she did a bit of home-baking he would take a bite of the product and throw it down with a snarl: "Nobody could eat that!" I would gulp it down, and tell her I had never tasted better. That's how it went; the more he thraved her the more I submitted to her, until I was like putty in her hands.

She could get me to do anything except give up the new ideas that were beginning to germinate in my mind. The Boer War was going on at the time, and there were a number of speakers going around, including Lloyd George, exposing its imperialist character: a war for loot, for gold and diamonds. I was getting more and more drawn into discussions. My sister would hear, from one or other of her work-mates in the threadmill, something of what I had said, and she would get after me in no uncertain manner. The company I was beginning to keep would lead me to eternal damnation—and me a member of the Wallneuk choir! I could have told her there was more chance of being led astray by some of the lads in the choir than by those she was complaining about, but I never answered back, I just let her go ahead. (Many years later, when I was married, she came up to my place in the west end of the town to give me one of her tellings-off. "That'll do, Mary," said Jean, my wife. "I'm the boss now." That put the finish to my wee sister's scoldings, but it didn't help me much.)

There was quite a stir in the town when the Volunteer Yeomanry left for South Africa, but I don't remember showing much interest in that event. Yet in the ranks there was a young lad, Pat Machray, a Roman Catholic who a few years later was my first platform colleague. His experience in South Africa had not only shaken his faith in the imperialists, it shook his faith in the Church as well.

When the war was over a young man named Moffat, a nephew of Mrs. Arthur of Barshaw, leader of the Women's Christian Temperance Federation, was presented as prospective parliamentary candidate for Paisley. His contribution to Empire was to arrange a scheme whereby he would pay the third-class fare (about £3 or £4) for thirty or forty lads who were prepared to emigrate to Canada. When they had found work they could repay him at so much a week, and that would enable another group to get an assisted passage. My problem brother was one of the first to get his name down. The week they were due to sail they were called together, and Mr. Moffat and his aunt gave them a talk in which they did their best to boost the Empire and to impress the lads with the great responsibility they'd have for its building. Each of them got presented with his boat ticket between the covers of a Bible—the latter being a gift from Auntie. She was quite a character in her own right, was Mrs. Arthur.

The evening before the emigrants were due to sail, my brother went out all dressed up, with quite a swagger. He came back at six o'clock in the morning, and what a sight he was! I had the damnedest

job getting him half-sobered and cleaned up. With my brother-in-law carrying the suitcase we made our way, about nine o'clock, to catch the train at Gilmour Street station. On the way my brother must run up to see an old pal. By the time he came out and we got to the station the train had gone. We were told there was another one in a quarter of an hour at Abercorn station: off we went. Alas, on the way we had to pass Hodgarth, Fullerton & Barclay's where he had been employed. He must go in and say goodbye to his old "gaffer". I told my brother-in-law to go on to Abercorn station and take the train, and I would get my brother there somehow. By the time he emerged from the factory it was too late for the train at Abercorn, so back we went to Gilmour Street and got a train there. We had to get out at Shields Road station and walk from there to the docks at the end of Lorne Street, off the main Glasgow-to-Paisley Road. There we found my brother-in-law waiting with the suitcase. We approached the gangway when—Holy Jesus! he found he had forgotten the Bible with the boat ticket in its pages. The purser would not let him board the boat. I turned and ran along Lorne Street. Not a car anywhere in sight. (Not long before, the line had been extended to Crookston, about three miles from the docks and two from Paisley.) I kept on trotting, and never a car came along. I ran all the way to McKerrell Street in the east side of the town, and my wee sister didn't half get a shock when she saw me. I rushed into the room and grabbed the Bible. All she could say was: "Oh, Wullie!" as I went dashing out of the house and away on the road again. Fortunately, when I got to Crookston there was a car waiting. I fell aboard it gasping, and continued gasping until we got to Lorne Street. Dismounting, I put on a final spurt and got to the docks as the boat was preparing to cast off. I got quite a cheer as I staggered along the dock, but my brother was already aboard. A reporter had persuaded the purser to accept him with a promise that if I wasn't back in time the reporter would see that the ticket was there for him at Greenock. My brother had been feeling a bit depressed with a hangover and no ticket, but when he saw me his spirits rose and he was ready to become the life of the party. Despite all we had endured from him, we were sorry to see him go, and cherished the hope that the new associations might have a beneficial effect. He was, at heart, a really good lad, with a very, very deep affection for his mother and our older sister. But he couldn't get along with my wee sister and that meant he couldn't get along with me.

I was not only beginning to read socialist literature, I got, in a somewhat practical way, introduced to Shakespeare. A dramatic club had been formed in the town and I was invited to take the part of the Second Gravedigger in *Hamlet*. The lad who was the big chief in the dramatic club worked in Douulton's office, where I was employed. He knew that if he had me in the cast there would be a good sale of tickets in the works for the two-night show, for I'd already appeared in a works programme as a comedian. And it was so. Frank Dykes, active all his long life in the dramatic and operatic society, was the First Gravedigger and we got quite a nice write-up for our bit of the performance. The local paper blended praise with the reflection that the Second Gravedigger had introduced something entirely new to Shakespeare: "He appeared smoking a cutty pipe, before tobacco was discovered."

I found it an easy transition, as I have said, from Dickens to socialist literature, particularly *The Clarion*, edited by Robert Blatchford. This very popular writer easily won me to a sentimental adhesion to the idea of socialism, and prepared the way for my coming into contact with Marxism. Many years later this same Blatchford—or should I say a sadly changed Blatchford—completely repudiated his early convert. But that still lay far ahead. From *The Clarion* I started reading *Justice*, the organ of the Social Democratic Federation, of which H. M. Hyndman and Harry Quelch were the outstanding leaders. I thought they were all wonderful people: and I thought that this great gospel of socialism had only to be brought to the attention of my fellow-workers to win their general acceptance. I soon found, however, that it was going to be more difficult than I had contemplated to get my new views accepted. Paisley was still a predominantly Liberal town and the great majority of my workmates seemed to accept Liberalism as a law of nature. Out of the five or six hundred employed in the factory I was alone as far as this question was concerned. Nevertheless, I got on well with my workmates. I was still a rabid teetotaler and could occasionally persuade one or other of the well-known addicts to come along to the Templars Lodge and "take the pledge". In many cases, I was approached by their wives, who had to bear the burden of making ends meet when too much of their men's pay passed across the pub counter.

I had for several years been known to a fair circle as a keen temperance advocate and, as such, a quite respectable and up-and-coming young man. As word got around that I was actually propagating

revolutionary ideas, many of the "nice people" I knew began to shy off from a too close association with me. But old friends leave you; new friends appear. In 1905, the secretary of the local branch of the Independent Labour Party came to see me and invited me to join. This I did, and by a strange coincidence the young Yeomanry volunteer, Pat Machray, was there to join the same branch. Coincidence, I say, because from our first meeting a very close affinity developed between us. Taller than I, and dark, Pat's features and head were almost a replica of those of the great atheist of the second half of the 19th century, Charles Bradlaugh. We sat down side by side. At the close of the meeting we walked to the Paisley Cross together. I had to go east from there, he west, so we stood talking a long time before parting. He was still a Catholic, but his faith was shaky. When, a short time later, he made a clean break, I got the blame from many who knew nothing of how his active mind had been stirred by his experiences in Africa and the full exposures that followed the close of the Boer War—and even more by his realisation that while the British clergy were calling on God to bless British arms, the Boer clergy were equally active in demanding celestial approbation for their cause and appealing for victory for the Boers. He was, as a consequence, already expressing the idea that Squire put into his famous lines at a later date, in the early months of the first world war:

God heard the embattled nations sing and shout
Gott strafe England—God save the King!
 God this, God that, and God the other thing;
 Good God, said God, I have my work cut out.

No, it didn't require any effort of mine to bring about Pat Machray's break with the Holy Mother Church. His own clear, keen-thinking mind made the retention of its superstitious dogmas out of the question. After two or three months in the I.L.P., we began to realise that we were in the wrong party, for we had got to the stage where we were able to differentiate between the various groups who were all ostensibly advocating socialism. We came to the conclusion that while there was a strong sentimental desire for something better animating the leaders of the I.L.P., there was a complete lack of Marxist theory to guide and direct their practical work. We made enquiries, and found that there was a very small group—half a dozen members—of the Social Democratic Federation, who met occasionally in a shoe-repairer's shop after closing hours.

We got in touch with this group and set about organising a regular branch and a Marxist study meeting. For this purpose we rented a vacated barber's shop in a narrow lane off Causeyside Street, Browns Lane. Soon we had a folding platform made, and Pat and I could use it for open-air meetings on Sunday evenings. Pat would do half an hour and I would follow on. I still retained certain mannerisms that were common among my associates of the temperance movement. I was standing at the side of the platform one Sunday evening—a real picture, I thought I was. I had on a light grey suit, a cream vest with an emerald green border, a silver-mounted cane and a straw hat. There was the usual large crowd in the County Square, all attention as Pat put his points across with a humour all his own. In those days our cartoonists were likely to picture the capitalist as a fat man with a double chin, and his lackeys as fops. Pat was giving his audience solemn warning as to whom they must watch: "Keep your eye on the fellow with the big pot-belly! Keep your eye on the fellow with the triple-expansion chin! Keep your eye on the fellow with the fancy waistcoat!"

The roar of laughter nearly shook Pat off the platform; he noticed that all eyes were turned on me, and a broad grin spread over his mobile face as he waited for the laughter to die down, and then said: "Fortunately, this one can speak for himself." And I certainly did my best to put the case for revolutionary socialism before the County Square audience—so much so that one self-styled passer-by wrote to the *Paisley Daily Express* about the "ranter" in the County Square and ended his remarks with: "Who, in heaven's name, is this Gallacher?" But there were two of us, Pat Machray and Wullie Gallacher.

It wasn't long before our branch was strong enough to rent a fair-sized hall in Cumberland Court, where we were able to have meetings, Marxist classes and Saturday evening socials. We were doing well, with Pat and me most often on the public platform. I was inclined to be over-serious in my relations with my comrades, whereas Pat was light-hearted and mercurial. He was not only an able platform speaker he was also a clever cartoonist and an indefatigable writer to the correspondence columns of the local press. He wrote over the initials "P.M." Like other daily newspapers, the *Paisley Express* in those days used to have a contents bill shown in every newsagent's window. Whenever there appeared in the contents bill "Letter from P.M." the paper was sure to sell out. Pat took on opponents of all

sorts, on socialism or religion, and laid them out, sometimes half a dozen at a time. Friends of his advised him to break with me, saying that I was a bad influence, while my friends were quite convinced that he would be my ruin. We had many a laugh as we exchanged notes on this subject. His sallies at religion amused many readers of the local press, and drew angry irritation from the "unco guid", including my wee sister. For instance, answering a correspondent who had been labouring the columns with a fantasy about the efficacy of prayer, Pat wrote that this reminded him of the pious old lady who told her neighbour: "With the help of God and two big policemen I've got rid of that noisy lodger of mine." Alas, Pat, who had a touch of genius that might have taken him to the front rank of writers or cartoonists, made a tragic mistake which brought his life to an early close. But that I will be dealing with later on.

In the meantime a change was taking place in my circumstances. My wee sister had got married, and was living at the other end of the town. One night a week I had to make her a visit and, as a rule, get a lecture from her and a warning of what was awaiting me in the world to come. As a tonic from this I was more and more in the company of Jean Roy, whose father was one of the early followers of Keir Hardie, and had had his daughters brought up in the socialist Sunday school. Jean, who had never had any religious teaching, was a firm socialist; and though she had always a warm regard for my sister she could never understand why Mary always wanted to make a fuss about religion. There were young girls I knew in my early days in the Sneddon, others in the Wallneuk Choir. But after my mother, the two women in my life were my sister Mary and Jean Roy, who became my constant comrade and ever-loyal and devoted wife.

Joins trade union. Stands for Council as socialist. Gets the sack, goes to sea. Shipwreck and what followed. Joins S.D.F.

IN 1906, when an election was pending, I was having a tough time with the vocal Liberals in the factory. The most impressive of these was Gavin Pinkerton from Barrhead, well known in the co-operative movement. With greyish hair, moustache and pointed beard, and a well-set figure, he had the respect of the whole body of workers. I was young in comparison with him, and it must have seemed presumptuous of me to argue with one so experienced, but argue I did.

Smillie was the Labour Party candidate, and I thought my fellow-workers ought to support a miner's representative rather than a capitalist like John McCallum, the soap manufacturer, with whom I had been associated in the Temperance movement. In his personal life no fault could be found; but he was a capitalist and the other was a worker even though he had left the pits to become a miners' leader.

Then, just before the election, I got a real shock. One of my work-mates showed me a paper from Glasgow that contained a list of names of the directors of a Public House Trust—and one of the names was that of Robert Smillie! That did it. Many a time in the I.O.G.T. we had discussed what we called "this attempt to make drunkenness respectable" and most of us were more bitter against this popularisation of alcohol than we were against the ordinary pub. I couldn't get over it. There was no more argument. Like a famous joker of old I "sulked in my tent"; it was impossible for me to vote for such a man. Many years later at a dinner in the House of Commons, with MacDonald in the chair, Smillie told this story to the company. Snowden said he could scarcely believe it—he had always had the feeling, he said, that Willie had been born a revolutionary. But what they said years later was nothing to what Jean Roy said at the time. She took the defeat of Smillie very much to heart, and you would actually have thought that somehow or other I had been responsible. As a matter of fact, in the situation that then existed, Smillie hadn't the ghost of a chance; if there had been a deposit to lose, he'd surely have lost it. His can-

vassers got the reply that Communists hear today during an election campaign: "We agree with what you say, and we realise that Smillie is a good candidate. But Labour has no chance of forming a government, so we must vote Liberal to keep the Tories out." As for me, my friend Pat thought I was crazy! What about all those respectables you followed around in the Good Templars; they were all over Renfrewshire supporting Sir Thomas Glen Coats, and he's a director of a Public House Trust too! That gave me a knock the other way. I still remained hostile to the drink traffic, but I had no more confidence in my former brethren.

In the following year, 1908, several things happened. I have mentioned that I was the only socialist in Douulton's; but in the machine shop where I had served my apprenticeship there wasn't a single trade unionist. I knew very little about trade unionism, although in the *Clarion* I occasionally read an article that was anything but complimentary to trade union officials. These were classed by the *Clarion* as reactionary tools of the employers and enemies of socialism; they were responsible for the fact that the Labour Representation Committee, formed in 1900, had refused to accept socialism as the goal of the movement.

A very bright young lad was being assiduously groomed by the *Clarion* as a genuine, hundred-per-cent socialist. A popular speaker, he achieved fame as Victor Grayson, who won Colne Valley in a bye-election, standing not as a Labour candidate, but as an out and out Socialist. He had published a pamphlet entitled *The Fly Fly, and Other Stories*, the opening story of which was a sort of parable illustrating the method used by trade union leaders to get a rise out of the working class. A group of flies got stuck in a jam pot. One of them pulled a leg out, licked it clean, then—stuck it back into the jam as it pulled out another. After doing this several times, it saw that it was never going to get free. Then it had a great idea! It licked a leg clean, and put it on the back of another fly; this it did until all its legs were clean and free and so, on the backs of its fellows, secured its freedom. The moral we were intended to draw was that the trade union leaders got out of the struggle by standing on the backs of the rank and file, or, as it was popularly put by the cynical: "They believe in the emancipation of the working class, one at a time!"

This sort of thing didn't turn my mind towards trade unionism to any great extent. But in that same year a representative of the Paisley Trades Council got talking to me and asked me what union I was in.

When I told him I wasn't in any union, he almost threw a fit. Such an ardent, revolutionary socialist, and not a member of a union! As there was no branch of the Brass-finishers in Paisley, he got me to join the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, No. 1 Branch, which met in Tannahill Hall, Moss Street. This soon got around in Douulton's, and the gaffer didn't like it. Bad enough spouting socialism, but trade unionism was going too far.

In the following November the branch put me up as a Socialist candidate for the council in the Third Ward. My opponents were an Independent (Tory) and a Labour Bailie standing for re-election. I had less chance than Smillie had had as a parliamentary candidate, but we were not much concerned with votes; the big idea was socialist propaganda—and in that we gave of our best. I got 187 votes; not bad, considering that Bailie Harry Baird was the protégé of the outstanding Labour leader in Paisley, Bill Brown. Bill was a strong-built man with a powerful voice and a straightforward manner that attracted the ready support and confidence of the workers. He had been elected to the Council and had paved the way for Harry Baird, who was a lightweight physically and politically. Bill had been victimised after the 1897 lockout and was faced with quite a battle to fend for his wife and young children. Then some of his supporters had an idea: they organised the raising of a fund and put Bill in a tobacconist's shop at the top of Moss Street, just off Paisley Cross. That gave him economic security, and for some years he played a leading part in the town's affairs. But his shop became a sort of Mecca for bookies and publicans, and more and more he lost touch with the workers. The next stage was a public house, and as a publican he was lost to the movement. When he was dying, and knew it, I sat at his bedside one evening. In the course of our talk he said to me: "Willie, never let them do to you what they did to me; they ruined me when they put me in that tobacconist shop." Having mentioned this, I'll jump ahead for a moment. When I came out of gaol in 1919 a deputation, representing the Albion shop stewards, Beardmore's shop stewards and the Paisley Trades Council, came to see me. Each group was proposing to raise £100, that is £300 in all, and—you will scarcely believe it!—put me in a tobacconist's shop. "By God you won't!" I told them. "No subscription, we'll manage to battle through." A week later Danny Fleming from the Albion came to see Jean, when he knew I was at a meeting in Glasgow, and gave her an envelope with £30 in it. "Don't tell Willie," he advised her, "but when I told the lads about his attitude,

thirty of them each gave me £1 as a present to you." I didn't know of this till quite a time later; I must say I had a great feeling of gratitude for these former workmates.

Now back again. Shortly after the Municipal election in November 1908, the incumbent of the Sherwood Church, Rev. Boyd Scott, announced that he was going to give a lecture on Socialism in his Church Hall. It was just a few yards from my home so I thought I would drop in and hear what he had to say. He was an exceptionally good-looking lad and what is called a brilliant product of our Universities, and he knew it. You had only to look at him to realise that he was away up high, far above the ordinary commonplace mortals who had come to bask in his wisdom. He quoted what all kinds of people had to say about Socialism and "the slavery of the state". He drew from his pocket a wooden pipe, held it up and exclaimed: "Fancy me having to give my poor old pipe to the State!"

When he finished I claimed the platform. He didn't want to grant it to me, but I insisted; somehow this had become a practice of mine. I said that neither the state nor, as far as I knew, anyone in the state, was the least bit interested in his poor old pipe; that if he would read the *Communist Manifesto* he would see that it draws attention to the fact that the masses have no property to speak of and that what they have could be impounded at any time for debt; that only when the means of production become common property will the people have private property free from any possibility of impounding. After I finished, he told his audience that every socialist had a different conception of socialism, but none of them could offer the peace and contentment enjoyed by the true believer in the Christian faith. He didn't add: and for that, you need me and all my fellow tradesmen in holiness, but it was implicit. The local paper subsequently reported the holy tradesman's speech, adorning his name with the numerous degrees he had collected, and then commented on the fact that "a horny-handed son of toil had the temerity to challenge such a highly educated and brilliant gentleman".

We have just such another highly educated and brilliant bloke in our town today. He is a Labour Councillor, but he isn't interested so much in Labour policy as he is in "absolute love" and the other absolutes that go with Moral Rearmament. He is in close touch with the Almighty and told us, through the local press, that "God speaks to the lonely man". It is implied in what he writes that if only everybody were as good and loving as he is, the world would be a paradise.

Then someone wrote a letter to the Press commenting on something he had had to say about the rates, and he sent a short letter in reply in which he said that because of a personal reference to himself he was breaking a life-long principle and answering an anonymous writer; he regarded such people as "curs snarling at the heels of a gentleman". Absolute love!

The year 1908 was a bad one for the working class in Glasgow and along the Clyde. There was, we were told, "a glut in the market" and thousands of workers were thrown on the streets, while the warehouses were packed with goods they had no money to buy. Unemployed meetings were held, and great marches were organised to the City chambers. A deputation from one of these, admitted to the Council Chamber, invited the City fathers to have a look at the demonstration from the window. They had a look, and we were informed next day by the Press that when he saw the hungry faces looking up at him, Lord Provost Bilsland broke down and wept. That was a chance for my colleague Pat: "It was the thought of the profit he was losing that made him weep," Pat declared, for the Lord Provost was a baker in a very big way.

In 1791 Thomas Paine, in the book that got him outlawed, *The Rights of Man*, first put forward proposals for old age pensions. And now in 1908 Lloyd George introduced a Bill and carried it through Parliament, providing a pension of 5s. a week at seventy years of age. Man's span of life, we are told in God's holy book, is three score years and ten; and in the House of Commons the Welsh Wizard, in his mellow, soothing voice, proudly proclaimed to the cheering Liberals that for every week the ancient wights could 'dodge the old fellow with the scythe he would award a couple of medals in the shape of two half crowns. Was there any opposition to this act of gross profligacy? Yes, sir, many devout Christian ladies and gentlemen were convinced that five bob a week would "sap the sturdy independence of the Scottish people". We had our share of these dear brethren in Paisley, and Pat and I certainly got no bouquets from them—nor they from us.

About this time the Glasgow Committee of the Social Democratic Federation, having heard of the two "prodigies" in Paisley, sent its secretary down to see what he thought of us. As a consequence of this visit, Pat and I each got an invitation to speak in Glasgow. My first meeting there was in the Gorbals, at the corner of Rose Street. It was not only my first meeting in Glasgow, it was my first encounter with

Jewish workers; there may have been some in Paisley but I have never met them. I was struck right away with the spirit of enthusiasm that emanated from the young Jewish comrades who constituted the Gorbals branch of the S.D.F. They were so keen and so colourful; they praised my effort and cordially invited me to come back again. I got several visits fixed for the Gorbals, and as I was always invited to tea in one or other of their homes, I met the older people who told me of the persecution they had suffered under Czarism in Russia, Poland and Lithuania. From these visits I got an interest in Jewish people and their history that has never left me.

I was speaking in the Gorbals on the evening that Oscar Slater was sentenced to death for the murder of Miss Gilchrist. It had been a shocking trial. There was no evidence to sustain the charge and the Lord Advocate had not made any real attempt to produce any. He had raked into the past of his victim and found that he had been, at times, engaged in discreditable activities, though never anything of a violent character. The gist of the address to the jury was, in fact, that as this man was not as good as he should have been, they ought to agree that he should be hanged. And there was a strong suspicion that the treatment of the case had an element of anti-Semitism. Oscar Slater was sentenced to death, so we passed a resolution at our meeting protesting against the conviction, and calling for a reprieve and a new trial. He was reprieved and, after having served long years in prison, was given a fresh trial, as the result of a persistent campaign in which Conan Doyle played a leading part. At the re-trial, Slater was found Not Guilty and was awarded £7,000 compensation. Some time later he came to one of my meetings and handed up a five pound note for the collection.

Towards the end of 1908 and the beginning of 1909 relations between the gaffer and myself steadily worsened. He had been persuaded to join the Freemasons and in due course was made chaplain of his Lodge. Always on a Monday he would hear what Pat or I had been saying the previous night, particularly if we had been having a crack at religion. In mid-1909 there was a minor scandal in the town; it concerned an appointment to a job where, it was alleged, the best man had been passed over in favour of a Brother of the Craft. On the following Sunday evening I made reference to this and took occasion to say that a secret society such as this could be a source of disruption in the working-class movement. On the Monday forenoon the gaffer walked back and forth behind my lathe, with all the lads in the shop

CHAPTER TWO

watching him. I knew he was there, trying to make up his mind to tackle me. At last I turned round and asked: "What's the matter?" He stepped forward and growled: "What right have you to speak about the Freemasons at Abbey Close?"

"Jamie," I replied (he was known as "Big Jamie" Thomson), "if you want to talk to me about the Masons, come along to Abbey Close and do your talking, and I'll tell you plenty." "Don't be so smart, Wullie," he toned down a bit. "You may want to join yourself some day." "Listen, Jamie," I said to him as civilly as I could, "while there's sufficient water in the Cart to cover my body I'll never join the Masons." He went away mad as mad could be.

A short time after, an incident occurred with which I was connected. It was nothing much, but once again he started his pacing behind my back. I turned on him and shouted: "Say what you've got to say and don't behave like a bloody fool. Can't you see that all the men are laughing at you?" "You've no right to talk to me in that manner"—he was on his dignity—"you'd better pack up and get out o' here!" "It'll be a pleasure," I retorted, and without more ado I packed my tools and took my departure.

This caused quite a commotion. The manager, with whom I was on quite friendly terms, came down from the office to find what had happened. Jamie said he had only been going to talk to me, but after the way I had insulted him there was nothing else he could do. One of the lads came to see me, and said they all felt I would get started back again if I would only go and make my peace with Big Jamie. "Do you mean apologise?" I asked him. "Well," he muttered, "just a word or two to say you're sorry you shouted at him." "I'll see him in hell first," was my reply.

I felt quite independent. I was a steady worker and—as a cat-burglar years later put it in a letter he sent me from Parkhurst—"good at my trade". I felt I would have no difficulty in getting another job. But I soon found I was wrong. Wherever I went, there was always a large number of job-seekers there before me.

A friend who was a first class steward on an Allen Line boat came home to Paisley. When he heard I was out of a job, he suggested I should try a trip or two at sea until trade got better. He was sailing the next day, but offered to give me a note of introduction to the chief steward of the *Laurentian*, which was expected in from Boston the following week. My friend thought it likely that I would get taken on; stewards were always "jumping ship" on the other side of the

Atlantic and, as there were always fewer passengers coming from than going to the United States, the company didn't worry much.

I decided to give it a try, for I had very little money saved. I got fixed up with the job, went to a clothing firm near the docks and obtained a steward's jacket and cap; I didn't have to pay; they told me that there was an arrangement with the company and the cost would be deducted from my pay. I had no trouble getting into the routine, and though I was a bit squeamish on the first couple of days at sea, I was able to keep on my feet and do my chores. But without knowing it I committed what was considered an unpardonable offence by my fellow-stewards. The experienced stewards always take their pick of the tables, and any new starter is sure to get the one least likely to provide anything in the way of tips. I couldn't for the life of me take anything from the folk at my table, and I gave them to understand that it had been a pleasure to wait on them and that I hoped they would prosper in their new homes. When we reached Boston and this got out, the lads gave me hell. Wages were low and they had to depend on tips to maintain their families. Who the hell was I, coming aboard and threatening their livelihood? By the time they had finished with me I was sitting limp. I felt like getting up and going ashore after my passengers and taking every penny they had off them.

We left Boston on a Friday afternoon. Early on the Sunday morning we were aroused by a crash. We had been sailing through fog all night, and instead of being twenty miles south of Cape Race we were well off course and had crashed on to a jagged reef of rocks on the coast of Newfoundland. The force with which the ship struck kept her on the reef. There was quite a sea running as we got to our boat stations. The first boat, loaded with women and children, was lowered. It was a near disaster! As soon as the boat touched the water the sea drove it right against the ship's side. All hands that could get on the ropes were mustered to assist in getting the heavy load up again. Then each boat was lowered with three of the crew in it—one at the bow, one at the stern, handling poles to avoid another smash, and one to catch the passengers as they came down the rope-ladder. When all were loaded we strung out, the leading boat searching for a place to land on that fearsome shore. The officer in my boat called to me: "Give us a song, Gallacher!" He knew I had a voice because I had been singing at a concert on the outward journey. I bawled a few lively choruses and tried to keep in time with the rowing. After a time, we got a hail from the first boat to say that a landing place had been found. One after

another we sailed into a small bay as calm as a boating pond. Up on the shore was a large group of huts. They were unoccupied, alas! They belonged to fishermen from the other side of the island and were used only in the fishing season. However, they provided some shelter, and we soon got into them, collected some wood and got fires going.

The hut I was in had six occupants. Along one side was a big flat-topped iron stove; opposite to that were two bunks made of netting and bark. In between was a long seat, on which we sat with our feet nearly touching the stove. We organised four-hour shifts for the use of the bunks, two lying down while the rest sat on the bench, chewing or smoking, and listening to their expectorations sizzling on top of the stove. There wasn't a bit of food in any of the huts, and we began to feel very hungry; nobody had eaten since the previous night. But on the Monday afternoon the sea calmed down a bit and it was decided that three of the boats should put out to the ship, still lying canted over on the reef, and see if it was possible to get some meat. Several sides of beef and some hams were brought ashore, and we got our share. We rubbed the top of the stove with paper and slapped our beef on top of the hot stove where everyone had been spitting, and I'm sure the costliest meal in the most luxurious restaurant never tasted as good as that one.

While we were sitting at the fireside I learned, to my surprise, that it was the law of the sea that the wages of the crew stopped the day a ship was lost. But my mates reassured me. The Purser had let it be known that the Allen Line, one of whose directors was James Allen, the millionaire socialist, would not let the seamen down. This cheered us quite a bit. On Tuesday afternoon a ship from St. Johns came to the rescue and the officers called on us to load what luggage the passengers had saved and take it with the passengers out to the *Prospera*. This we did, after which we got a meal of bread, marge and bully-beef. I've always had a warm regard for bully beef after that utterly enjoyable meal. We sailed round to St. Johns, where the seamen got put up in cheap hotels, more like doss-houses, and had to wait a week before another Allen Line boat, the *Mongolian*, put in for us.

We arrived back in Glasgow on a Friday and when we tied up the Shore Purser came aboard and handed out the pay-sheets with instructions to return to the *Mongolian* the following morning to get paid off. What in hell had we got to cheer about? Our wages were stopped from the day the ship struck, and from whatever we were to get there were deductions for clothes, cigarettes and tobacco.

I got together as many of the lads as I could, and proposed we should make a fight about it. I reminded them that we had been ordered to attend to the passengers on the Tuesday and here we were, having to come back the next day for our pay. We had a very strong case, I told them. But it was no use, they weren't prepared to do anything. It would mean getting black-listed, they said.

The next morning we queued up to pass through the saloon where the Shore and Ship's Purser and two Board of Trade officials were sitting, to pay us off and hand over our books marked "shipwreck" instead of "completed voyage". One by one, the men drew their wretched pay. When it came to my turn, one of the Board of Trade lads told me: "Sign here!" while he held my book ready to hand over.

"Don't be in such a hurry," I told him. Then turning to the Purser I spread out my pay sheet and announced: "Before I sign off, I want the full amount on this sheet."

"But you are getting the full amount due to you," the Shore Purser answered. "You've got to pay for the clothes you had."

"You pay me what the Allen Line owes me," I insisted, "I'll attend to my own debts." I turned to the Board of Trade men. "You're here to protect the seamen. You tell them they've got to pay me the full amount of my wages." They had a quiet consultation; then the Shore Purser said: "We can't settle the matter here. You'd better come to the office in Bothwell Street on Monday morning."

"All right," I agreed, and walked off with my pay sheet in my hand. On the dock the lads who were already through were waiting. "How did you get on?" one of them asked. I told them what had happened. "You won't get it" they said. "You'll only get yourself black-listed."

Monday morning at ten o'clock I entered the office in Bothwell Street. I found myself standing at a counter, behind which was a large room with about a dozen clerks sitting at desks. On the right was a glass-partitioned office. A young clerk came and asked me what I wanted. I asked for the Shore Purser, but it wasn't the Shore Purser he fetched. It was a dark, sharp-featured, superior type.

"You're the man who wouldn't sign off?" he barked.

"That's correct," I answered. "I'll sign off when you pay me."

"We'll pay you what's on your sheet and no more." This with a raised voice.

"That's what I want," I told him. "Score out the deductions and pay me what's on the sheet."

"Get out of here," he snarled. "We've no time to waste with you. Come back when you're ready to sign off like the rest."

"I'm not getting out until I get my pay." I was also snarling by this time.

"Go out and get the police," he ordered the young lad who had brought him out. Work at the desks came to a standstill as the clerks watched the free performance.

We stood glaring at one another until the lad returned with two policemen. "Get this man out of here," the manager snapped.

"What's the matter?" asked one of the policemen.

"I've just come off one of their boats and I can't get them to pay me what I'm due," I explained. He looked at the manager. "He refused to sign off on Saturday," the latter answered the unspoken query. "He wants more than he's entitled to. He's making a disturbance here, and I want him removed."

"Come on outside and tell us about it." I don't think the policemen liked the supercilious manager any more than I did. I took a parting shot before leaving. "Wait till I get you and the Allen Line in court, I'll make you sing small. Don't forget we were serving the passengers on the Monday and the Tuesday—ask your officers!" And with that I went out of the door, followed by the constables.

Back I went to the docks where a group of the lads, now unemployed, were watching the Anchor Line *California* being berthed. I learned that signing-on day would be Thursday and that all shortages had to be filled by Wednesday. When I told the lads my experience at the office, they were unanimously of the opinion that I would have to sign off like the rest of them, and that my name would be mud on Glasgow Docks.

While we were talking, the shore superintendent came along. "Is that man Gallacher here?" he asked. "I'm here," I told him. He invited me up to his office at the head of the dock. "I hear you made a lot of trouble at head office," was how he started when we got there. "Not me," I assured him. "It was the fellow that wanted to treat me like a dog."

"Take my advice," he said. "Go back up, and ask quietly for Mr. X, and I think you'll go on all right." I took his advice. I asked for Mr. X (I have forgotten his name, and I have lost the unique paysheet and book—the first marked "shipwreck" and the second "voyage completed"). A pleasant looking official approached me. "Come with me, Mr. Gallacher." He was the last word in civility. We walked down

to the Broomielaw and entered the Board of Trade Office. "Here is Mr. Gallacher to sign off," Mr. X told one of the officers who had been on board the *Mongolian*. "Good!" he remarked.

"Cash first," I murmured, keeping things quiet. "Give me your pay sheet," requested Mr. X. I handed it over. He took out his pen and scored out all the deductions; then he handed me the full amount of my wages, having taken which I duly signed off in the Board of Trade book. The Board of Trade official shook hands with me and smiled. Mr. X also shook hands with me and said, with a wider smile: "You deserve it."

I thanked both of them and walked across to the docks. I showed my pay sheet to several of the lads. Their eyes nearly popped out. "Keep it," one said. "It's the last you'll ever get."

On the Wednesday I was back up, dressed in my best, with a bowler hat on. A group of lads were waiting at the foot of the *California* gangway for the appearance of the Chief Steward, whose name, I had learned, was Wheat. I started walking fast along the dockside as though on urgent business. I didn't halt at the gangway but proceeded right up it and said to the seaman on duty: "A message for Mr. Wheat; where is his cabin?" Unhesitatingly he directed me. I found the door, knocked and heard a voice say: "Come in!" I entered, and there was a handsome middle-aged gent sitting at a desk. "Excuse me, Mr. Wheat," I began, "have you heard that the *Laurentian* was lost off Newfoundland?" His eyes opened wide. "The *Laurentian*!" he exclaimed. "No, I hadn't heard of it." I then explained to him that it had been my first trip, and how difficult it had been getting signed on, then to have such an unfortunate ending. I hoped, in the circumstances, that I wasn't being too presumptuous in coming aboard to make application to him personally. He looked at me with knitted brows, asked me a few questions, and then made out a slip. "There you are," he said. "Be ready to sign on tomorrow."

So I had more pay sheets. I did several voyages, and then in 1910 I got the chance of a job in Babcock and Wilcox and finished with the sea.

But what a job I got! Milling headers in the wrought iron department—it was the nearest thing to manslaughter I had ever experienced. I stuck it three months and then got a job in the Argyle Motor Works in Alexandria. Working at a lathe again was a happy relief.

But all this time I had forgotten about the union. I had failed to report when I lost my job in Doulton's and as at that time there was

no union for stewards the question didn't arise in my mind. But here I was back in my trade. Among my new mates there were several members of the National Union of Brass-founders and Finishers and, as I had never felt at home in the Amalgamated Society of Engineers I decided to join this union. I remained a member until it was taken over, after the first world war, by the A.S.E. So I was back where I had started, only the name was now changed to the Amalgamated Engineering Union. "The Vale" is a long way from Paisley, and when I got the opportunity of a job in the Albion Motor Works I jumped at it, and remained there until the middle of the 1914 war.

But other things were happening in 1910. Memory, memory, how it can let you down! Just after writing the foregoing I remembered that I was a deputy candidate in the "Big Budget Election" of 1910. The Social Democratic Federation had decided to contest Carlisle with a straight Socialist candidate against the Liberals and Tories. There was no Labour candidate, and they had chosen Charlie Bannington, who was working in Coventry, as their candidate. But Charlie couldn't get time off to conduct a campaign, so I was invited to deputise for him. We had a really grand campaign, with tremendous meetings. But at all the doors we got the response: "We'd like to vote for your man but . . ." and then the old story we heard so often, about voting Liberal, that we hear today about voting Labour.

The S.D.F. rooms were upstairs in a building opposite the Market cross. The morning after the count, a large banner was spread across two windows: "Great Socialist Victory—777 Votes!" Yes, that's what we got, and the lads were quite pleased with it. As soon as the polling had finished on the previous night, the heir of the Lord of the Manor, the Hon. Something Lowther, had requested a word with me. What a future I would have, he wanted to tell me, if only I would take my stand for Empire and Tariff Reform! All through my life I've had people telling me this sort of thing. *If* only I could be something different to what I am, the world would be my oyster. Only, *as I am*, I am not interested in oysters. My one dominating concern is the Communist revolution, and now that I am coming near the end of the road I am not likely to change.

But while I will later on mention a couple of occasions when "the devil took me up to a high hill" there is one, of a somewhat pathetic character, that I would like to offer now. An old friend of mine, very earnest and devoted to the Gospel, always had me in his mind and heart. He came to see me some years ago (he was well over eighty at

the time) and told me that on Christmas Eve he had not been able to sleep. He had a feeling that there was a strange presence in the room. Then as he looked, lo, the Lord Jesus had appeared at his bedside—"as plain as you are, Willie," he told me, and he went on: "The Lord said to me, go and tell Willie Gallacher that if he comes on my side he'll be a power in the land."

Politics were hotting up in Glasgow and along the Clyde in these years before the great crisis of imperialism burst. Blatchford of the *Clarion* was beginning to lose his grip. So also was Hyndman of the S.D.F., which had by then taken on a national and centralised form and changed its name to Social Democratic *Party* instead of Federation. Both these one-time leaders of the socialist movement were showing characteristic imperialist features. Hyndman was advocating a "Citizens' Army", using voluble demagoguery to cover up the fact that it meant conscription in preparation for a war against Germany. But this appalling proposal got no support in Glasgow.

One of the strongest opponents of Hyndman and his corruption of Marxism was the Glasgow school-teacher John McLean, who was destined to play a tremendous part in creating the atmosphere that led to the revolutionary appellation "The Red Clyde". The people who went to Parliament after the war was over, who have been referred to as the "Clyde Rebels", played little or no part in the events that brought the Clyde its fame; in fact they diverted and later broke the back of that movement. The one strong man in that group was John Wheatley. Resolute and unshakable in his devotion to the movement, as he proved by his actions, John Wheatley, a Catholic, attracted me almost as much as the confirmed Marxist John McLean. But while Wheatley was a quiet, persuasive talker who sought to influence individuals, John McLean was like a tornado sweeping along the Clyde. Added to his outstanding ability to arouse the masses, he organised and conducted Marxist classes that attracted large numbers of students and prepared the way for the Scottish Labour College. Wheatley was easily the most vital parliamentarian in the Labour Party; impervious to bourgeois or establishment corruption, his great weakness was his failure to make a study of Marx and his lack of contact with the organised working class.

In the meantime, Pat and I were carrying on an active campaign in Paisley, and at the same time speaking at meetings in Glasgow and Lanarkshire, the latter among the miners, several of the leading figures in that district being members of the S.D.P. 1911, however, proved

a fatal year for the Paisley combination. Pat had married fairly young and now had three small children, two little girls and a boy. It was a hard battle to keep things going, so when he came across an advertisement offering big money for engineers over on the Gold Coast, the temptation was too much for him. He and another Paisley lad put in their applications and both got accepted. The Gold Coast at that period was known as "The White Man's Grave". They signed on for a year with the understanding that if they were prepared, at the end of that time, to sign on for another three years, they would get three months' paid home leave. It looked good, from hard times in Paisley. At the end of November they got under way. The evening before he left, Pat said to my Jean: "Well, Jean, I'm off tomorrow, and a year from now I'll either have a motor cycle or a wreath on my chest." He had a wreath on his chest.

Two events in 1912 may be worth mentioning before taking farewell of Pat. A campaign was being conducted in the *Clarion* and in *Justice* for the unity of all genuine socialists. Out of this came a conference called in Manchester, to bring it about. It was held at Easter, and I was elected as a delegate from Glasgow, with instructions to oppose Hyndman and Quelch on the issue of the Citizen Army. There was a small group there representing one or two I.L.P. branches, and a small representation from the *Clarion*, but the overwhelming number of those present were from the S.D.F. Out of it came the British Socialist Party but, except for a few very fine members of the I.L.P. who came over to us, it meant little more than another change of name for the S.D.P. Blatchford withdrew *Clarion* support at the last moment. Hyndman, stroking his aristocratic beard, put his usual case for the Citizen Army; I had no trouble in demolishing it, and though he still held on to this reactionary idea he could not get it accepted by the conference. Two years later he and his associates were to expose themselves completely as enemies of socialism.

Death of Pat Machray. Anti-militarism. Marriage. Albion Motors. May Day, 1914. First days of first world war; anti-war struggles. The fight for the 2d. increase begins.

AT the beginning of October 1912, my comrade Pat was back home, "sick unto death". He had not been able to complete his year; he was able to get around a little but was finding it increasingly difficult to breathe. I was with him as much as possible, but I had more meetings than ever at that period. One of them, in particular, is worth a mention. Gustav Hervé had come over to Britain from France. His anti-militarist book *My Country Right or Wrong* had been translated into English and had had a wide sale. Not long previously he had been arrested and thrown into jail. Before he went in, he was down-at-heel; when he came out he looked a prosperous gentleman. This we did not know up north. Guy Bowman, a London socialist, was engaged to organise a speaking tour for him, and the Glasgow Clarion Scouts booked him for their regular Sunday evening meeting in the Pavilion Theatre. The Secretary wrote to me—"as a well-known anti-militarist"—and invited me to take the chair for this "great anti-militarist gathering". Then, alas! at a meeting in London Hervé made it obvious that he was no longer an anti-militarist but a loyal, patriotic Frenchman. The Clarion Scouts immediately cancelled the booking, but the advertisements for an anti-militarist meeting were already out far and wide, so they had to get someone to fill the bill. They got in touch with a London anarchist, Guy Aldred, who expressed his willingness to take it on.

On the Saturday before the "great meeting" was to take place, two members of the Scouts, Ted Dunn and his wife (they later moved to Bournemouth and were members of the Communist Party until they died) had an extraordinary visitor: none other than Madame Sorge, "the most dangerous woman in Europe" according to a magistrate in Brussels. She was also an anarchist and anti-militarist, so her host and hostess thought it would be a good idea to bring her along as a special attraction for the Pavilion meeting.

"Attraction" was the correct word. She was a good-looking woman somewhere in her late thirties or early forties, sturdily built,

wearing a large dark blue sombrero and, over her shoulder, fastened at the waist and continuing down to the hem of her skirt, a bright red sash. With a straight back and prominent bust she strode like a sergeant major on parade. Her appearance at the Pavilion nearly caused the other anarchist to throw a fit; it was obvious she was going to steal the show, and Guy Aldred, who liked to remind people that he had early gained fame as "The Boy Preacher" was not without a modicum of conceit. There we were, all gathered to hear the Socialist Choir, conducted by Tom Kerr (later to become Lord Provost) and two anarchists who were going to wipe out the British and other armies. What a cheer went up as we mounted the platform and the audience saw the "sergeant major" in her red sash. I first called on Tom and his choir, who gave a very fine opening to the meeting. Then I introduced Madame Sorge, who was to speak first. Before she began, the Clarion secretary, sitting beside her, got up and read out her credentials from syndicalist unions in France and Belgium, and also the cutting from the paper describing her as "the most dangerous woman in Europe". Each of these items brought strong applause from the audience. Madame made quite a good speech, which went down well. Loud and sustained applause. It would have been all to the good if at this point I had closed the meeting; but I am not the seventh son of a seventh son, so I called on Guy Aldred to take the floor.

I had been at a lot of meetings but never one like that! He forgot about the British, French, Belgian and other armies, and turned all his guns on the sergeant-major. "Easy, Aldred, keep to the subject," I implored him in a stage whisper, but he paid me no attention. So vicious were his remarks that the lady rose to her feet, arm outstretched, finger pointing at him in the most dramatic manner, and shouted: "Aldred! when I get back to London I'll report you to Malatesta!"

That was too much for me. I ordered both of them to sit down. "I haven't finished," Aldred protested. I told him he had, and called on the choir to sing again. Tom and his singers were somewhat nervous. "It's all right," I assured them, "we're having no more of this. We'll finish as we started, with melody in place of discord." Tom and the choir got set, the audience cheered, and Aldred, forgetting the sergeant-major, glowered and muttered his anger at me. A memorable anti-militarist meeting!

Who was this Malatesta? Fifty or sixty years ago we had two great anarchists in this country: Malatesta, who was an Italian, and Prince

Kropotkin, a Russian refugee. Malatesta, like the sergeant-major, drew attention wherever he went; with his large slouch hat and the dark cloak swinging from his shoulder he could have walked into any Hollywood film as a real bomb-thrower. He was known as "The King of Soho". He was arrested and deported to Italy before the 1914-18 war; when that war broke out he became a patriot, and that was his finish as an anarchist. Prince Kropotkin lived down on the south coast, where he held court; to the many important people who came to pay him homage he would talk in high-flown language of the happy days when, having got rid of the Czarist and all other governments, the intellectual people like himself would devote themselves to educating the ignorant masses for a new and better life. When the 1914-18 war came, he too became a patriot and supported the war-mongers. Following the February revolution and the overthrow of the Czar, he decided to return to Russia and the British government was only too ready to help him on his way, believing that he would throw in his influence on behalf of those who wanted to continue fighting. But he had lost touch with his people. There was nowhere for him to fit in. When the great October revolution shook the world, he was completely lost. The masses that he and his kind had been planning to educate began educating themselves, under the leadership of Lenin and the Bolsheviks. He was given a cottage with a small garden, outside Moscow. I went to visit him in 1920, at the request of one of his disciples, Jack Tanner, another anarchist who has travelled a strange road to get where he is today. I found the old man a pathetic figure. The world hadn't gone the way he meant it to go, and he had been left like a piece of driftwood on the shore. He was finished.

But back to 1912 and Paisley, where my comrade Pat was weakening fast. I went to see him one Saturday afternoon and it was clear, both to me and to him, that the end was drawing very near. I sat on through the night with him, as he gasped and battled for breath. About midnight he took my hand and, with great difficulty, managed to gasp: "Don't let the priests in, Bill!" He was clearly afraid that his family would try to give him a church funeral. He lived on until two o'clock on Sunday afternoon. I had dozed once or twice during the night. Stiff and sore, I got to my feet and went to tell his mother and family that he had gone, to send a telegram to the ship on which his brother was serving and one to his aunt in Belfast.

We gave him a secular, public funeral and many, many trade unionists and others attended to pay their last respects to Pat. Three

of us spoke at his graveside, and his family thanked us for what they agreed was "a very dignified funeral service".

The branch decided that our friend's life story should be written, and the task was allocated to a member who was looked upon as an intellectual. To him I gave a number of letters I had received from Pat while he was away. I am sorry I parted from them; he had illustrated many of them with humorous sketches, really fine drawings they were. And there was all his correspondence with the local paper, as well as a number of small cartoons he had drawn before he went away. All this went to the man who was supposed to be working on Pat's life story, but after a while he went off to London without a word to anyone—to take up an educational appointment of some sort, and that was the last we heard of him until some years later when we learned that he was in charge of educational work at the Co-operative Wholesale Society.

I was feeling very sad at the loss of Pat. To add to this, my elder sister had gone to America, taking my wee sister with her. She kept writing to me, asking me to come and see them. I had a talk with Jean. She had been reluctant to get married as I was continually in and out of jobs, while she had a good position as manageress of a Co-operative milk shop. She saw that I was showing signs of wear and tear, and urged me to visit my wee sister for a change. I said I would if she would agree to marry me before I left. She finally agreed, and we were quietly married. She kept on with her job until my return from the family trip, eleven months later.

On the return voyage I met a lad who was foreman of one of the squads employed by the Glasgow Steel Structural Company. We became, as I thought, good friends. So much so that he offered me a job on a structural erection he was taking on in Belfast as soon as he arrived home.

I had saved a little money while I was away, and the first thing I did when I got back to Paisley was to set up home with Jean. We had a single-apartment house, but she made it a real home and to our comrades—in fact to all who knew us—she still remained Jean. I don't suppose there ever was a lawful married wife who heard so little of her married name.

The next thing was to go to the Labour Exchange in Niddry Street and get my insurance book before setting off for Belfast. Unfortunately, I could not find the receipt they had given me when I lodged it with them before leaving for America. The clerk wouldn't even look

for it without the receipt. I saw the manager: he would give me a temporary card, he said, for two weeks, during which time I must find the receipt. I took the temporary card and travelled to Belfast with my friend Charlie, the foreman. What a job! I thought Babcock's was bad, but it was heavenly compared with what we had in Belfast. There were no cranes, only cross-trees, and we had to drag girders and beams to their proximity. I stuck it out until the job was finished and then—no more steel-erecting for me! I went back and got started at my old job in the Albion, where my workmates gave me a warm welcome.

During my time in Belfast, the Ulster Volunteers were on the march nearly every night. I had some heated discussions, and a few of the old-timers remember those hectic days. But I not only had the Ulster boys to trouble me, I had the manager of the Labour Exchange on my neck. He sent me an official form at the end of the third week, ordering me to return the temporary card he had given me. I sent him a courteous reply, saying that I would send him his card when he sent mine. A couple of days later another official form arrived: "Card number such and such must be returned without delay." This was underlined in red ink. I wrote again, and courteously explained that his duty was to see that I had my proper insurance card, and that if I had been dealing with a voluntary insurance society the officer would first establish my identity and then dig my card out of the files and hand it over. "Follow that good practice," I ended up. A few days later came another card, doubly underlined with red ink. No more courtesy from me. I wrote to him as follows: "Sir, When Lloyd George introduced his Insurance Bill he informed the House that he wanted the people to get a share of the 'rare and refreshing fruits'. I have come to the conclusion that you fellows are getting all the juicy fruit while I am most certainly getting the pip. Now I am going to give you a warning: the only thing I want from you is my insurance book, but stop annoying me or so help me Christ I will march on Niddry Street with a battalion of the Ulster Volunteers and won't leave one stone standing on another." I heard no more. Four months later, when I returned to Paisley, I went round to Niddry Street, and told the clerk there that I wanted to see the manager.

"What's your name?" he asked.

"Gallacher," I told him. "William Gallacher."

"It's all right, Mr. Gallacher"—he couldn't get it out quick enough—"Your book's here!" He opened a file and produced it, watching the door all the time in case the Ulster Volunteers were outside. Great fellows, these bureaucrats!

In the Albion, the boys were gathering round just as they had done before I went away. Big efforts were needed to meet the situation that lay ahead. The three-year agreement would come to an end in the following November (1914) and the unions were preparing to present a claim for increased wages, to the tune of an extra 2d. per hour. This was considered a fairly hefty demand but, since prices had been rising steadily, essential if we were to maintain a decent standard of living. We knew there was likely to be a bitter struggle before the employers would yield, and we set ourselves—the various groups of socialists—the task of winning 100 per cent trade unionism to meet the situation. This campaign brought about the beginning—just the beginning—of workshop organisation.

There was no lack of socialist propagandists in Glasgow at this time. I have already mentioned John McLean, who had no equal as an agitator and a Marxist lecturer. John Wheatley was just then running a special campaign for workmen's cottages at an annual rent of £8 a year; for this and other activities he often called on me to give a helping hand. For instance, when he started the Catholic Socialist Society I was one of his regular speakers. Why, you may ask, a Catholic socialist society? It was a demonstration of Wheatley's moral courage and his belief in socialism. In 1891, Pope Leo XIII had published his Encyclical, *Rerum Novarum*. This was an out-and-out condemnation of socialism and gave private ownership the full backing and blessing of the Church. On p. 13, after telling us that private ownership "in the common opinion of mankind . . . has found in the careful study of nature, and in the laws of nature, the foundations of the division of property", it went on to underline this by stating that "the authority of the Divine Law adds its sanction". On p. 34 it warned that "private ownership must be held sacred and inviolable". There followed a whole series of generalisations about employers dealing fairly by their employees and workers giving a "fair day's work" in return; the sort of thing that was common then to every apologist of exploitation, all based on the deceptive formula that "capital needs labour and labour needs capital". Labour is the application of the workers' strength; capital is dead matter—how can anyone talk of these having "needs"? What was behind this deception? The fear of facing the true formulation, which represented the challenge of socialism: "The capitalist needs the workers, but the workers don't need the capitalists." But Pope Leo could not see what lay ahead: countries driving forward without capitalists or landowners, and even in capitalist countries developments he never dreamed of when he

wrote his precious Workers' Charter. On p. 25 he gave a sort of rhapsody on Christian piety and help to the poor. ". . . the common Mother of rich and poor had exerted herself to gather funds for the support of the needy. . . . At the present day there are many who, like the heathen of old, seek to blame and condemn the Church for such eminent charity; they would substitute in its stead a system of relief organised by the State. But no human expedients will ever make up for the devotedness and self-sacrifice of Christian charity."

This twaddle was presented to a mass meeting of Catholic trade unionists by the then President of the Amalgamated Engineering Union in my home town, Paisley. He was advertised and introduced as the president of the A.E.U. and thereby created the impression that he was speaking for the Union. The efforts of my branch to get him dealt with by the Executive met with no success. A few months later he got a Knighthood conferred on him by the Vatican for services rendered to the Church.

Wheatley, like James Connolly over in Dublin, had repudiated this mendacious document, and brought into being his Catholic Socialist Society with regular Sunday afternoon meetings in the winter months. This brought him the wrath of the hierarchy in Glasgow, and it can be said that these holy men of God stopped at nothing to try and blacken his character. But he carried on unheeding—or rather giving them back blow for blow. A great man in his way, John Wheatley.

Then there was Tom Johnston, now "the Right Honourable", who, with the help of Dr. Robertson, got the *Forward* going, and who wrote a book, *Our Noble Families*, in which he exposed the crimes of one after another of the Scottish aristocratic robbers.

Laurie Anderson, a shipwright, was a popular, if rough and ready, speaker who used, I remember, to tell a good story about the "Billies" and the "Dans" (Orangemen and Catholics, between whom violent action was often breaking out). A lad went down to Hell. "What's your religion?" asked Auld Clootie. "Church of Scotland." "In that cage to the right." Another arrived. "Your religion?" "Church of England." "In that cage to the left." A third, and the same question. "Roman Catholic." "Get in that double-barred cage at the bottom." A fourth: "I'm a True Blue Orangeman." "That double-barred cage at the top." A fifth: "I've no religion." "Are you sure?" "Sure, I'm sure." "All right," says Auld Clootie. "You can get a barrow and buggie about the yaird; you'll no quarrel wi' anybody."

Jimnie Johnston, another shipwright, would talk about kings and

queens, lords and ladies. We, the workers, provide their food, he'd say. We supply their gaudy raiment, and build their palaces. That's not enough. Our daughters have to wash them and keep them clean, or they'd be plain lousy. This would be followed by a laugh from the audience, and Jimmie would bark: "What are you laughing for? Don't ye see that the laugh's agin ye?" Our Paisley branch had a great liking for Jimmie. I often think of him.

Two others, very well known in those early days, were J. O'Connor Kessack and Tom McKerrel. The former, a Clarion Scout, was a brilliant speaker and it seemed at one time that he would be a power in the movement; but at the outbreak of the war he was commissioned as a lieutenant, went to France and lost his life within a few months. McKerrel was the prospective Labour candidate for Kilmarnock. He was a first-class propagandist and I often took the chair for him when we had him booked for meetings in Renfrewshire. During the Boer War he had been one of the few who was prepared to face howling mobs by opposing blatant imperialist aggression. But in the first world war he was with the warmongers. He took a job with the government, but he was dropped by Kilmarnock and a lad named Climey became prospective candidate (and eventually the Labour member) for that constituency. After the war, when Tom saw that he had ruined himself, he threw himself in front of an underground train, and that was his melancholy end.

On my return from America and before I left for Belfast, I spoke at a Sunday night meeting where I found I had a very fluent new platform colleague. "The Boy", as we called him, had been attending open-air meetings from the time he was thirteen years of age. Before he was seventeen he had started taking the chair. Now, on my return, I realised that he had become an accomplished speaker. He was J. R. Campbell, and has proved himself one of the outstanding leaders of the Communist Party.

May Day 1914 was, as usual, a great event in Glasgow. Each year the attendance was increasing. The streets along the route to Glasgow Green were crowded with onlookers. At the Green itself there were numerous platforms, representative of the different organisations in the city. One was known as the "International Platform" and that was the one from which I always spoke. This arose from my close association with the Jewish comrades; Russia, Poland and Lithuania would be represented, but in most cases these were Jewish comrades from the Gorbals, where they had settled. And here it is meet that I should

mention a young Jewish lad with whom I was desined to have a long, close and friendly association—Manny Shinwell. Sharp? He had the quickest, slickest mind I ever encountered. I used to marvel at the quickness with which he picked up arguments and ideas. He was an organiser of the seamen with an office in Broomielaw. He had lots of troubles, not only with rivals at the docks, but also with his comrades of the Independent Labour Party in Glasgow. But whatever his troubles, he had one comrade he could always call on and that was me. I never let him down. In the House of Commons in 1938, when he once stepped across the floor and slammed the Commander, I was out in the middle along with him immediately it happened¹. When in 1939 I objected to Chamberlain going to Munich to betray Czechoslovakia, Manny shook my hand and told me: "You're the only Member who had the intelligence to know what was happening and the courage to get up and say it." He may have been right on the second part, but he was not right about the first. Churchill knew what was happening. He sat there in his corner seat, his face all puckered up as one Member after another got up to wish Chamberlain "God-speed". Though it was clear that he was restraining himself, it seemed to me that "God curse you!" would have been more in line with his thoughts. V56y7M76 K6

Mrs. Helen Crawford and Mrs. Agnes Dollan were among two of the best-known women speakers, both attractive orators and ready at all times to take the platform for women's rights, for peace and socialism. With all this talent and many more, such as the well-remembered Jimmie Maxton, Jimmie Houston, propagandist and choir conductor, comrades Guthrie and Nicholl, all four of them school-teachers, with *The Voice of Democracy*, with Willie Stewart and a group of Socialist Labour Party speakers, it can be understood that we were developing a movement that was going to count in the critical days that lay ahead.

I had been for several years a member of the executive committee of my union, and with two others from Glasgow and one from Greenock travelled once a month to Manchester where the headquarters of the union was. Then with the battle on wages pending, I was elected as a union delegate to the Allied Trades Committee, which represented all the principal unions in Glasgow and along the Clyde; this was the strictly official committee that would have the responsibility of negotiating with the employers. Its chairman was the very able leader of the Boilermakers, Bill Sharp. The secretary was William Lorrimer

1. Editorial note: Commander Bower had shouted to Mr. Shinwell a remark which members considered offensive.

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of the Blacksmiths. Bunton and Brodie represented the A.S.E.; Lawson the Joiners; John McKenzie the General Workers. There were various others, including Bailie Whitehead, secretary of another union of Brassies (mostly confined to the West of Scotland). We were all very good friends—till the negotiations started. But before that happened the seeds of disruption had been sown by the declaration of war—the war for a re-division of the world.

On the first Sunday of the war, "The Boy" and I were out early in the morning chalking the pavements with "Down with the Imperialist War!" in time for all the Church folk to see. Along with the slogan was a notice that an anti-war demonstration would be held at the Racecourse. Paisley Races had a history going back to some time in the 1660's. Every year (up to and including 1914) a few weeks before the August Fair, the workmen would get busy on preparing the racecourse for the big event; their job included the building of a barricade all round the course. On Racecourse Sunday, the Sunday preceding, most of Paisley would flock there, particularly in the evening, to promenade round the course. Various Bethels would hold their Sunday evening open-air meetings there. Mahomet had to go to the mountain. Our Branch (now the *British Socialist Party*) had to do likewise. I was the speaker, and Campbell took the chair. We had a tremendous meeting, at which I made a violent onslaught on the government, the war and all who supported the war.

I wanted, from the start, to intimidate any possible hecklers, for I remembered how war-mad Jingoists had broken up meetings and attacked speakers during the Boer War. When I reached the end of my speech, the Boy said: "You have heard what comrade Gallacher has had to say. If anyone wants to ask a question, he will give his usual courteous reply."

"No," I muttered hurriedly, "no, Johnny, no courtesy!" But the damage had been done. From somewhere at the back of the huge crowd came a question. Standing down at the side of the platform I could not see whence it came from, nor whether there was the beginning of a concerted attack; but the question was truly provocative: "Was the speaker a pro-German and did he want to see the Germans win the war?"

I got up on the platform in a savage mood. "I have often heard it said," I started, "that the mule is the stupidest of all animals. But the men who asked that question is stupider than the stupidest mule that was ever foaled." I went on to expose the blind character of one who

could listen to an hour's talk from a worker who was explaining his hatred of war and capitalism—and all that he had in his mind was a relic of the Boer War, where thousands of young lads had been sacrificed in the interest of the gold and diamond financiers.

There were no more questions. As the meeting broke up, Jean came towards me accompanied by a friend of ours from Glasgow, a small businessman who was an occasional visitor to our home in Well Street. As I went to meet them, I had a feeling something was wrong. My fear was confirmed, when he met me with: "You didn't have to be so insulting. I only asked that question to enable you to make it clear you weren't a pro-German."

I didn't argue with him, and he didn't return with us, as he usually did, for a cup of tea. He was in a hurry, and he never entered my door again.

The following Sunday we had our usual meeting at the Abbey Close, where we had moved from the County Square. Again I was the speaker, with the Boy taking the chair. This time, when I had finished, he got on to the platform and solemnly intoned: "You have heard what comrade Gallacher has had to say about the war. If anyone wants to ask a question, comrade Gallacher is prepared to administer the dull thud." There were no questions.

Beside my comrades from the branch, there was another friend who was always right there in front when I was speaking. James (Jeemuck) Stirling had been an early member of the Independent Labour Party but had dropped out and become a member of the National Secular Society and a regular reader of *The Freethinker*. He came to be known, in certain circles, as "Gallacher's bodyguard". He was only about my height, 5 ft 5½ in., and of a lighter build, but tough as they come, with a temper always on a hairspring. One Sunday evening I was at my usual stance at Abbey Close and Jeemuck was there on the right side of the platform. On my left, as the prize-ring announcers put it, were two rough-looking soldiers. While I was speaking, I happened to turn towards the right, whereupon one of the "sweats" let drive and hit me hard enough to knock me off the platform. I hurriedly got back up, to hold the crowd together, but as I mounted I saw Jeemuck flash past me and there was a "thud, thud" as the soldier and his mate were knocked through the crowd, after which Jeemuck and another lad took them along Abbey Place and tried to talk some sense into them while I carried on with the meeting.

But I wasn't always at Abbey Close on a Sunday. I addressed anti-

war meetings in other parts of the country too. I recall one of the most amusing—at Port Brae, Kirkcaldy, where there was a good branch of the B.S.P. It was towards the end of September 1914, and it was their first attempt at an open-air meeting since the war had begun. Two speakers had been booked, comrade Dingwall from Greenock and myself. We were to speak from a lorry. As soon as the chairman got up to speak, we knew there was going to be trouble. He could scarcely be heard as he uttered a few opening remarks and then, with a motion, invited Dingwall to face the storm. The yelling and yah-hoo-ing was terrific! Those wild "patriots" were putting everything they had into it, and if they had only gone to France with such a show they would have had the Germans on the run. But—not Dingwall! He stood there, in the midst of the wildest din I had ever listened to—worse than the Clydeside when the riveters were speeding up delivery—and went on stolidly talking for forty minutes. He sat down, with a smile to the chairman and the rest of us on the platform. I stepped forward to the edge of the lorry and looked at the sea of faces. Slowly and compassionately I moved my head from side to side.

"Boys," I said. "I've never seen a crowd of lads put on such a fine show, but—" I shook my head again—"it was what Shakespeare called Love's Labours Lost. All your best efforts were wasted: Dingwall is stone deaf!"

What a roar of laughter went up from the non-howling section of the crowd! Not another murmur came from the "patriots". They were properly discomfited. A very fine anti-war meeting was the verdict at the finish.

After the outbreak of war, prices began to go higher still and the demand for 2d. an hour increase appeared to us in the workshops a very modest demand. But when we met the employers' representatives they expressed a different view. After much discussion, which took us into December, they made a magnanimous offer of a halfpenny an hour. This, of course, we refused to accept, and the meeting broke up with nothing settled. The next meeting was towards the end of January. Billy Sharp, as chairman of our side, put a very strong case for the 2d., as he had done at the earlier meeting. Discussion followed, with the employers' representatives pulling out the organ-stops about the boys at the front and all must be prepared to make sacrifices. To show how willing they were, they upped their offer another farthing! Before anyone else could get a chance to thank them for this sudden burst of generosity, I got started. Jesus slamming the Scribes and Pharisees was

mild compared with what I handed out to that gang of robbers. "You," I shouted, pointing to one of them, "you talk about sacrifices when you know there are three guns lying there at Greenlaw Goods Station and your firm won't touch them until the government gives you a higher profit! Not one of you," I told them, "but will have bigger and ever bigger profits every day the war goes on. Will you accept our demand or else—?"

I had heard Lorrimer whispering down the line as I was speaking: "Stop him! He'll spoil everything!" They didn't stop me, though. And by the time I'd finished the employers had had enough. They got up and walked out, with a curt remark to the chairman.

I discovered that I had ruined the chance of a settlement. Said Bailie Whitehead: "If you'd kept your mouth shut we could have got them raise it to a penny."

"So!" I said to Billy Sharp. "You were going to sell us out for a penny! Wait till I tell the lads that one."

"You've no right to tell the lads anything," he retored. "We didn't agree to anything and we didn't offer to agree to anything."

I hadn't the wit, at that moment, to remark that they had agreed about something—that I had spoiled the chance of a settlement, and it was that agreement that had prompted Bailie's remark. But I made use of it later on, at a packed meeting in St. Mungo's Hall.

Sharp, Lorrimer and Bunton operated as a sub-committee of the main body and as such they kept in touch with the secretary of the employers' side in an effort to get a new meeting or a new offer. But before anything was effected the management of Weir's, Cathcart, threw a chunk of Yankee fat in the fire. A special type of pump was made in Weir's and the war had brought an increased demand for it. There was a shortage of skilled men, so Weir's had engaged a group of Americans. These were to be paid more than the local men, even though the latter had been granted the 2*d.* increase, and were to receive a substantial bonus at the end of six months. Our minimum rate at that time was 8*d.* an hour for a 54-hour week. For those of us with a distance to travel, that meant getting up at 4.30 a.m. and reaching home at 6.30 p.m., with of course the Saturday afternoon free. Most of us had a penny an hour above the minimum rate, and bonus or piecework that brought out wages up around £2 12*s.* 0*d.* or £2 15*s.* 0*d.* a week; but, with the steadily rising prices, that left us far short of a decent standard of life. When Weir's men heard what the Yanks were getting they decided on a stoppage and a mass meeting the following morning in

St. Mungo Hall. When I arrived at the Albion in the morning I got the shop stewards together and told them the news. We decided to hold a mass meeting at breakfast time and recommend a stoppage in support of Weirs'. The meeting overwhelmingly accepted this recommendation, and Kennie Dunn and I were appointed to attend the meeting at St. Mungo Hall as delegates. On arrival there I was immediately ushered on to the platform, to make a report on the progress of official negotiations and to express the solidarity of the Albion. When I told them that the officials had agreed to sell them out for a penny, there was a roar of rage from that vast throng of angry workers.

We got a resolution carried unanimously, that we remain out and call on all Clyde workers to join in with us. At the end of the meeting proper, Kennie and I settled down with the leading figures from Weirs' to work out a programme for sending delegates to visit all the factories in the area.

Strike for the 2d. increase. The Clyde Workers' Committee. Formation of Shop Stewards movement. Fight against dilution of labour. The Clyde Workers' Committee and Lloyd George. The Worker suppressed. Arrest of Gallacher and Muir.

A SMALL committee sat in session all day in the platform room of St. Mungo Hall, increasing in strength as representatives of other plants came in to report an addition to the strike. Next day we had the whole of the Clyde on the streets, while the committee had moved its headquarters to the Herald Bookshop in George Street. There we were accommodated behind a partition. The bookshop was run by a fine couple of comrades known as "the MacGills". They were middle-aged: she very pleasant, retaining the good looks of her younger years; he ready at any time or place to argue with anyone—and there was any number quite willing to take him on: anarchists, Single Taxers, left and right socialists. Often as we were discussing reports from different parts of the area we had to suspend operations for a time, so heated was the discussion on the other side of the thin partition. I was elected chairman of the "unofficial" committee, while continuing to attend meetings of the "official" one. My colleagues on the latter body were not what could be called effusively friendly. But there was nothing they could do about it. All the members of my union were out; they wanted 2d. an hour and they wanted me on the Allied Trades Committee along with our district secretary who was something of a liability.

I have told the story of that strike and other outstanding activities in Glasgow and along the river in *Revolt on the Clyde* and I don't want to repeat it here, though I'll make one or two quotes if it seems desirable. By the time the strike was over, the employers had added the extra farthing, but that was as far as they would go and the official committee was too "patriotic" to push them any further.

The strike had quite definitely shown the great mass of the workers to be against the employers, against the government and against the war. John McLean was arrested early on for obstruction, and got a small fine. This gave the Education Authority the opportunity to sack him from his teacher's job, and he devoted his full time to being an

agitator and Marxist teacher. I was with him often. His meetings were tremendous and his propaganda was rammed home with great effect. We scarcely ever had an interruption.

It was different with the I.L.P. A couple of months after the start of the war, a cyclostyled circular was sent out from its Scottish headquarters advising branches and propagandists to concentrate on socialist propaganda and avoid saying anything about the war. That was an invitation to the hoodlum element to get after them. The Scottish secretary, Willie Stewart, was for ever asking me to go and visit him. Willie was a small chap, little over five feet tall, with a face mostly covered by a moustache and short, pointed beard. Paul the Apostle, writing to the Corinthians, says: "They say my writings are weighty and powerful, but my bodily appearance is weak and my voice contemptible." Not so Willie's voice. It could be heard miles away. He had twinkling eyes and a ready smile, and he beamed at me every time I accepted an invitation to visit him. "It's another," he would say, and then he would tell me that a meeting had been broken up at such and such a place and would ask me to go and re-establish the pitch. I went to many of these; but the most amazing one of all was that at Barrhead. The "Kelly gang" had broken up an I.L.P. meeting, smashed the platform and broken the windows of the house to which the speaker had run for protection. Would I go? I was asked.

What could I do? I could only shake my shoulders and say all right. Notice was duly published that a week on Friday Gallacher would speak at an I.L.P. meeting in Barrhead Station Square. During the preceding week I was getting all sorts of warnings as to what was going to happen. The Kelly gang had the walls chalked "Come and see Gallacher getting chased out of Barrhead!" My friend Stirling said he was coming out with me. "It's going to be very tough," I warned him. "Well," he answered, "I want to be there and see what happens."

So there we were, two lads 5 ft 5½ in. arriving out at Barrhead to see the Station Square packed with the biggest crowd ever assembled in the history of the town. We managed to push our way into the centre of the square where a young lad, pale and shaky, was standing beside the platform. In front, grinning like a cat with a mouse in its paws, was Kelly with his gang.

"I'm the chairman," said the young lad.

"Do you feel like getting up?" I asked him.

"Yes," he replied. "I'll introduce you." He was courageous, for he

was afraid. He got up and started appealing for a fair hearing for the speaker. I reached up and pulled his arm. "Better come down," I urged him. He didn't want much urging. Down he came and I took his place.

"I'm here," I started, "to give a revolutionary speech against the government and against the war. I'm not pleading for a peaceful hearing but I'm going to issue a warning. Kelly!"—I pointed at him—"If there's any trouble at this meeting I'm going to jump right on top of you and whatever happens to me I'll make sure you never disturb another meeting."

I looked over the crowd. "You all hear that?"

There was a slow murmur that broke into a storm of "Hear, hears" and I got going, with Kelly and his gang standing there in front—and not a word out of them all through the meeting. When it was over Stirling and I walked among the crowd chatting to this one and another. A great night, with the I.L.P.'s pitch re-established in Jimmy Maxton's home town.

But that reminds me of another meeting "doon the watter". The Stirling family—Jeemuck, his wife and their four children—with Jean and myself, were spending our summer fortnight at Girvan. The day after we got settled in, we had a visitor—Captain Jack White. He was a queer case, was Jack. His father was General Sir George White of Ladysmith fame. Jack had a good enough record in the British Army, but his heart was with those who were fighting for Irish independence and a new and better deal for the workers and poor farmers. His family had a large estate which took in Cushendall in what is now Northern Ireland. Jack knew James Connolly and he went down to Dublin to organise Connolly's Citizen Army. This meant a complete break with his family and all his former associations. But he found it difficult to fit in anywhere. (Much later he published a small book entitled *The Misfit*.) He was fully six feet tall, and had all the airs of one born into aristocratic surroundings. He had often been to see me in Paisley; as we only had a single apartment we couldn't put him up, but my mother-in-law had taken him, as she thought, for a night. He had stayed with her three weeks. For that short period, he seemed to be happy. So he visited Paisley and got our address in Girvan. Here also, we just had a small room, so I suggested he should go to an hotel. He had plenty of money and often left notes lying around in a most careless manner. He went to an hotel but the next morning he turned up with a tent he had bought. He pitched this on the back green, and came in to join us.

On the Sunday evening I was speaking for the I.L.P. at the harbour. There was a big holiday crowd in Girvan and I got a fair share of it. There were one or two small pockets of "patriots" trying an occasional interruption, but I battered them into silence. The meeting over, the Captain, Jeemuck and I went strolling along the promenade. The Captain was silent for a good time, while we two were chatting. Suddenly he stopped and said: "Gallacher, I've been thinking. If I had your courage with my intelligence, I'd be a really great man."

A sad case, the Captain. When he came into the estate, he offered me a farm. He liked me, he liked Jean and he liked Jean's family. With us he could, for the time being, forget that he was a "misfit".

The strike committee held together and decided to organise the shop stewards into a shop-stewards' movement. The first test of its development came when the women, led by Mrs. Barbour, Helen Crawford and Agnes Dollan, were conducting their magnificent campaign against the rent increases. A stage was reached when only industrial action could carry the women's fight to victory. The Clyde Workers' Committee, the new name of the strike committee, of which I remained Chairman, called on the Clyde workers to cease work in support of the women; from every part of Glasgow and the Clyde, they marched into the centre of the city. The response overwhelmed the authorities. Several lads were in the Sheriff's Court, summoned at the instance of the agents of the property owners to show reason why their wages should not be held to meet their debt for rent. The roars from outside made hearing impossible within the court. The Sheriff got on the telephone to Lloyd George, who told him to stop the case and to tell the women and the workers that a Rent Restriction Bill would be introduced immediately. Much talk is made these days about shop stewards and unofficial strikes: many people are led to believe that unofficial strikes were unknown when there was no shop stewards' movement. They deliberately close their eyes to the fact that it was an unofficial strike that brought the movement into existence, not the other way round.

The Rents Act was a victory. But we were having continual trouble with the Munitions of War Act. Munition Courts were set up and workers were continually being brought before them. Our small committee was meeting twice a week, and every Saturday afternoon we had a meeting of between 300 and 400 stewards. We were always able to get sufficient lads to pack the court when any worker was called before it. McGill was always there with the *Herald* and a selection of

pamphlets, and used to go along the rows of seats selling his wares until the Sheriff came in. We were able to make such a farce of these courts that eventually the authorities had to abandon them and drop the practice of summoning workers on trivial charges.

But there were two cases of a more serious character. The first concerned a shop steward in Beardmore's, Parkhead. This lad, Marshall by name, was sentenced to three months for "slacking", following a short strike against non-unionists in one of the sections. I learned of this one evening when I arrived at a committee meeting a little late, having been delayed by a meeting at the Albion. I sat down by Tommy Clark, who was taking the chair in my absence; the meeting was being addressed by a man I had never seen before. I watched him with amazement; at the end of every other sentence he would compress his lips tightly and look around to see what effect his words were having on the others. He was reporting the Marshall case. "I saw Maister Chisholm, I saw Sir William Beardmore, I . . . I . . . I," it went on.

"Who the hell is this?" I whispered to Tommy Clark. "It's Davy Kirkwood from Parkhead," he told me.

That was my first meeting with Kirkwood, as it was his entry into the life of the leadership of the Clyde Workers' Committee. He was a big, generous, clean-living fellow, for whom I always had considerable regard; but his pronounced egotism, played upon by other influences, became our undoing later. Despite all his talk with Chisholm and Sir William, nothing had happened, and it was only when he brought the matter before the Committee that the release of Marshall was secured.

The second case was that of the shipwrights, who got sentenced to thirty days or a £10 fine—for acting in accordance with official instructions. Two of them paid, the other refused. Immediately the Union officials got on the job, and gave us to understand they were calling out Fairfields. The men there were ready to respond, but the Union men kept on stalling: they were writing to his important person, or seeing an even more important one; they were consulting with the Allied Trades Committee—that body had decided to call a conference . . . and so it went on until it was too late to do anything but give the lad a reception when he came out. At the Allied Trades Committee conference Lorrimer reminded one of the delegates: "Remember, there's a war on!" "Yes!" was the retort. "The class war!"

What struck Glasgow as something of a calamity, though it wasn't recognised as such until much later, was the arrival from London of a

"hard case". I had met him first in Manchester when I was attending the Unity Conference. I had been walking along quietly looking for a cheap coffee shop, after a hectic run-in with Hyndman, when I heard a hissing voice call my name. I turned my head and saw a dark-skinned lad, about thirty-five or thereabouts, with a short black moustache. He held out his hand and grinned, his upper lip ascending until the moustache touched his nose, the process revealing a glittering row of even white teeth. I had seen his type in many a popular melodrama—always as the suave and cunning villain. He introduced himself to me as Peter Petrov, a delegate to the conference and an enemy of Hyndman. We went into a restaurant together and he could scarcely eat for talking. Hyndman and Quelch weren't Marxists: he was a Marxist and was writing a book, the greatest book on Marxism ever to be published. (Only it never was published!) He told me the most hair-raising stories about spies and *agents-provocateurs* as he had experienced them in Czarist Russia and even in London. He described tortures in Czarist prisons: how warders, by turns, would keep talking through an opening in the cell door to prevent political prisoners from sleeping, and how they would keep up the psychological pressure by asking constantly: "Are you going mad, what's the matter with you? Are you going mad?" All the time his moustache was going up and down and his teeth were gleaming at me across the table.

Well, here was this villain of melodrama in Glasgow, amid all the ferment of 1915. Imagine, if you can, my surprise when at one of the Saturday afternoon meetings of our shop stewards, John McLean dropped in and asked me, as chairman, if he could introduce Peter Petrov to the Clyde shop stewards. We gave him a welcome, but it soon became evident to most of us that he was having a sinister influence on McLean and on a young bank-clerk, Jimmie Macdougall, who was teaching industrial history in John's Marxist classes. Jimmie was a quiet, somewhat reserved lad and up to the end of the war was always to be found in the company of John McLean. Soon stories got around that, with their new associate, they could be seen walking along the street, turning the corner and then peeping round to see if they were being followed. This may seem an exaggeration but it's actual fact. The consequences of this association will be noted in due course.

In the meantime, amid all the demonstrations and the marchings of the "Women's Peace Crusade", we were actively engaged in the discussion of a subject that had been thrown in our laps by the Minister of Munitions, David Lloyd George. As 1915 drew to a close, he started

out on a tour of the industrial areas. When he had been Chancellor of the Exchequer it was "silver bullets" that were going to win the war; now he was Minister of Munitions it was shells that were going to be the decisive factor, and he was the little lad that was going to get them. His tour was for the purpose of persuading the unions, and the workers, to accept the dilution¹ of labour—though there was no indication that any of the unions were opposed to it.

When he reached Newcastle, he had visitors from Glasgow: Sharp, Lorrimer and Bunton. They were there without the knowledge of their colleagues on the Allied Trades Committee, but a little matter of that sort didn't trouble these fake democrats. They were not concerned about dilution in the factories; they were concerned about their own precarious position as unwanted leaders. They were servile to the government and the workers were fighting the government—so maybe the Welsh Wizard could help them to get re-established?

He was due to come to Glasgow on December 23; two days were to be spent visiting the factories and winning over the shop stewards, an easy job, surely, for the little spell-binder. He was certain he could do it, and the three were in complete agreement with him. His meeting, or conference as it was advertised, was to take place in St. Andrews' Hall on Saturday forenoon, Christmas Day. He would let them have the distribution of the tickets, and each ticket would entitle its possessor to receive the sum of 6s. 6d. Not satisfied with this, they got him to put a short statement in the Press declaring that he had given them a solemn promise that he would have no association, direct or indirect, with the unofficial Clyde Workers' Committee.

A truly happy trio returned to Glasgow. They would show the world who were the leaders on the Clyde. A meeting of all the officials was called for the Thursday evening in the A.S.E. rooms in Carlton Place, for the distribution of the tickets. The three Big Chiefs were sitting at a table at the top of the room, which was large enough to accommodate the sixty-odd officials present. The tickets were all neatly

¹ Editorial note: Dilution of labour was the substitution for skilled labour of semi-skilled and unskilled (chiefly female) labour by alteration of the methods of production and in agreement with the trade unions in the munitions trades (chiefly Engineering) who had consented at the Treasury Conference of March 1915 to accept compulsory arbitration. The Manpower Bill (see page 102ff.) came into force in 1916 and subsequent years when there were a series of Military Service Acts; the application of these was linked up with the question of dilution and the increasingly difficult conditions for the workers—both at home through rising prices, rents etc. and in the workshop.

stacked ready for handing out. Lorrimer reported on the meeting with Lloyd George and the agreement that had been arrived at.

Harry Hill, who had another meeting to attend, walked up to the table and got his allotted number of tickets. As he turned from the table with the tickets in his hand I got up and protested. I proposed that no tickets should be handed out until the meeting had had the opportunity of discussing whether the officials present were agreeable to act as ticket-distributors for such a tricky subject as the Minister of Munitions. Harry turned back to the table and returned his tickets with a bang; then he walked down the room to where I was sitting and shouted angrily: "Ya bugger, ya could mak' trouble in an empty hoose!" Then he slammed out of the room.

The discussion got started. One by one the officials expressed their disapproval of the Newcastle visit and their intention of boycotting the meeting. Shortly after ten o'clock a vote was taken: 60 against, 5 for. Bunton hurried out and got on the telephone to the Central Station Hotel, where Lloyd George and his entourage were quartered, one of those being Arthur Henderson. Bunton returned, saying that Henderson had asked him to plead with us to wait a short while and allow him to come over and have a talk. I knew there was a likelihood of the rest agreeing to this, as many of them still had a fraternal feeling for Henderson; before he entered Parliament he had been a trade union leader like themselves. I contented myself with pointing out that it was getting very late and by the time he got here and got finished the trams would have stopped. I suggested that we should agree to hear him only if he would provide a fleet of taxis to take us home. This met with vociferous agreement: Bunton went back to telephone the good tidings to Henderson.

When he reached the meeting, he made us a pathetic appeal to have some thought for the Minister; he had had a very trying day. At the conclusion of his speech, several of the others looked towards me, so I got to my feet.

"Mr. Henderson," I began, "the officials here present have considerable respect for you. That's why they agreed to await your coming. But you're asking too much." I took a cutting out of my pocket. "Here is a statement the Minister made to a meeting of employers who were anxious that the trade unions should be curbed. 'You go ahead with your plans,' he told them, 'and if the trade unions try to make trouble, I'll deal with them!' That's the language of an enemy, yet you want trade union leaders to become ticket

distributors for him. Do you think these responsible trade union leaders have no sense of dignity?"

This brought loud cheers, and Henderson realised his mission was in vain. Bunton insisted on another vote, but the result was the same as before.

Outside was a fleet of taxis. I had seven miles to go to Paisley, and Prentice, secretary of the Brass-moulders, shared the cab with me as far as his home, about half way. As he got out he had some trouble with the door and succeeded in breaking a window. He told the driver not to worry: "It's a wealthy firm you're working for," he said.

The Clyde Workers' Committee had decided that when Lloyd George appeared at any factory none of the shop stewards should meet him. His first visit on the Thursday was to Parkhead. Davy Kirkwood, although he had been present when the decision was taken, couldn't resist the desire to see the great man and—the thought was perhaps in his mind—confront him with a greater. At the request of the manager he mustered the shop stewards and introduced them to the Minister—with some very caustic remarks, anything but complimentary to their visitor. When a photographer came in to get a picture, Tom Clark, who was angry with Kirkwood for agreeing to the meeting—and who later resigned as a steward and left the job—snarled: "What the hell do you want? Get out of here; there'll be no bloody photographs!" In his memoirs, Lloyd George refers to Tom as "a natural savage". However, he got his talk with the stewards, though he did not make much impression.

From Parkhead he went to Weirs at Cathcart. The manager sent for the convenor, J. Smith. Would he get the shop stewards together for a talk from the Minister of Munitions? Smith informed him that they had already come to a decision not to meet the Minister but to tell him that if he wanted to discuss dilution he would have to meet the Clyde Workers' Committee. The manager begged him to go and have another talk with the boys. "He's here in the office," he almost wept, "surely they can't refuse to meet him?" The convenor went away, and a short time later returned. "They won't meet him," he reported. "They want him to understand that the affairs of Glasgow and the Clyde can only be discussed with the Clyde Workers' Committee."

Lloyd George tried another couple of factories and then gave up in despair. What a blow to his ego! The man above all others in the British Empire, and maybe further afield, and these damned rebel workers, who had been given a chance of seeing him at close hand,

spurned his approaches! Then, later in the evening, to learn from Bunton of the decision of the officials—he'd want a handful of sleeping pills after such a repudiation.

Next morning about nine o'clock Davie Keachy, the Albion's manager, sent an office-boy to invite me to come up to his office. "What's the matter?" I asked him on arrival. He gazed at me as though I had taken on a new look. "Do you know Lord Murray?" he asked. "I know of him," I answered. "He was a well-known Liberal when he was the Master of Elibank. Now he's travelling around with Lloyd George."

"He has just phoned from the Central Station Hotel," Davie was almost gasping. "He wants to see you."

"Well, I'd better go," I said.

"As you are?" His eyes were wide and round.

"How else can I go? I haven't a change of clothes here."

"Go in your dungarees to the Central Station Hotel? They won't let you in!"

"They'll let me in all right," I said. I went out and got a car around the corner that took me close to my destination. I got there in time to meet the members of the Allied Trades Committee, all of whom had received a similar invitation. I was the only one in dungarees, though; the rest were all full-time officials. When we were fully mustered, Bunton let the great man know that we were ready. We were invited into a very comfortable room, where chairs and small tables had been arranged in a semi-circle, with a larger one across the open end. Lloyd George, Lord Murray and Arthur Henderson sat at that one. I was in the middle of the semi-circle, directly facing the Minister. Up towards him on my left were Jimmie Whitehead and Bunton.

The Minister expressed his regret at the decision we had taken the previous evening, working himself up about the boys at the front, the terrible responsibility that rested on him, how he looked to us as good patriots to help him in his heavy task, etc. "I have asked you here to reconsider your decision, and help me to see that the boys don't lack for shells."

It was well put across, and I thought one or two of the lads were shaken a bit. I was left to take up the challenge. I said very quietly:

"Mr. Minister, it's not possible for us to change a decision that was taken by a full meeting of Clyde officials." There was a murmur of assent. The Bailie, near enough Lloyd George to touch him, jumped up with a shout. "Who was responsible for that decision?" he yelled. "Mr. Lloyd George, this man is out for bloody revolution!"

"Easy, Jimmie," I grinned at him. "You're not trying to frighten anyone, are you?"

Then Sam Bunton rose to his feet, very dignified. "Mr. Lloyd George," he said very solemnly, "I want to expose this man as an irresponsible trouble-maker. Even his own associates have repudiated him."

This, it seemed, was a real bombshell. Lloyd George leaned towards him. "Yes. . . ." he encouraged.

"While he was with us, opposing our participation in the meeting on Saturday, his own shop stewards were in the Central Halls and passed a resolution giving their terms for participating in it. And this morning they came into my office and took away all the tickets."

Dead silence. Lloyd George pulled himself together. "Is this true, Mr. Gallacher?"

"Yes, sir," I answered. He looked at Bunton with fire flashing from his eyes. He looked at the others. Then he snapped: "That will be all, gentlemen." Just like that! They were dismissed with the utmost contempt.

As we moved towards the door, the Minister called: "Mr. Gallacher, could I speak to you?" I turned back as the chastised schoolboys left the room. "When can you get your committee together, Mr. Gallacher?" "This evening at seven o'clock," I said. "I'll have them all here."

"Good!" He gave me a wide smile. I nodded to the other two, who were also smiling, and made my exit. Thus the Minister of Munitions kept his promise to the trio at Newcastle.

I got word to the various factories, and at seven o'clock in the evening was back at the Central Station Hotel. We were ushered into the same room, with the same set-up. I sat in the centre again, with Davy Kirkwood on my right and Arthur McManus on my left. Between Davy and Jim Messer, the secretary of our committee, was a girl from a shell-filling factory, Annie Durham. Another girl, whose name I have forgotten, sat between McManus and Johnny Muir who was to be our spokesman. On the far side of Messer was the "natural savage", Tommy Clark.

Lloyd George gave us a welcome and offered a box of cigars as he had done in the morning. "No, no," I told him. "A bad start!"

He took it in his stride. "I agree with you." He smiled round the company. "I'd prefer a pipe myself"—and out it came.

He made a talk similar to that he had made in the morning. When he

finished I told him Johnny Muir would put our point of view on dilution. I will now quote from *Revolt on the Clyde*, for what I am going to recall has an interesting sequel.

While Johnny was speaking, the pompous little peacock at the top of the room was doing everything to distract attention. I have never in my life seen such a pitiful example of uncontrollable conceit. He brushed at his moustache, he pawed at his hair, looked-around to see if he was the centre of attraction. His yes-men played up to him. They had their eyes on him, not on Johnny Muir. Then, to crown it all, he turned to Henderson on his right, and started whispering. This meant that he was half turned away from Johnny.

I suddenly said, "That'll do, Johnny, stop!"

Johnny stopped. They all sat up with a start. Addressing Lloyd George, I remarked, "Excuse me, Mr. Lloyd George, if you don't want to hear us, we'll go. We're not here to waste our time." "But I've been listening," he hurriedly exclaimed. "I've heard every word." "You haven't been listening," I said, "all the boys know you haven't. . . . Either you give Johnny your attention or we go!"

"Please go on, Mr. Muir," Lloyd George begged. "It's very interesting." "Go ahead, Johnny," I added. And Johnny went on to his conclusion with the whole top table's attention directed towards him.

Shortly after the second edition of *Revolt on the Clyde* was published, I got a copy of it through the post, the sender being none other than the eldest son of Lloyd George. He had written in the margin at that part: "This is a very true description." I ought to have kept this copy, but a nephew in America wanted a copy of the book and I sent him that one. I knew that there was bad blood between the young Lloyd George and his father. The father left him the title (he couldn't keep it from him) but he left him nothing more. The son got back with a shocker of a book; a fearful exposure of his Old Man.

To get back to the Central Station Hotel. We had quite a wrangle about the form the next day's conference should take. The Minister proposed that Henderson, as chairman, should have twenty minutes, then he himself should speak for forty minutes, after which he would answer written questions. We laughed at this, and told him that wasn't a conference as we understood it. Our proposal was: Henderson, five minutes; the Minister, thirty minutes; Johnny Muir fifteen minutes and then open questions from the floor. Lloyd George wouldn't consider that.

"All right," we told him. "Nobody can stop you from having your own way. You can decide what you and Henderson propose to do, but you can't make the shop stewards listen to you."

"Oh!" he said, quite cocky. "They'll listen to me."

"You're in for the surprise of your life," we told him.

We were out in the hall, donning our coats, when a secretary came running out. "Mr. Gallacher, Mr. Lloyd George would like to have a word with you." I asked the others if I should go. They were of the opinion that I should, so back I went. All the yes-men, with the exception of Lord Murray, had been dismissed. Lloyd George put his arm over my shoulder as though I were his cousin from the country. I was a fine lad, in fact I was a great lad and I had a great future before me.

"What is it you want?" I asked him. He wanted to make a personal appeal for my support. He could assure me I wouldn't regret it. Again I repeated: "What is it you want?"

"I want you to accompany me on the platform," he beamed at me.

"All right," I assured him. "I'm sure the boys won't object provided you accept our proposal for the conduct of the conference."

"You know I can't accept your proposals," he barked.

"Well," I grinned at him, "you won't get our support, and believe me you won't get anywhere tomorrow without it."

"I can't talk to you, you're impossible!" And he went barging out of the room. Lord Murray looked very depressed. Pointing my thumb in the direction of the Minister's departure I said: "Is that the way to behave? He asks me in and then treats me in such a manner?"

He replied: "I'm sorry you couldn't come to an agreement." We shook hands, and I left him there while I went out and had a laugh with the others.

Lloyd George and Henderson had a dreadful reception the following morning. A large force of police was on the floor of the hall, and the balcony was barricaded at either side nearest the platform. But barricades and police couldn't get them a hearing, and after battling against the storm for fifty minutes they marched off, leaving Johnny Muir, who had mounted a bench on the floor of the hall, addressing the meeting.

Towards the end of January 1916 a visitor came to Glasgow from London. We were invited to meet him in Willie Stewart's place, the I.L.P. headquarters. Half a dozen members of our committee were able to accept the invitation and there, in Willie's office, we met one of the outstanding leaders and founders of the I.L.P., Bruce Glasier. Bruce was

a very pleasant, gentle, sentimental socialist. He had married an attractive young woman, Catherine Conway, and later both of them became Theosophists. Here, he was delighted to meet us. We asked him to tell us what was on his mind—and there was plenty. The government was preparing to bring in a Conscription Bill, and it was evident that most of the trade union leaders, warriors by proxy, were not prepared to offer any opposition. He had come, he said, to appeal to us on behalf of the "dear young lads he had left in London", to arouse the Clyde and force the government to withdraw this reactionary, menacing Bill.

We told him we were definitely opposed to conscription, and were already preparing a campaign against it. He was a happy man; he shook hands all round and said all sorts of nice things about us, while Willie Stewart looked on, his little eyes beaming.

Among the "dear young lads" Bruce was grieving over were youngsters like Herbert (later Lord) Morrison, and Clifford Allen, who passed the last years of his life as Lord Allen of something-or-other. When Herbert came before the Tribunal as a Conscientious Objector, he declared that all modern wars were caused by capitalist greed for profits and, as a socialist, his conscience would not allow him to fight in such a war.

When the third Labour Government was in office years later, he and others were viciously attacking "unofficial strikers". I reminded him then of the visit of Bruce Glasier to Glasgow, and said that he had not been opposed to an unofficial strike when faced with conscription. To this he replied that he had never had any association with the Clyde Workers' Committee, which was, in a manner of speaking, true. But it wasn't the question at issue. Who was Bruce Glasier speaking for? Who were the "dear young lads"? Bruce was on the executive of the I.L.P. and Herbert was a London official of the same party. It's hard to believe that he didn't have knowledge of the mission that took Bruce to Glasgow.

You remember that ticket holders at the Christmas Day meeting were entitled to 6s. 6d.? We collected quite a number of these 6s. 6d.'s afterwards, and in the middle of January were able to publish the first issue of a weekly paper, *The Worker*. It had a ready sale, and we used it for leading the agitation against the Conscription Bill. While the fifth issue was on the press the government moved.

When I got home late one evening to our little place in Well Street, I found it crowded. There were four C.I.D. men, two from Glasgow, one from Paisley and one from the county, all waiting for my arrival. Jean was pregnant at the time, and had been sitting all alone when this invasion took place, four big husky brutes pushing their way in with-

out as much as by-your-leave. Having a search warrant, they started going into all the drawers and closets, looking for "incriminating" material. I was put under arrest, and was trying to comfort Jean when a knock came at the door. One of the cops was quick to open it. Two lads came in, Kenneth Dunn and another, to tell me that Johnny Muir had been arrested and *The Worker* suppressed. When they saw what they had fallen into, they could only stare at me with despair in their eyes. "I'm sorry lads, I won't be able to attend the quarterly meeting," I said. "You will have to see Stirling and get him to raise the matter."

"What meeting is this?" demanded one of the Glasgow men.

"The Co-operative Quarterly meeting," I answered. "These are two employees who have a complaint and I promised to see them to get the facts so that I could bring them before the members."

To Kenny and the other I said: "Sorry, but you may as well go. Be sure to see Stirling, he'll help you out." They mumbled thanks and out they went.

Jean suffered very much from the shock of this invasion. Poor lass, I had to leave her with a neighbour, who did her best to comfort her. But the consequence of the rampage was evident when she came to childbirth. The shock had caused a complication, and the doctor and midwife had a difficult time getting the child home in what they told me was a "cross-birth". The little fellow lived only a few days. Some years later, in February 1920, I sent a telegram to Jim Messer: "Roy Gallacher arrived this morning. He and his mother are both doing well." But I was wrong. He was a fine baby boy, and we were delighted with him. But alas, there was some internal organ not functioning and after several days he was taken to hospital, where he died a week later. We had no more children until we adopted two orphan nephews, but I will deal with that later.

The press was seized, the paper suppressed and its editor, Johnny Muir and I were arrested. There was immediate talk of a strike. But we were let out on bail and that halted the question of action. We were just out on bail when calamity struck the movement.

"Dilution commissioners" had arrived in Glasgow with the intention of going from factory to factory and getting the Minister's new regulations accepted. At a full meeting of shop stewards it was decided that no factory should sign such an agreement; that the commissioners should be asked to meet the small committee and get an acceptable scheme drawn up. The commissioners, following the example of the

Minister, went first to Parkhead. There they persuaded Davy Kirkwood to call the stewards together "just to have a chat". He fell for it. Before the commissioners left, the shop stewards had accepted a dilution agreement for Parkhead.

In it, Davy got a phrase written: "Your sole concern is increased output", and somehow he thought that this was a magic sentence that left the stewards much as they had been before. There were many hard things said about the big fellow. Then he made things worse by making a statement that "my only concern is Parkhead". I tried my best to hold things together but it was no use. We might have had the breach healed if there had been time. But within a week of the signing of the agreement Parkhead was in an uproar. Kirkwood, as convenor of shop stewards, had like all other convenors the right to go to any department where there was trouble if the stewards of that department considered his presence necessary. He had received such a call and had left his job to go and see what the trouble was. He was stopped by the foreman: no more leaving the job—"increased output" meant that he as well as the others must keep at it the whole time. He called a mass meeting in the lunch hour, told what had happened and declared that he would not remain a convenor under such conditions and proposed to resign. The meeting did not accept this; instead, they decided to strike. No suggestion of getting in touch with others in order to get a concerted policy. The following morning we called a meeting of the Albion lads and they agreed to stop work in support of Parkhead. We arranged for approaches to be made to other factories, but none of them would come out.

Then the government made another swoop. All the members of our committee, with the exception of Johnny Muir and myself (we couldn't be touched as long as we were on bail) were suddenly picked up and deported to Edinburgh. They were free to travel from there, they were told, but not back to Glasgow. Still no action from the other factories.

The deportees, on arrival in Edinburgh, got the assistance of John S. Clarke and his wife Sally. Sally decided to organise a slap-up high tea for them. She got a recipe from a friend for baking a seed cake. The deportees gathered for the feast and were well supplied with all kinds of acceptable diet. But all the time their eyes were on the lovely brown-baked cake that was sitting there in the centre of the table. At last it was cut and passed around. Soon they were all engaged in picking the seeds out of their teeth and laying them at the side of their plates. John S. looked at his wife.

"Sally, what in hell's this you've put in the cake?"

"That'll be the canary seed," replied Sally.

"Canary seed?" echoed her husband. "Whatever made you put that in it?" Sally pulled out the recipe. "Here it is," she said, and handed it over.

"It's *caraway seed*!" he told her.

The deportees spent many pleasant evenings with this couple. But we in Glasgow were having no pleasant time. Weir's wouldn't move, and the others were taking their cue from the Cathcart workers. It was decided that Johnny and I, the only leaders left, should make a quick trip to London, contact MacDonald, Pringle and Hogg and get them to put pressure on the government to get the ban raised on Kirkwood's rights as convener of shop stewards, and the lifting of the deportation order. We thought that if we could get a row started in Parliament it would strengthen us in our campaign for a general stoppage.

Lloyd George was away in Paris when we got to London. MacDonald and the others arranged for us to meet Dr. Addison. We had a couple of meetings with him, and got him to agree in principle to a statement we had prepared which would allow the deportees to return to Glasgow and would remove the ban that had been placed on Kirkwood. A third meeting was arranged for the following day. But alas, the Minister had returned from Paris that evening. When he heard what was afoot he nearly threw a fit.

In the House next day Johnny and I were in the Public Gallery. The Minister was quite gentle with MacDonald, but he literally blasted Pringle and Hogg—Liberals who had taken a very good left line throughout the war. They put up a fight but were battered down. MacDonald was exceedingly apologetic. He was sorry about what had happened, he said, "But I beg this House to believe me when I say that rather than that division of opinion should make me an agent to bring men out on strike just now, I should wish that something should happen of one kind or another which would destroy every particle of influence that I ever had with the working men of this country. Within two months of the outbreak of war I made publicly in my own constituency an appeal to men who are working on munitions to work honestly on munitions."

That was typical of the flabby oratory of MacDonald. But it wasn't what you'd call helpful to the deportees. Pringle drew the Minister's attention to the fact that he himself had testified to my sincerity, to which he made reply: "There would have been no trouble had it not

been for this very sincere and rather fanatical man coming to my friend, the Hon. Member for Leicester. Had it not been for the fact that he was sincere, and that therefore the men believed in him, he could not have this influence for mischief." After delivering himself of this, the Minister remembered that Johnny and I were out on bail, so he ended by saying that as we were coming up for trial shortly the case was *sub judice* so he wouldn't say anything that could prejudice it. A cunning little lad, was David.

While Johnny and I were sitting in the Galley an army officer in front of us got up, walked down to the rail and threw himself over on to the floor of the House. He fell flat, but got to his feet as two or three members rushed to help the sergeant-at-arms eject him. Before they could get him away, however, he managed to shout: "I demand helmets for the men at the front!" (There was a fearsome roll of casualties from bursting shrapnel descending on the unprotected heads of the soldiers.) They rushed the officer out of the House, but they had to heed his protest and rush helmets to the lads for whom he spoke up.

Johnny and I left the House and went over to the Labour Research Department at Tothill Street, where our good friend and comrade Robin Page Arnot was waiting to hear the result of our negotiations. (Lloyd George, in the House, had denied that there had been any negotiations.) Our first contact on arrival in London had been Robin; through him we had contacted the others. We had scarcely started talking to him now, when MacDonald and Pringle came in. Pringle was somewhat depressed; he felt that Lloyd George had given him his parliamentary death-blow. With MacDonald it was quite different; he walked up and down, talking all the time, without a thought for his unfortunate companion. "They gave me quite a good hearing. I'm sure I made a good impression. Lloyd George was exceedingly friendly; I was really surprised at the warm reception I got. . . ." And so it went on, while Pringle sat the picture of misery. It was the first speech MacDonald had made for some time—he'd been hesitant about getting up because, associated as he was with the pacifist I.L.P., he was afraid he'd get shouted down. At that time, he had to remain in the I.L.P. as it was his only means of membership of the Labour Party: there was no individual membership of the Labour Party until after the 1914-18 war. Anyway, we had provided him with an opportunity for breaking the ice. But he gave such an *exhibition of self-centred egotism* that afternoon, I think it was that which started me on the path of anti-Parliamentarianism.

Calton Gaol, the warders and the work. Back to rebuild the movement. Support for Russian Revolution. Release of McLean.

THE following night we travelled back in the third-class carriage, Johnny to go right away to his job in Barr & Stroud's, I to the Albion which was still the only factory out with Beardmore's. Notwithstanding the strike, three or four days after the commissioners had been at Parkhead, they arrived by appointment to discuss dilution with our directors and the representatives of the men. Our first task was to get rid of the commissioners. We shook hands with them, and all sat down around the director's table. We opened by saying that we were pleased to see the commissioners, but we had to take note of the fact that they had no knowledge of the motor industry and, more important, they didn't have any knowledge of the cordial relations that existed in the Albion—something of which the directors and workers were justly proud. This being the case, we earnestly felt that the best service they could render—and we had no doubt that they wanted to render service—would be to leave us to work out the dilution problem ourselves. We were sure, from our experience, that we and the directors would have no difficulty in coming to an understanding. The directors were with us all the way, so we thanked the commissioners for coming and courteously invited them to leave. They took it well, were happy to find such friendly relations and were sure, they said, that we would get along all right without them.

On their departure we settled down to work out proposals in relation to the bringing in of dilutees. We got the finest terms on the Clyde. No question about that at all—the nearest to ours was Barr & Stroud's where Johnny took up the running.

But we were determined to stick by Parkhead. Every second day we had a mass meeting of the men and there was no sign of yielding. After almost two weeks, I went to Glasgow one afternoon to see some of the lads and—what a shock! I found that Beardmore's men had gone back to work that morning. What a fix they had left us in! Out without consulting anyone, and now back to work without consulting their only allies! I had to hurry back to Scotstoun, locate as many of the lads as possible, and get them going the rounds to acquaint as many men as

possible with the situation. We got them all back the next morning by breakfast time. Those whom we had not been able to contact learned the news from the evening and morning papers.

The strike was over, but there were no hard feelings on the part of the management. The Albion was a low-built factory, just the one floor; but now a great new development was going ahead, a large three-story building of steel and glass. Davie Keachy, the manager, tried hard to get me to take a foreman's job in the new building, but all in vain. I wasn't being taken in with that. The workmate who took the job, J. McFettridge, rose to be manager. What a chance I missed!

In April 1916, Johnny and I were tried in the Edinburgh High Court, well away from our home ground. We were sentenced to twelve months. John McLean had already, two weeks previously, been sentenced to three years—which meant the penal prison, Peterhead. When we entered Calton Goal the prison authorities didn't know what to do with us; in prison regulations sedition is charged as a "Civil Offence", which meant that we should have been allowed our own clothes, and to get in food, and papers, like First Class Offenders in England. But some question had arisen regarding our treatment; instead of our own clothes we got brown corduroys of the type supplied to prisoners awaiting trial whose own clothes were beyond wearing. We were kept suspended thus for a week before word came from London that we were to be classed as criminals. This turned out to be a boon and a blessing for me. In Calton there was no communal work; each prisoner had a frame in his cell for making mats. Only an hour's exercise, walking round the exercise yard, took them out of their cells once a day: all the rest of the time, day and night, they were in solitary confinement. But not me! The morning after we had become criminals, we were issued with new moleskins—short trousers, split at the knee with a couple of tapes to pull them tight. I had no sooner donned my new outfit than a warder opened my cell door and said: "Come on!" He took me across the yard to his workshop; he was engineer warder.

"I've been waiting for a man like you," he told me, "you'll get plenty to keep you going here."

There were two or three other prisoners hanging around, apparently with not much to do. "We'll go around to the laundry," he said. "One of the wringers has given out there." Along the left hand side of his workshop there was a row of cells; one (a double one) was a blacksmith's shop, one a paint store, one had a foot-propelled turning lathe.

The other prisoners were locked in, one to each of these cells, and I went off with the warder, Mr. Calder, to the women's side of the prison. This was only the start. I next got the job, with a couple of men, of cleaning out the boiler. I was supposed to be in charge of this operation and they were meant to do the work; but as they firmly believed in "restrictive practices" I had to do most of it myself. On any job that involved working with other prisoners, we were always accompanied by a warder. But if I was doing a job on my own, I was allowed to go alone. Crossing the yard one day I met the Chief Warder.

"Hullo! where away today?" he greeted me. "I'm going up to the gatehouse," I told him.

"Going out?" he jested. "Not me," I answered, "I'm not leaving this job." On another occasion, when I was asked by an official visitor how I was getting on, I remarked: "All right. I've got a good job and I'd stick it long enough if he"—I nodded towards the chief—"would let me out at nights." "Would you go out in those clothes?" asked the chief. "You try me," I challenged him, "and watch me swaggering along Princes Street."

But my job at the gatehouse that day was a sad and tragic one. When Dr. Devon, who was Prison Commissioner for Scotland, came to Calton as he often did, he always sent for me to have a bit of a chat. The first time had been about a month after my arrival at the gaol. I had never met him before that, but we had mutual friends and I had often read reports in the Press of his lectures on prison reform. On that first occasion, when I got to the chief's office, the doctor had had with him not only the chief but the Governor and the Governor's son, a tall, handsome officer in Highland uniform. We shook hands all round, then the Governor and his son took their departure; the young officer was about to go to the front. Now, in one of the rooms of the gatehouse his officer's kit was lying on the floor, just as it had come from the mud of the trenches. The splendid young lad would never use it again. I got a basin of hot water and started to wash the various articles. While I was doing so the Governor came in. He didn't speak; he just stood there looking. I wasn't thinking of prisoner and keeper; I could only feel deep compassion for the tragic sorrow of a fellow-mortal.

The men I worked with were, as a rule, short-term prisoners—20 or 30 days—so I had quite a variety. Several came from the warships lying at Rosyth, and all of them concurred in saying that Calton was the worst prison in the world. It certainly was a forbidding place. It had been opened the year after Waterloo, and had all the worst methods for

depressing and breaking the morale of those confined to its inhospitable care. I don't know how I would have got through it if, like the others, I had been confined by myself all day. As it was, in the workshop, we talked about any and every subject though the silence rule was applied all over the rest of the prison. I was working in "A" hall one day on my own, and I had a very painful boil on my eyelid. In a double cell (used when necessary as the condemned cell) a prisoner named McCabe was sitting cobbling shoes. As the cell door was wide open I went in to have a chat with him. In case a warder should come along I got behind the open door. We were getting along fine when a young clergyman popped in to gladden McCabe with his presence. He greeted McCabe, saw him looking at me, turned, and saw me. I had already met this young man and we hadn't parted good friends. There was some trouble going on outside with the miners, and he started off by letting McCabe know what he thought of these wicked rebels. That started a real up-and-down, in the course of which the pious lad shouted: "I don't give a damn for you, Gallacher!" Naturally I was shouting back at him. This brought a first class warder, Mr. Grant, hurrying to the scene. He saw the clergyman and McCabe, and as he inquired: "What's going on here?" he caught sight of me.

"Oh, it's you, Gallacher. You're always arguing with someone. No wonder you've got a sore eye!"

I didn't see the connection, but I let it go at that and got on with the job I was there to do. But it will be noted from this that the silent rule did not apply to me or to the lads who worked with me. As for the Engineer Warder, Mr. Calder, he and I were just like workmates.

Another feature of the life in Calton that didn't apply to me was the lack of shaving facilities. Once a week the barber, a prisoner, came round and cut off superfluous whiskers with a pair of scissors—which meant that a considerable residue of whisker was left, leaving the victim scruffy and unkempt. But I had made myself a small razor out of a piece of hacksaw, and every evening in my cell I would go over my face, a little bit at a time, and every morning I appeared with shining countenance, without benefit of any of those well-advertised and highly profitable shaving creams or powders. Of course all the warders, including the chief, knew I was shaving, but not one of them ever passed a remark about it.

Two books a week were allowed to each prisoner, supplied from a truck that came around the corridors. But I got the free run of the library and sometimes had as many as half a dozen books in my cell.

The warder in charge of the library was a very pleasant lad named Somerville. When he got to know I was from Paisley, he told me a story of which he was very fond. A horse-bus ran from Paisley to Glasgow in those days; the fare was 6d. It stopped at Half-way House, the only building for two or three miles either way: there was a pub of the same name there too. There the horses were "watered" and the passengers too, if they felt inclined, as most of them did. The driver collected the fares at that stop; Somerville, who was sitting with him on the "dickey", proposed that they should toss a coin for double or quits. Somerville won, and got the drive into Glasgow free. He told me that story many times, and always started off: "Did I ever tell you . . .?" Many years later, when he was an old man, I heard that he was spending his last days and went to see him. He opened the door at my knock, and looked hard at me.

"Don't you remember me?" I asked, "the lad frae Paisley."

He peered into my face, then exclaimed: "Gallacher! come in, come in!" We sat and chatted for a while, and then: "Did I ever tell you . . .?" he said. Yes, that free ride was surely an event in Warder Somerville's life.

Another warder, named Ross, was secretary of the Edinburgh Branch of the Police and Prison Officers' Union. He would call on me, in my cell, of an evening, to discuss branch business and get my advice on a variety of subjects. Sometimes the chief or the Chaplain would drop in for a chat. I was certainly a favoured prisoner. I occasionally wrote odd verses and passed them around through the Engineer Warder. But here are some I didn't let him get possession of, though I showed them to him later:

In Calton Gaol the erring mortals
Of masculine or t'other gender
Who cross its uninviting portals
Their ill-spent liberty surrender,
And there in silent meditation
May ponder on their tribulation.

Alas! that man should be so frail
So prone to very strange disorders
That make him subject for a gaol
And careful scrutiny of warders
Into whose tender care he's sent
With hopes, at least, of betterment.

How grim the gate as you go in!
But grimmer still the halls of wrath:
Reception: somewhere down below,
"Get stripped right off and have a bath!"
Old Robertson he growls down there
Like hungry tiger in its lair.

Fresh bathed and dressed you go upstairs
A first-class warder meets your view
The many mansions are his care
And he'll prepare a place for you:
B 2, B 3, or else B 4
He'll show you in and lock the door.

With heavy heart around you look,
Your furniture's a pot and basin,
A stool, a bed, likewise hymn book
And Bible meant to wash away sin.
On Sunday all proceed to Chapel
To hear how Adam ate the apple—

And thereby damned us one and all.
My erring brother, think a minute
If you had learned from Adam's fall,
This Calton you would ne'er be in it.
But since you're prone to halt and stumble
Just take your gruel and do not grumble.

In Reception Warder Robertson, a man with a perpetual grouch, wrote down your particulars, including your religion.

"Socialist?" A snarl. "That's no bloody religion! Church of Scotland, Church of England, Roman Catholic?"

You had to be one of them. No admittance to Calton Gaol without a religion. The Church of Scotland prisoners got out of their cells not only on Sunday mornings but also on Wednesday evenings when the Chaplain used to give a short talk in the chapel, finishing up by giving out the important news items. On Sunday afternoons there was another session in the hall (we all carried our stools) when an evangelist, accompanied by a young lady who played on a small harmonium, came to give us a talk. A Catholic priest looked in only once in a while. The result was that practically all the prisoners were Church of Scotland. Philip Murray, a Roman Catholic, registered Church of Scotland like

the rest. He had lost an eye, I never asked him how. He was a short-term man, repeatedly "drunk and disorderly" but a very quiet chap in prison. One day when I was attending to the cell lights he asked me if I could get him into the workshop. I spoke to the boss, and he brought him down. We were redecorating the wardresses' rooms at the time. Every morning four of us went up to their quarters. Each of the wardresses took a week in turn, preparing meals for the others. At eleven o'clock each morning we got a cup of tea! It was relished—as will be realised when I mention the daily diet. We had a warder in attendance; while we sat in the room enjoying our cuppa he would stand at the head of the spiral stair, keeping a look-out in case any of his superiors might think of paying us a visit. This may seem hardly credible; nevertheless it is true. The first time Philip Murray sat drinking tea with us, he was thunderstruck. "Wait till I get out and tell the lads!" he said, grinning all round.

I mentioned "gruel" in my rhyme, but there was none in Calton. Two pints of thick porridge and three-quarters of a pint of (sour) milk was our breakfast. Nothing more—and the sour milk was nearer sour water; it was what was left after all the fat had been churned off to make butter. Two pints of soup and six ounces of dry bread for dinner. Two pints of porridge and three-quarters of a pint of swill for supper. A cup of tea in the women's section was a godsend!

A couple of weeks after Johnny and I entered Calton we were joined by Jimmie Maxton and Jimmie Macdougall—the lad I have mentioned who was constantly in the company of John McLean and the sinister Peter Petrov. They had addressed a meeting on Glasgow Green and had called for a strike to stop conscription. In the circumstances, with the unofficial leadership deported or in prison and the official leadership supporting the government, it was slightly ludicrous for a school-teacher and a bank clerk to be calling for a strike. But they were determined not to be conscripted into the army, so they got conscripted into Calton instead. They had only been in a short time when we saw how Petrov's conspiratorial airs had affected Macdougall. One Sunday morning we marched into the Chapel as usual after exercise. We got seated in readiness for the Chaplain; as soon as he entered the pulpit, Macdougall got to his feet.

"Sir!" he shouted. "I want you to write to my father and tell him that the warders are shouting at my door at night, trying to drive me mad!"

Two warders led him out and took him back to his cell. He was taken next day to a Perth prison, for special treatment.

Away up at Peterhead, McLean was behaving in the same way. After we were all released—McLean got out after serving only thirteen months, as a result of the tremendous campaign in Glasgow and throughout the mining areas, where he had a great following—I tried my best to persuade them that they had allowed Petrov to poison their minds to such an extent that they had imagined they could hear talking outside their cells. I pointed out that there were no warders on duty after we were locked in at nine o'clock; there was just a watchman, who went along the corridors so many times a night, clocking at each landing, but he wore felt shoes so that not a sound could be heard. I kept telling them that if any prisoner, even at the farthest end of the corridor from them, so much as coughed, it could be heard by everyone. But I could not convince them. We had to let the subject drop, though in the company of others they would still repeat the story.

The Chaplain at Calton was Dr. John Hunter, a very earnest, very pleasant clergyman who gave a lot of time to the prisoners, helping them in a variety of ways. He dropped in very often to have a chat with me. We both avoided raising controversial questions, and got on like a house on fire. When eventually I was due to leave, he came along in the early morning to have a final word with me. (This is another almost incredible incident in my prison experience, which I have already mentioned in *Revolt on the Clyde*.) He said to me: "So you are leaving us."

"Yes," I smiled at him. "I'm finished here."

"In a way I'm sorry," was his startling remark—to be followed by one even more startling. "For I must say you have raised the moral tone of this prison." We said a few more words, then he shook hands and left me to get ready for my departure.

Johnny Muir, so gentle in his manner and so sensitive, suffered terribly with the confinement. His fiancée had been with Wheatley, in charge of a very large fund that had been raised for the deportees and the dependants of the prisoners. Johnny came completely under Wheatley's influence after he came out of gaol, left the Socialist Labour Party and joined the I.L.P., through which he got elected to Parliament in 1924 and entered the first Labour Government as assistant to the *Postmaster General*. But he didn't live long after that. His mind never lifted from the depression the solitary confinement had forced on him.

Kirkwood, shortly after his return from deportation, got a job as foreman in Beardmore's Mile End factory (where I myself got a

job in 1918). This meant that he was taking no active part in the rebuilding of our movement. McManus, Messer and the other deportees were drifting about England and it was only with Messer that I carried on correspondence. So there was nothing for it but to get on with the task of rebuilding our movement myself.

It wasn't easy. With my colleagues out of the fight and with no paper to advertise meetings, I had to rely on two or three lads to spread the word around that I was calling a meeting of shop stewards for the following Saturday week. I didn't know that these lads, for the time being, had "wandered from the fold".

On the Saturday designated, the Ingram Street Hall, where we had always been accustomed to hold our meetings, was soon well filled up. It could have held more, but I was satisfied at the response to the call. I felt that we were on the way again. What I am now going to relate is almost beyond belief. Of course, I saw T. L. Smith and J. Ness sitting near the front, trying to look profound; I wondered what had brought them along. Will Fyffe, an engineer who some years later became District Secretary of the A.E.U., took the chair. He said he was sure they would all be glad that Comrade Gallacher was back on the job again, and that he had called the meeting in order to discuss a policy and programme which he had prepared. He then called on me to take the floor, which I did.

I drew attention to what was happening throughout the country, in Sheffield, Coventry and Birmingham, to the issues that confronted us and the problems that would confront us when the war ended, as and it must sooner or later. I pointed out how necessary it was to restore the power of the shop stewards, with an organisation that could ensure action whenever it was required. All this I had committed to paper, but where the document is now is beyond me to say. When I finished the chairman, as usual, asked for questions.

Up gets T. L. Smith. "There'll be no questions," he announced. ("Hear, hear!" from his pal Ness.) "We've just come here today to let Mr. Gallacher know that he and his policy of strikes that achieve nothing are finished. All those present are now carrying cards of the W.I.I.U., a genuine revolutionary movement, and they want no more of Gallacher. I am now going to ask them to get up with me and leave this faker's meeting."

Just like that!—and, be Jasus, they all got up and followed him. One or two I saw were a little bit shamefaced, but out they went. I looked at Will Fyffe and at what was left of my fine meeting, and I'll

swear by all the Gods on Mount Olympus there were five left, along with the chairman and myself. Seven of us.

"It's going to be tougher than I thought," I remarked. "But we'll get there. I'll go to *his* meeting and we'll see how he likes that." We chatted for a bit, and then went our separate ways, none of us feeling very jubilant.

The W.I.L.U., the Workers' International Industrial Union, was a De Leon-ite importation, the industrial arm of the Socialist Labour Party. No strikes, no nothing, just get all the workers class-conscious and they will take over the factories: no trouble, easy as knocking off a plate of pancakes. It was "the first Monday after Socialism" in a new guise. Smith and Ness, with one or two others, had conceived the idea of taking advantage of the absence of the former leadership and had got out membership cards on quite a large scale. They had been pushing them for all they were worth, at a membership fee of 2d. a week. It was to be revolution on the cheap. With the money that had come in they had rented a hall at Anderston Cross, where they met every other Saturday afternoon.

Two weeks after my abortive meeting the passive revolutionaries were gathered in the hall at Anderston Cross. I walked in on them, alone, up to the platform where T.L. was on his feet addressing the gathering. He stopped addressing the audience and shouted: "What do you want? You've no right to come in here. This is a membership meeting."

"I only want to have a talk with my fellow-workers," I told him.

"They don't want to hear you. They've had enough of you," he declared.

"Let's put it to them," I challenged. — "Or are you afraid?"

At this the chairman intervened, and went over the mark. (I won't mention his name. He later regretted his remark, and he became a good and loyal Communist Party member till his death.) "Don't listen to this man!" he shouted. "There's a very strong suspicion that he's an *agent-provocateur*!" The reaction was in my favour. The groan that went up from the meeting showed T.L. that he had lost.

"Do I get speaking?" I put the question to the meeting.

"Yes!" came back the shout.

"Please," I said to T.L., indicating a chair. He sat down with a scowl on his face that looked pleasant compared to that worn by the burly Ness, seated on the other side of the chairman.

I began: "We'll forget what my old workmate just said. We were

good friends and good comrades in the Albion, and I'm sure we will be again. What we must consider is something more important than a remark made in anger. We have to ask ourselves: has this organisation that you've been persuaded to join anything to do with Marxism? The answer to that is an emphatic no! Keep the workers passive with the promise of happy days in the far-off future—nothing could better serve the interest of the capitalists and the warmongers. But, these chaps say, we've got to get the workers to think. True enough, but how do you get them to think? Not by telling them to remain passive and submitting to whatever conditions the bosses care to impose on them, but by being active and ready to defend what they have gained and to fight for more. Wages, working conditions, bullying managers and foremen—and all this terrible sacrifice of young workers in a war for imperialist grab and greed. Do nothing, they say! Wait on the revolution. You'll never get a revolution by waiting for it, only by fighting for it. And by fighting you'll build up and strengthen the forces that will enable you to overthrow the capitalist class. That—and not passivity—is the teaching of Marx. That is what the class war means!"

When I finished, T.L. tried to make a come-back. But he failed to impress them. If I had called on them to follow me out of the hall, I'm certain a considerable number would have accepted the invitation. But I knew I'd put paid to the W.I.I.U. and that it was now a question of rebuilding again.

A few of the boys gathered around and we set ourselves the task of getting things going. Before long we had quite a fair representation from the factories at our Saturday afternoon meetings. The campaign for the release of John McLean helped us quite a lot; so did the Women's Peace Crusade.

Two great events had taken place while we were in prison. James Connolly with his Citizens' Army and Padraic Pearse with a small force of the Irish Republican Army had celebrated Easter 1916 by coming out on the streets of Dublin and there, in the face of the power of British imperialism, proclaimed the establishment of the Irish Republic. The other event was the February Revolution in Russia in 1917 which had ended the rule of the Romanovs for good and all. These events stimulated greater activity than ever throughout Glasgow and the Clyde. On May Day there was a truly tremendous workers' march from George Square down Renfield Street and along Argyle Street to Glasgow Green. Greetings were sent from many

platforms to "Free Russia" while speaker after speaker expressed sympathy with the Irish Republic, and indignation at the execution of the badly-wounded James Connolly. A resolution was passed calling for a public holiday on the 1st May; May Day in Glasgow had always been celebrated on the first Sunday in the month.

The following Sunday we called a meeting of shop stewards to consider the situation in England and to prepare for a great demonstration in St. Andrew's Hall the same night. News was filtering through that in London, Birmingham, Manchester and Sheffield strikes were taking place against the "comb-out". This was the name some smart-Alec in the government had given to a Bill or Regulation lifting the exemption from military service, which had hitherto applied to all engineering workers, from certain categories of young engineers whose jobs, it was said, could be filled by older men or dilutees. Comb-out? the workers were asking; are we to be treated as lice? Apart from the name, which aroused strong objections, the principle was considered wrong. Young lads who were just finishing or had just finished their apprenticeship were to be taken out of the industry without the opportunity of getting a job as fully-fledged journeymen. This regulation applied only to England, but we knew that if they got away with it there they would try to extend it up our way.

At the afternoon meeting it was decided that I should go to London. But we agreed that I should go by the night train so that I could attend the evening meeting first. We all knew there was going to be a tremendous turn-out and that there would be more outside than inside St. Andrew's Hall. Ramsay MacDonald and Robert Smillie were to be the principal speakers inside the Hall, demonstrating their joy at the revolution in Russia and promising unfailing support to the workers in the great tasks that lay ahead. I was to be the main speaker outside.

It has been remarked by many people that, when the atmosphere has been favourable, I have been able to arouse an audience of workers to a high pitch of enthusiasm. Not so many have noticed the extent to which the workers arouse me (though one did say to me after a mass meeting: "You and the audience just pass the ball back and forth to one another").

Well, they certainly passed the ball plenty to me that evening. I went from the meeting to the station with every nerve a-tingle. I found a corner seat in a third-class carriage, and tried to settle down.

It wasn't possible. I got out into the corridor, and after a spell of walking back and forth, with my pipe going like a factory chimney, I went back into the compartment. In a minute or two I was up again. So it went on. I spent most of the night outside the compartment and arrived in London tired and cold. After a light breakfast I made contact with the shop stewards who were leading a partial strike in one or two factories. The reception I got didn't warm me much. It soon became clear that they had little heart for trying to extend the strike. I assured them the Clyde stewards would do everything possible to bring the Clyde out in their support if they would only hold on, but while they expressed appreciation of this they gave me to understand that their movement was in its infancy and they had very little experience. I left them and took a train for Birmingham; the situation there was not much better. In Sheffield and Manchester there were some very good and keen stewards but there too the strikes were only partial, and while they had tried hard to make them general they were baulked in one or two factories by official influence. In Sheffield I met for the first time George Fletcher, a master-baker, a clear-headed and resolute socialist who was an active agitator and ready to help the shop stewards' committee in all possible ways.

I got back to Glasgow on the Wednesday and reported to our own committee that evening. I told them I thought the strike would already be over while we were talking, but that we must get the Clyde prepared for action if the fight developed. Within a couple of days of my return, the London and Birmingham men were back at work. The others held on a little longer and succeeded in holding off the "combing-out" process.

With all the meetings that were taking place, pledging support for "Free Russia", the question of setting up Workers' and Soldiers' Councils in Britain soon came to the fore. This resulted in the calling of a National Convention, in Leeds, for the setting up of such Councils. The Convention was sponsored by the I.L.P., the B.S.P., which had got rid of its warmongering Hyndman wing, and one or two other anti-war associations. Snowden and MacDonald were among the principal speakers. I was sitting with a "Left-wing" Marxist in the body of the hall—none other than Ernest Bevin. At that time Bevin was a cloth-capped dockers' leader, and the dockers didn't count for much in MacDonald's scheme of things. The leaders of the big craft unions were the men he played up to; for Bevin he didn't even have a friendly look. Herbert Morrison, MacDonald's faithful lackey, spurned

the unimportant dockers' leader as his master did. He paid for this later on; it was the one-time despised docker who kept him out of the leadership of the Labour Party and thereby thwarted his ambitious desire to become Prime Minister of Great Britain.

That convention was on June 3. On June 4 the order of deportation was withdrawn from our stewards, and it was whispered that John McLean was going to be released. What had happened? The Glasgow City Council had decided to give Lloyd George the Freedom of the City. The year before, Lloyd George had knocked out Asquith in mistake for the Kaiser (to whom he had promised "a knock-out blow") and was now top man in Britain. What a roar went up! What a protest that they should contemplate such an action instead of fighting for the Freedom of the City for McLean, Kirkwood and the others. The city Fathers got into a proper stew; they advised the Prime Minister that he would have to make a gesture of some sort, or there was no saying what might happen. So the deportees were brought back.

June 29 was the day fixed for the big event. We did not call for a one-day strike, but all the different organisations made preparations for the greatest possible mass demonstration "to chase Lloyd George out of Glasgow". Rumour got round that we were going to kidnap him. It was only a rumour, but what a day! Masses of workers knocked off at breakfast time and made their way to the centre of the city. Lloyd George had to be got to the City Chambers and from the City Chambers to St. Andrew's Hall. Soldiers in full battle order; mounted, foot and special police lined the route. Never before had a Freedom been granted to a subject so hemmed in—it's a wonder he was able to breathe. As the carriages crawled along, the police forcing a way through the shouting crowd, we couldn't even see the little fellow; his protectors blotted him out. As they turned towards the entrance to the Hall, old, white-haired Mrs. Reid, like Barbara Fretchie, was leaning out of her top-story window, waving a huge Red Flag. That was the last sight he saw before, surrounded by his costly escort, he passed through the entrance. I'll bet that there never was a man so glad to get out of the city of which he had just received the "Freedom".

But that didn't finish the demonstration. The masses were in a fighting mood, and McLean had not yet been released. So threatening did the situation become that the police superiors approached us and told us that McLean was back in Glasgow, in Duke Street prison. Certain formalities had to be gone through, they said, but he was sure to be out the following day.

When he did come out, there was another tremendous demonstration. "Now all our children have returned and are come home again. . . ." Campaigns were going strong in the factories; the women were setting an example to the men by the colour of their parades. Soon MacDonald was to make another visit to Glasgow; it had been decided to hold district conferences of the Workers' and Soldiers' Convention. The Co-operative hall, St. Mungo, had been booked for the occasion, a Saturday afternoon. The Press began to show signs of hysteria, particularly in the letter columns. Soon it was said that the wounded soldiers were coming out from Stobhill Hospital to break the meeting up. The Co-operative directors got into a patriotic panic and cancelled the letting of the hall. When this news was conveyed to us a week ahead of the date, we decided to abandon the idea of a conference and to have a monster demonstration instead, in the street outside St. Mungo's. On the Friday afternoon, the Clyde Workers' Committee, which was giving full support to the Convention Committee and had been given the responsibility of providing stewards for the conference, was invited to Willie Stewart's office. There we met Ramsay MacDonald, Jimmie Maxton and others. Mac was very nervous—and not without reason: a similar conference had been called at the Brotherhood Hall in London, where the protests had been louder far than in Glasgow. A gang of Australian soldiers had broken into the hall there and battered all and sundry. MacDonald had caught it pretty rough. We reassured him, saying that we would have a strong body of stewards all around the meeting just as a precaution, though we were certain that nothing untoward would happen. But what about the wounded soldiers? he wanted to know. We told him it was just a bluff; in fact the Discharged and Demobilised Soldiers' and Sailors' organisation would have a contingent participating in the demonstration: they had been with us from the time of their return.

The demonstration went off with gusto. MacDonald got a tremendous reception, and not a whisper of opposition anywhere. He and Wheatley contented themselves with expressions of joy at the overthrow of the Czar and the emergence of "Free Russia". I drew attention to the fact that there was a dual form of government, the Soviets representing the workers and soldiers, the Provisional Government representing the bourgeoisie, which meant that the revolution was far from being accomplished. But the best, and strongest, speech came from my pal Manny Shinwell. He too was pleased at the overthrow of the Czar, but he wanted to see the same thing happen here. He tore

into the robber parasites in this country and left them stark naked before the eyes of a thoroughly receptive audience.

"They're squirming now," he exclaimed, "but before we're finished we'll make their teeth rattle!" (Good old Manny; he sent me a very nice letter regretting that he could not be with me in St. Andrew's Halls for my 80th birthday but saying nothing will keep him away from my 90th.)

The demonstration sent MacDonald's spirit soaring sky-high. He had come to the meeting not a little nervous; he left it like Alexander, "looking for new worlds to conquer".

A little later, when E. D. Morel came out of prison (he had served six months for sedition—which means saying or writing something the ruling class doesn't like) he and MacDonald came back to Glasgow to speak at a meeting in the Metropole Theatre. The theatre was packed but there was, as usual, a far bigger crowd outside. It so inspired MacDonald that in a sort of pious moment he declaimed: "Oh, it is good for the soul to visit Glasgow!" The "extreme Left" were his dearest and best comrades.

Sir Harold Nicolson tells us, in his *life of King George V*, how that worthy was disturbed when he learned that he had to give the "green light" to a socialist Premier; but when Ramsay MacDonald appeared before him, he began by assuring the monarch that there wasn't a more loyal and devoted subject in the realm than himself. "But," complained George V, "you spoke at a meeting two weeks ago where 'The Red Flag' was sung." "That was the extremists," MacDonald told him. "We'll deal with them." That was in 1924. In 1925, at the Labour Party Conference in Liverpool, at which I was a delegate (for the last time), he, Snowden and others got a resolution passed banning the "extremists"—the Communists—from any participation in the Labour Party, which meant that the trade unions no longer had the freedom to choose who should be their delegates. So much for the soul that was cleansed and revived by the extremists in Glasgow!

But not only MacDonald felt and responded to the great surging movement in Glasgow in 1917-18. Here is the *Herald's* point of view:

Yes, Glasgow is a tonic. If the Labour Party is weak, if the rest of civilisation is on the road to decay, we have still got Glasgow. The movement in Glasgow ought to float itself as a limited company to supply backbone to the rest of the United Kingdom.

The most amazing comment of all, however, considering what he later degenerated into, came from Pat (later Sir Patrick) Dollan. Who that knew him in his later years would ever have thought he could have written:

There is general discontent in Socialist and Labour circles (in Glasgow) at what seems to be the apathy of the official Socialist and Labour bodies in this country towards our Bolshevik comrades. Their methods may not be genteel, but they get there, and their aim is our aim. They are out to smash capitalism and imperialism, and so are we, and we should not stand still while they are being attacked.

At the time he wrote that, he seemed to be making an effort to become as staunch a socialist as his wife, Agnes. She, with Helen Crawford and the Women's Peace Crusade, made a march on the City Chambers, distributing an "illegal" leaflet in front of the police—and even to some of the police as well. The women forced their way into the building, and the police had a really tough time trying to get them out. Word spread around that several of them had been arrested, and this brought out new, and very threatening, demonstrations. It was in this explosive atmosphere that at the end of January 1918 Sir Auckland Geddes came to Glasgow to address a meeting in the City Hall on behalf of the government's "Manpower Bill".

Sir A. Geddes and the Clyde Workers' Committee. Sir L. Macassey and the Clyde Workers' Committee. Trouble in Belfast. May Day, 1918.

THE City Hall was packed to the doors with one of the liveliest bodies of shop stewards and workers we had ever gathered together. Songs and slogans almost lifted the roof, while old McGill went from row to row selling a special number of *The Socialist* with a coloured cartoon on its front page, showing barbed wire hung with torn and tattered clothing and what was left of soldiers; it was entitled "A Bundle of Bloody Rags", a phrase that was credited to Churchill. The platform party consisted of a group of patriotic trade union officials. Willie Lawson, of the Joiners, was in the chair.

As soon as the platform party appeared the "Red Flag" was sung with the utmost fervour by the audience; the platform waited with expressions of deep gloom as verse after verse, with chorus, was rendered with suitable emphasis on such lines as:

It suits today the weak and base
Whose minds are fixed on pelf and place
To cringe before the rich man's frown
And haul the sacred emblem down.

The song was followed by cheer after cheer for peace and socialism.

Willie Lawson got to his feet. He didn't even try to speak. He knew it was impossible for his voice to penetrate the din. I was sitting at the front with other members of the Clyde Workers' Committee. Will Fyffe (the engineer, not the Scottish comedian) walked over, put his hands on the platform and spoke to the chairman.

"If you want a meeting you'll have to invite Willie Gallacher to take over," he shouted.

"We don't want Gallacher," snapped Willie Lawson.

"All right," replied Will with a shrug of his shoulders. "Then you won't get a meeting."

The trade union officials had organised the meeting to give Geddes the opportunity of putting the government's case. We, however, had come with the definite purpose of taking it over to put our case against the government and against what we called the Manslaughter Bill. So

I sat there in my front seat and waited. I didn't have to wait long. After several ineffectual attempts to be heard, Willie Lawson signalled to Will Fyffe to ask me to come up. It was complete capitulation. I went through the side door and on to the platform. When I appeared, what a change! I signalled Geddes to come alongside me as cheers ran round the hall.

"This is amazing," he said to me. "I've never experienced anything like it." When the cheering died down I told the lads that Geddes would speak for half an hour, after which there would be questions followed by a resolution. The resolution was to be moved by Arthur McManus and seconded by Jimmie Maxton "... who is now," I said, "working as a plater's labourer and will therefore speak as an ordinary worker. Agreed?" "Agreed!" came back the loud response. "Go ahead," I told Geddes, "but be careful!"

He went ahead. But twice I had to get up and hold the lads in. Once was when he tried to play up to them by saying: "You know, when I heard you singing 'The Red Flag' my heart was with you," and the second time when he remarked: "Believe me, I understand your problems. My wife has to stand in the queues just the same as yours". That one just about burst the barriers.

There is one thing to be said in the speaker's favour: he never once mentioned the Manpower Bill. Before his half-hour was up he was ready to sit down, relieved to have got through at all in such a hostile atmosphere.

When question time came, someone asked about the secret treaties. This was a puzzler for him. He looked at me. "What secret treaties?" he asked. "Have you not read Morel's book?" I enquired. "No," he said. "I don't know anything about secret treaties!"

I called a young lad up to the platform. He was a little chap, not more than five feet in height. McGlyn was his name. That morning he had received his calling-up papers and I had asked him to bring them along to the City Hall. I asked him to stand alongside the six-footer Geddes.

"Now, Mr. Geddes," I challenged. "I want you to tell this audience that you are going to send this little lad out to the front to defend you from the Germans."

He looked down at young McGlyn. "What age are you?" he asked the lad.

"Eighteen," replied the little fellow.

"No!" shouted Geddes. "Not till he's nineteen!"

The roar of laughter that came sweeping up to the platform nearly knocked him off his feet.

That was enough. I called on Arthur McManus. He was a clear and fluent speaker, and made some fine points against the "hateful, wasteful war" and about the urgent necessity of fighting to bring it to a close. Then he moved:

- (1) That having heard the case for the government as stated by Sir Auckland Geddes, this meeting pledges itself to oppose the government to the very uttermost in its "Manpower" call;
- (2) That we insist on and bind ourselves to take action and enforce the declaration of an immediate armistice on all fronts;
- (3) And the expressed opinion of the workers from now on is that our attitude should be to do nothing at all in support of carrying on the war but to do everything we can to bring the war to a conclusion.

When he finished, Arthur McManus got a great reception. Jimmie Maxton got an even greater one when he seconded the resolution. With passion, *softened by a touch of humour*, he made a powerful appeal for all of us to work unceasingly for peace. He sat down to a big ovation.

"What do you think of it?" I asked Geddes. "I don't know what to say," he admitted. "I never imagined anything like this."

"Watch this!" I said, with a grin. "All in favour of the resolution raise your hands!" A sea of hands went up from area and balcony, not a gap anywhere. "Down!" I called, and then: "Any against?" Slowly, very slowly, the single hands of five officials went up.

"There you are," I turned to Geddes. "There's the answer of the Clyde to the Manpower Bill." He could only keep muttering: "Amazing, amazing!"

And what, you may ask, were the trade union officials doing, sitting there on the platform while all this was going on? Nothing! No one in the hall paid the slightest attention to them. The meeting finished with all on their feet, singing "The Red Flag" again. Then we mustered outside in Candleriggs, marched down Argyle Street, up Renfield Street and along George Street to George Square, where the demonstration ended.

Wheatley came to see me one evening after this had happened. We chatted for a bit and then he said, his eyes twinkling behind his thick glasses: "You know, Willie, you fellows are making history."

"Maybe, John," I answered, "but it's working-class history and working-class history isn't popular with bourgeois historians." John agreed, and said we would have to get our own historians. There is need for them: the history of the Clyde movement has been greatly distorted; attention has been directed away from the splendid struggle of the men and women of Glasgow and the Clyde to the handful of I.L.P. parliamentary representatives; yet these contributed very little to the campaigns that brought such huge forces into the struggle for peace and workers' control in industry. It is important that this side of our work should be understood today, for there are reactionary trade union officials who still do their utmost to weaken the power of the workers in industry and persuade them not to use their united strength.

Sir Auckland Geddes was not long away from Glasgow before another of the government's wonder-workers arrived. But Sir Lynden Macassey, Director of Shipyard Labour, had not come to address a public meeting. He had come with a whole series of proposals for tying up the workers in the shipyards which he wanted the Allied Trades Committee to accept and put into operation. The Committee called a general meeting of trade union officials, which unanimously rejected all his proposals. He had to return to London with nothing in his pocket; but he was determined to get his regulations for the shipyards pushed through come hell or high water. At the next meeting of the Committee I suggested to the members that opposition to the government's proposals was not enough, that Macassey would push his regulations through unless action were taken to defeat him. What action? they wanted to know. Let us draw up proposals of our own, I said, and fight Macassey and the government on the basis of these; we would get the full support of the workers if we did this. One or two members of the Committee were reluctant to commit themselves, but I got specially strong support from the chairman, Willie Lawson, and from John McKenzie of the General Workers. John had come from Ballachulish to Glasgow and had worked his way up to become Scottish organiser of the General Workers' Union. He was a tall, carefully-dressed man with a strong intelligent face. But on a committee of craft union officials he, a labourer, was a sort of Ishmael; he drew to me because I had always made it clear that I had no craft bias. After some discussion we got a substantial majority for facing Macassey with our own proposals, and McKenzie, the chairman and I were given responsibility for preparing them and meeting Macassey in London (as the latter had suggested before he left). We got a

document drawn up in two copies, one for the secretary of the Committee and one to be taken to London. We sent word to Macassey that we were prepared to meet him for further discussion; if he took it for granted that we meant discussion on *his* document, that was his look-out.

We travelled by night train, first class, at the government's expense. We had the compartment to ourselves, and when the train started Willie and I witnessed a sartorial performance peculiar to John McKenzie. Carefully-dressed? Consider: he had on a suit that for texture and fit could not be bettered. He opened his case and took out a spare pair of trousers; with these over his arm he made his way to the toilet, returning with the spare pants on, and his razor-edged best ones nicely folded.

"What do you think of that, Willie?" I asked. "Very sensible," commented Willie Lawson. Mac then explained, with the lovely lilt of the Highlands in his fine baritone voice, how sore night travel was on clothes, particularly on trousers, with which we readily agreed.

I told Willie Lawson that we were depending on him: no discussion of Macassey's regulations—present ours and refuse to consider anything else. "You stand firm and he'll be stymied. He won't dare to force his own, with the shipyard workers solidly behind our proposals."

Willie had his mind made up. "These proposals of ours," he said, taking them out of his case, "are far superior to his. I'd never dream of wasting time with his."

Well, we got to London and went to Lyons Corner House for breakfast. At the appointed time we made our way to the hotel in the Strand where Macassey had his suite of offices. He had been a dilution commissioner; now he was commissioner for labour in the shipyards: amazing how these guys jumped from job to job. We were shown into a very well-furnished room and had just got settled down into deep armchairs when the commissioner and two secretaries or deputies entered. The commissioner came forward beaming, shook hands with the three of us and invited us to sit down.

"Have you considered the regulations I submitted to your committee?" he opened.

"We have not," Willie told him. "We didn't consider them worth wasting time on. We've got our own proposals. Here they are."

He passed the document over to Macassey. "But this is out of the question," he snapped. "I understood you were coming to London to discuss what I had presented to you when I was in Glasgow."

"Quite so," said Willie in his quiet way. "That's what we want to do. You came to Glasgow and told us you wanted to discuss the best method of increasing output in the shipyards. These proposals of ours are directed towards that end, and we are mandated to discuss these and these alone."

Macassey was no longer the pleasant bureaucrat. "I can't accept these." He handed the document back to Willie. Then he glared at me. "What is the meaning of this?"

I shrugged my shoulders. "You've heard our chairman," I told him, "he speaks for the Allied Trades' Committee; you must deal with him."

"If you're not going to discuss my regulations there is nothing to be gained by continuing." He was blazing mad.

"If you won't discuss our proposals, we agree that there can be no use going on," said Willie. "But remember," he went on, giving him a serious look, "these proposals of ours will get unanimous support from the shipyard workers on the Clyde. If you refuse to discuss them and try to put something of your own across, you'll find yourself up against a blank wall."

Macassey glared at us one after another. Then, "Good day, gentlemen!" He got up with his two stooges and stumped out of the room.

"Willie," I said, "you were great!"

"I agree with that," added John.

"I'll treasure this document," Willie said. (I wonder where it is now? It would be good to have it, for it stopped for good the attempt to impose a set of slavish restrictions on the shipyard workers and on the unions.)

At the meeting when we reported back to the Committee, one tribute after another was offered to Willie by the members. Even those who had refused to vote for our document joined with the rest in complimenting him for the resolute stand he had made. It was the first time the "official" committee had scored against the government and its agents. Their strength came from the knowledge that they could rely on the solid backing of the men in the yards.

John McLean had been appointed Soviet Consul for Scotland, and he and I were conducting propaganda campaigns all over the West of Scotland and the mining areas. Then I got an invitation from the Belfast I.L.P. to speak at three meetings, Saturday evening February 9, 1918, and the Sunday afternoon and evening following. The resolution we had passed at the Geddes meeting was made the focus of a con-

certed attack on me by the Belfast Press. An attempt was made to get the meetings banned. "Loyal Ulster Protestants" would never tolerate a traitor in their midst, it was said. When I reached Belfast I found that the three meetings were to be held in the Engineers' Hall. On the Saturday evening when we mounted the platform, two things were noticeable: the chairman was very nervous, and there was an ominous silence in the packed hall. I had come across from Stranraer to Larne, the ship sailing without lights to avoid attracting enemy submarines. It had been a bit eerie, but I admit I had been thinking more of "Loyal Ulstermen" than of submarines. Now here I was, wondering what was going to happen. The chairman, a quiet, inexperienced lad and a Catholic, got up. He was a bit slow getting his voice to function. A big husky lad at the back got to his feet and beat the chairman to the punch.

"Before this meeting opens," he shouted. "I want Mr. Gallacher to tell us is he loyal to the King?"

The chairman could only gasp. "I'll handle this," I said to him. He sat down and I got up.

"That's a foolish question," I answered the big fellow. "You know that I'm a revolutionary socialist and that my loyalty is to the working class."

That got them going all right. One after another got up. They shouted all kinds of questions at me, based on what the Press had been saying. I shouted back and gave, I think, as good as I was getting. After quite a time at this, with me battering away at them and some of the audience beginning to cheer, the big fellow got up and called all true Belfast men to leave the hall. He, and six or seven of his associates, then marched solemnly out of hall.

If anyone cares to go to the trouble of looking up the Belfast Press for Monday, February 11, 1918, they will find close on two columns of what they shouted and what I shouted back, but not a word about the hour's speech I made to a very sympathetic audience.

But if they couldn't get me one way, they could try another. When we got to the Engineers' Hall on the Sunday afternoon there was a crowd of workers gathered at the door; a notice was pinned on it, stating that the let had been cancelled. There was nothing left for us to do but make use of the much smaller I.L.P. Hall. This, however, had an ante-room that looked into the hall, as well as a staircase which led straight to the door. Between these we got the meeting assembled. At the afternoon meeting a lad from one of the Belfast yards, who

said he was an Orangeman, expressed his pleasure at having heard my speech, and said he regretted that the Orangemen of the evening before had not waited to hear what I had to say. The evening meeting was the same, never a murmur of dissent from anyone. (I may as well mention here that in 1919 Davy Kirkwood and I went over to Belfast again and spoke in the City Square to cheering thousands—and no one gave a thought to the King.)

But it wasn't only Belfast that was calling me in February 1918. In Sheffield the shop stewards' movement was doing a fine job, while George Fletcher, the baker, was right to the fore with anti-war and socialist propaganda. There was another tough supporter in Sheffield; Dr. Billy Chandler, the foremost surgeon in the Royal Hospital. He had booked the Engineers' Institute for the winter season, and invited anti-war speakers from all over the country. John McLean and I were often invited to speak at these meetings. I was there just after the Belfast visit, and here is a report that appeared in the *Herald*:

Willie Gallacher, chairman of the Clyde Workers' Committee, was in Sheffield at the weekend and had a fine reception from a crowded propaganda meeting on Sunday evening. In the afternoon he spoke at a conference of shop stewards and informed them as to the situation on the Clyde.

A couple of weeks ago, he had four successful meetings in Belfast, although the capitalist Press tried to create the impression that the Glasgow "Bolshevik" met with hostility.

The only thing wrong with that is that it gives me a meeting too many in Belfast. But it's correct about the "capitalist Press"—all manner of slander and abuse, never a report of a meeting however massive and enthusiastic it might have been. We had no Press of our own. We had discussed the possibility of producing another paper in place of our suppressed *Worker*, but we couldn't get a printer. The S.L.P. did not actually refuse to print for us but pleaded that we should not ask them. They had been raided in 1916 and had almost lost their press; another raid would finish them. There was so much to write about if we had only possessed the means.

A meeting of the May Day Committee, faced with the resolution we had passed the previous year, had to consider the calling of the demonstration on Wednesday, May 1. There were some reluctant trade union officials who pessimistically declared that the workers would not come out in such numbers on a weekday as on the first

Sunday in the month. We told them we'd have more out on the 1st than had ever been seen marching on a Sunday. The Press, which had always had a bit of a sneer at the Sunday May Day, now pleaded with the workers to stick to Sunday and everybody would be happy. There was even a suggestion about banning the demonstration, but the authorities knew that a ban would not keep the workers inside the factories. Hundreds of branches of various organisations signified their intention of participating. So widespread was the feeling for May 1 that the Co-operative Wholesale Society not only declared its intention of joining in, but gave all its employees the day off without loss of pay. The Clyde Workers' Committee sent out a call to all shop stewards, to see not only that the factories were closed, but that the maximum number of workers turned up for the march.

The demonstration exceeded the expectations of the most optimistic of us. I'm prepared to say that there had never been a May Day gathering within thousands of it. George Square and all the surrounding streets were packed with cheering crowds, and all ablaze with colour. The Co-operative lorries filled with children were a sight to gladden the hearts of all who saw them; they were cheered all along the way by the many thousands who filled the sidewalks. We marched with great pride, bands playing, and workers singing and slogan-shouting whenever there was a pause in the music.

One of the slogans was—yes, believe it or not—"Release John McLean!" At the beginning of April his Russian secretary had been arrested and deported to Russia and a few days later, on April 15, McLean was arrested himself and charged with seditious speeches. He was remitted to the High Court and held without bail. From Glasgow Green large sections of the May Day demonstrators marched to Duke Street prison where he was being held, and made a demonstration at the gates.

On May 9, McLean was brought to trial. A number of police witnesses gave "evidence" against him. A "patriotic" jury found him guilty. A "patriotic" Judge sentenced him to five years' penal servitude. But the authorities realised they had overdone it, and in order to help quieten the agitation, they let it be known that he would be given privileges properly granted only to Civil or First Division detainees. Such a concession was unknown in the case of a prisoner sentenced to penal servitude. He went back to Peterhead, where he had been in 1916.

We decided that as John McLean had been chosen as the prospective

Socialist and Labour candidate for Gorbals, the sitting member, George N. Barnes, who was a member of the government, should not be allowed to speak in Glasgow. As a matter of fact, he should not have been allowed to speak anywhere. When Arthur Henderson was sacked from Lloyd George's government, Barnes had taken his Labour colleague's job; victimisation meant nothing in the circles in which Mr. Barnes, formerly an engineer, was now moving. At the beginning of August he came to the city. At his first meeting in the Electrium Cinema, the storm broke as soon as he and his few supporters came on to the platform. After it had died down a bit, Phil McEwen and I walked down the aisle and mounted the platform. Barnes was standing with his hand on a small table, stolid—as one of the lads said afterwards—"as a hielan' coo". At our appearance, Barnes and his supporters made for the platform exit. But Phil McEwen was blocking the door, while the audience cheered vociferously.

"Hold them there a minute," I said to Phil. Then: "Mr. Barnes, I just want to tell you, and I am speaking for the shop stewards of the Clyde, and McEwen there represents the discharged soldiers, that you, as the member for Gorbals, cannot be allowed to speak until the Socialist candidate John McLean is also free to speak. That's all. Let them go, Phil!" McEwen let them go, but although Barnes made a couple more attempts he could not get a hearing.

The *Herald* came out with the following bleat:

George Barnes has experienced a very rough weekend in the city of Glasgow. Discharged soldiers, trade unionists, socialists and others all united together to make it impossible for him to address his constituents in a peaceable manner. We regret very much indeed that he was not allowed to enjoy perfect freedom of speech.

The *Herald* utterly failed to realise that this treatment of Barnes was an important factor in the campaign for the release of his opponent. For it was becoming clear that the war was drawing to a bloody close, and the pundits were preparing to spring an election as soon as it was over. John McLean was the nominee of the British Socialist Party for the Gorbals. All the other Glasgow constituencies had members of the Independent Labour Party; these latter had the endorsement of the executive committee of the Labour Party, but such endorsement was denied McLean.

The Clyde Workers' Committee was not all that interested in parliament or parliamentary candidates. It was giving all its attention

to what was going to happen when the war ended and masses of men were demobilised. The 6 a.m. start to the working day was an abomination we were determined to finish; instead of a 54-hour week we decided that a 40-hour week was sufficient for any man, and we started campaigning accordingly. This was a very necessary and valuable campaign, but we made a grave mistake in ignoring the parliamentary struggle and the advantage that membership of parliament could provide for genuine revolutionary socialists. All the Glasgow seats with the exception of Gorbals fell into the hands of the I.L.P. and at a subsequent election Gorbals as well; and that paved the way for the decline and ultimate collapse of the movement in Glasgow and the Clyde.

Although I was not prepared to stand as a candidate, however, I had all along been close to John McLean, and so when the Gorbals committee asked me to act as his deputy I agreed to do so. Then, just after we had celebrated the first anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution on November 7, the first world war came to an end on November 11. I was on my way to Barrow-in-Furness when the longed-for news broke and I didn't witness the Armistice Day scenes. From Barrow I went on to London to attend a one-day Labour Party conference as a delegate from my union. J. R. Clynes came to the conference with a message from Lloyd George and a plea to the Labour Party to continue in the coalition. George Bernard Shaw made a hard-hitting speech, in which he exposed the shifty character of the Prime Minister; he ended up with his finger pointing at the miserable specimen who had come as Lloyd George's spokesman. "Go back," he exclaimed, "and tell Lloyd George nothing doing!"

What a roar of laughter went up from the massed delegates! What a wretched figure the humble messenger cut! I made a short speech. It was very well received while I was pleading for a complete break with capitalism and for international unity. But I couldn't resist having a crack at J. H. Thomas. There had been one or two references to revolution, and Jimmy was very anxious that no one should contemplate anything other than a peaceful revolution.

"It's all right," I said, "for Jimmy Thomas to plead for a peaceful revolution, but he'll find when we get to that stage that the strongest argument will be a six-inch howitzer and the man at the business end of it is going to win the argument."

The next day's Press fastened on to that, and respectable candidates all over the country hastened to repudiate me. I got several abusive

letters, one of which I used to show around—until I lost it. The writer, who gave his name and address, pointed out that violence could get us nowhere. The war with all its sacrifice and horrors should have been enough bloodshed for anyone, he said. He quoted various pacifists and poured scorn on those who were too weak-minded to appreciate the value of their teaching. But what was the use of talking to someone with a perverted mind such as mine? "A bastard like you," he ended up, "ought to be taken out and shot!" Honest to God (as the Bishop of Woolwich entitles his book), that's how the pacifist ended up.

Despite my *faux pas* I got quite a welcome at a dinner party in the House of Commons on the evening of the conference. There were two dinners, held in neighbouring rooms. The one I was at had the pacifist or semi-pacifist section of the Labour leadership; the other was the war element, mostly the trade union leaders. I sat well down towards the end of the table. MacDonald, as chairman, was sitting at the top. When we had finished eating he came down to where I was and, with his hand on my shoulder, chided: "Willie, you've been in here all this time and you haven't shaken my hand!" This was typical of MacDonald. He was looking to the future and he knew I had considerable influence with the Glasgow lads; he would have to depend on them to a large extent for swinging the vote for leadership of the parliamentary Party when this arose. Anyone who could be of use to him, he used, but he would discard them without a thought when their usefulness ended.

When it was all over I was going to take the midnight train home. But I was persuaded to wait over until the morning, as the I.L.P. had booked a whole floor in the Anderton Hotel, Fleet Street, and several of the rooms were unoccupied. I accepted the invitation, and walked all the way with Bruce Glasier. When we reached the hotel we entered a large sitting-room, or drawing-room, on the first floor. Dick Wallhead was there, Jim Houston and a whole lot of others, men and women. They were gathered in front of Katherine Bruce Glasier who was, as it were, holding court. She was now a Theosophist and was babbling away about the Transcendental. Some of the others kept glancing at me, the Marxist, to see how I was taking it. But I kept silent. Then she addressed me personally, with a remark about the barrenness of materialism. I told her I got along very well and had a happy and interesting life without any worry about the skies. Here Katherine proved to be well ahead of the Bishop of Woolwich. God wasn't "up there", she told me severely. God was all around us.

God was beauty and truth. I could only shake my head; she had me dizzy. Then she got practical. Take a rose, she said. What gives it its beauty? It's not the form, it's not the scent, it's not the colour; all these you can get apart from a growing rose. There is inherent in it something that gives meaning to these material factors, and that something is beauty and beauty is God.

"Do you understand what I mean?" she asked. "I think I do," I answered. She looked pleased. Then I committed another *faux pas*.

"Now suppose we apply the same reasoning to a rotten egg?"

There was a silence that could be felt. Katherine got to her feet. "Ladies," she said, "it is time to retire." Bruce went with her. I left in the morning without seeing either of them.

McLean's election campaign. Holiday at Rothesay with McLean. Strike for the 40-hour week. The fight in George Square. Prison again.

IMMEDIATELY after the conference ended, early in the afternoon, Kirkwood and I went to the Labour Party headquarters, by appointment, to meet several of the officers and to make an effort to get MacLean accepted as an official candidate. All our endeavours were in vain. They would not accept him. Why? They didn't consider him a suitable selection. Drop him and put someone else forward, they said, and we'll grant recognition. Nobody but McLean, we replied, and stressed that his record should entitle him to their support. They would not budge; and so we had to leave with the knowledge that although Barnes had not accepted the decision of the conference and had still remained in the government, he would get the support of quite a number of right-wing Labour people in the constituency.

On our return to Glasgow, I had to get started with the election campaign. The first essential was to get the candidate out of prison. We declared war against all government candidates, and stormed their meetings with shouts of "No speeches from you until McLean is allowed to speak!" So noisy was Glasgow becoming that they were forced to yield. On December 2, after serving seven months of a five-year sentence, he was released.

His train from the north came into Buchanan Street early in the evening. We had a horse-drawn, open coach at the station awaiting him. When he arrived he was presented with a large red flag. The lads took the horse out of the shafts as McLean and I got into the coach; they proudly took over the task of hauling the coach out of the station and down Buchanan Street, which was packed from end to end. It was a job to get through that wildly cheering mass of men and women, with John standing up in the coach waving his red flag and shouting above the din. What a night—and what a drive! People were jumping on to the carriage to shake John by the hand. The springs gave way and the bottom of the coach was resting on the axles, but we got across the bridge to Carlton Place where we held a short meeting. After that I got a taxi and took McLean home to Newlands.

But I could see that my comrade was a sick man. When he had gone to Peterhead after his trial he had refused the prison food, insisting that it was being doped. They had arranged for his food to be sent in from outside, but before he came out he had become convinced that dope was being put into that too. Now he was in a high state of nervous excitement, repeating as we went along in the taxi: "We beat them, we beat them! They thought they could finish me but we beat them!" I tried to quieten him, and told him about the campaign we were having in the Gorbals.

"You get a day or two's rest and we'll prepare a great demonstration for your first appearance," I said.

"Right away! Don't waste any time!"

"I'll make arrangements with Jim Gardner tomorrow," I assured him. "Jim's a young lad but he's doing a grand job as election agent." (Jim at that time was a member of the I.L.P. Later he joined the Communist Party and, an active worker in his trade union, was elected General Secretary of the Moulders Union,¹ a post which he occupied with honour until he retired.)

We had two meetings organised for the following Sunday evening, and John insisted on attending them. When he made up his mind there was no use trying to argue with him; he was very strong-willed and dogmatic. One meeting was held in a school, the other in St. Mungo's Hall. It was arranged, at John's wish, that he should speak first in St. Mungo's while I opened up at the school; we were to depart from our respective meetings at the same time, leaving relief speakers to carry on, and exchange platforms.

When I reached St. Mungo's Hall, John was still going strong, with no sign of finishing. I whispered to the Chairman: "Have you reminded him that he's due at the other meeting?" He shook his head; he was obviously too nervous to intervene. I waited about ten minutes, and then passed John a note saying that they were waiting for him at the school. He didn't look at it, just crumpled it up and put it in his pocket. After another wait I approached him and whispered "John! remember your other meeting!" He turned on me, shouting: "For Christ's sake, Gallacher, leave me alone. I'm feeling fine, and nobody needs to tell me what to do!"

And on he went. His energy, his flow of language, his grasp of politics and his wide range of ideas relating to the working class were unsurpassed by any other leader in the movement. It was a great

¹ Later Foundry Workers' Union.

speech, full of very good socialist electioneering, but marred by the sickness that had become firmly embedded in his mind: he kept on introducing the subject of how they had doped his food in prison and how he had got the better of them despite their dirty work. To me it was very painful, though I am sure many of those in the hall accepted the "doping" story as true.

We had a stirring campaign, right up to polling day, with a group of disabled soldiers attending every meeting and taking their places on the platform with John and the rest of us. I tried to get John to lay off the dope stuff and concentrate on the political issues, but in this I had no success. He would get angry and bawl me out, or else knit his brow and say nothing.

Like all other constituencies in Glasgow with the exception of Govan, where the women had played such a tremendous part in the rent fight, we were up against the most mendacious publicity campaign I have ever known in all my years in the working-class movement. "Let the man who won the war win the peace!" "Homes for heroes, with roses round the door!" All the Lloyd George candidates were given the "Lloyd George coupon" and liberals like Pringle and Hogg went down in the general holocaust, as did MacDonald. But we had the additional handicap of the refusal of the Labour Party to endorse our candidate, and along with that the most unscrupulous lies and slanders circulated about him. Despite all that, he polled 7,436 votes as a pronounced revolutionary socialist.

Once the election was over, it was decided that John and his wife, with myself and Jean, should go for a holiday. One of the fine old-timers in the movement, Tom Anderson, lent us a flat in Rothesay, above a draper's shop right on the front. It had a sitting-room, two bedrooms, a kitchenette and a bathroom. It was well-furnished and we settled down to have a restful, pleasant holiday. It was just before the New Year when we got there, and on New Year's Eve two young men arrived in the flat above us, for their holiday. They were nice lads, and I exchanged greetings with them as we passed on the stairs or in the hallway. But John was convinced that they were C.I.D. men, sent down to keep an eye on us. It was a bad business. Between our house and the promenade was a broad stretch of lawn. We had arrived in the dark, and next morning I heard a shout from the front room. "Look at that!" said John, staring wildly out at the grass, on which stood a souvenir cannon, pointing straight at us. We had not noticed it the night before, and nothing I could say would

persuade him that it had not been newly planted there for our benefit.

John and I went golfing—with hired clubs and red balls, as there was snow on the ground. He was always on the move. We would set out for a walk with our wives, but after a minute or two we would leave the two girls walking slowly while we covered several miles and then rejoined them at our lodgings. The day arrived when the young men packed their bags and made for the boat. I saw them go with pleasure; it was obvious to me that they had nothing to do with the C.I.D. But in the early hours of the next morning Jean and I were awakened by the damndest yelling and cursing. A pipe had burst upstairs and water was coming into John's room in a regular flood.

"Now will you believe me!" John was shouting, turning the atmosphere blue with the names he was calling those two young men. "That's what they were sent here for!"

We could not convince him to the contrary. It was not an enjoyable holiday for Jean, nor, I am sure, for Mrs. McLean. We did not stay long after that. Jean wanted home, and the other members of the Clyde Workers' Committee were anxious that I should be on the job that was looming up before the shop stewards.

Our Saturday meetings had been reporting strong support for the 40-hour week, and it was generally known that on January 18 the meeting was to reach a decision on a strike. The feeling was so pronounced that it was reported that a strike call would be answered by men all over Glasgow and the Clyde. This was demonstrated as we sat in session that Saturday afternoon. A delegation from the official Glasgow Trades Council sent in a message to me, as Chairman, asking if they could come in and participate in the strike call. The delegation was led by the chairman of the Council, Manny Shinwell, and the secretary, Willie Shaw. We gave them a hearty welcome and made them acquainted with the situation. After a brief talk it was agreed that we should appoint a joint committee, with Shinwell as chairman, Willie Shaw and Jim Morton as joint secretaries; Tommy Clark and I were to be responsible for the organisational work in connection with the strike. Kirkwood and Messer were also on the joint committee. McManus had gone south and was no longer with us, and Johnny Muir had given up all workshop activity. So had I, for that matter, as far as inside the factory was concerned. I had given up my job in Mile End to conduct the election campaign and at the moment I had too much to do to bother about a job.

"The Joint Committee representing the official and unofficial

sections of the industrial movement. . . ." That's how the strike call opened. Something really "striking" about that strike call; a committee representing both the official and the unofficial. I don't think a similar document could be found in any part of the country.

I have dealt very fully with the strike and the events that followed our declaration in *Revolt on the Clyde* and, although much of what I have written here follows the course of that attempt at working-class history, I want as far as possible to avoid simple repetition. There was, as part of our Clyde history that is fairly well known, a battle with the police in George Square, in the course of which several of us were arrested. But it is not so well known that the police were beaten to a standstill, and that word went flying to London that "the Revolution" had started in Glasgow. The soldiers in Maryhill were confined to barracks, and had they come out there would certainly have been startling events in the city. But while the soldiers were locked in, young conscripts were rushed up from England.

Friday saw the fight in George Square, and on the Saturday Glasgow was like a beleaguered city, with troops, tanks, machine guns and barbed wire all on display. A number of arrests were made.

I had one hell of a time with Big Davie in prison. Let him march head-high to the mountain top and draw the pure Highland air into his expanding chest; let him swing his arms wide and free, with his voice ringing out loud across the glen, and he would be in his element. But a prison cell! God almighty, he wanted to batter the walls down. As one of the warders said to me: "It's a shame, Gallacher, a decent big fellow like that shut up in here."

Shinwell was also a bit depressed. When we heard that the strike, after two weeks out without strike benefit of any kind, was ended, and the men were all back at work, he got the feeling that we were forgotten and had been left to our fate. He imparted this to me in the exercise yard.

"Cheer up, Mannie," I said. The silence rule was not rigidly applied in the exercise yard so long as we didn't start shouting; as an old offender I had to do my best to keep up the spirits of the others. "We'll not be forgotten. Did you ever read Olive Schreiner's story of the ants?"

"No," he answered. "What about the ants?"

"It's really inspiring," I told him. "She says that when an army of ants, millions of them, goes on the march and come to a shallow stream, the foremost ones go fearlessly into the water, fill it up and make a bridge of their bodies so that the army can continue its march.

We're the foremost ants, preparing a bridge across which the workers will march to victory."

I must say that Mannie, for whom my affection has never wavered despite his many shifts, didn't cheer up the least little bit. He merely muttered that he was "no bloody ant".

It was on a Saturday that the High Court took the decision to grant us bail. For Kirkwood, Shinwell, Harry Hopkins and myself, it was £300 apiece—money down. Shinwell's union put up his bail and he was out that afternoon. Likewise with Kirkwood, and I think with Wheatley. When word got to Paisley my friend Stirling, with one or two others, went scouring round the town and by late on Saturday evening they had collected the required amount for me. First thing Sunday morning they were at the prison, where they were told that prisoners were never liberated on a Sunday. But they had the cash, and they weren't going away without me, and so a concession was made and out I went. I have always loved my old home town, but never more than on that Sunday morning as they told me how everyone they had approached had readily contributed what cash they had on hand.

The question of our defence came up for discussion. I told the others I was going to defend myself. I had had enough of Counsel in 1916 and felt I could conduct my own case better than anyone else, however learned. Wheatley was delighted when I told him.

"You've got to get Davie out of this," he told me. "Prison would be terrible for him."

"I'll get him out of it," I promised. "I could see how it was affecting him in Duke Street."

Mannie was quite different. I could kid with him, for I knew that even if he was momentarily depressed he could stand up to whatever was handed out. But Davie was different. The last thing in God's earth for Davie was confinement; in Duke Street I had told him repeatedly that it was only for a short time and they would never get a case against him.

When we appeared in court there were seven of us, and two lads who were not strikers but had taken advantage of the fight with the police to smash a jeweller's window and pinch rings, watches and assorted jewellery. These two had been caught in the act, and there was all the loot on a table in front of us. The Indictment was a dandy. First, two or three of us were charged with "inciting to riot". Secondly, the same, with a number of others, were accused of forming part of a riotous mob. Then came a short paragraph accusing the two lads of

smashing and grabbing. Kirkwood and Shinwell each had his own Counsel; Harry Hopkins and the others were represented by a third. Harry Hopkins was the District Secretary of the Engineers' Union and had participated actively in the strike by decision of his district committee. (When the trial was over, the union's executive sacked him from his job—a rotten bit of business.)

But here was an indictment combining incitement to riot, rioting and smash-and-grab, the last-named quite unconnected with the strike or the strike committee. The Counsel who was working with me came over to the dock, and we decided to make a protest at the third part of the indictment. Kirkwood's man would raise it and then I would say a few words. Counsel made a very dignified objection to the fact that his client, along with the others, was being associated through this third part with common theft; it was really shocking that men whose characters were without reproach should be so associated. Then I put in my pennyworth: I told his lordship that these men who were before him, far from ever thinking of theft, would give their last halfpenny, as in fact some of them had actually done on occasion; and whatever penalty they might have to face if they were found guilty on the first two counts, they protested very strongly at having the charge of theft indirectly levelled against them.

Lord Scott Dickson, who was on the bench, immediately expressed his agreement with us. He said that it was a serious charge on which we were being tried, but he was sure that no one would question the strict honesty of all of us concerned with the first two charges. He ordered the third charge to be expunged from the indictment. This being done, there was no charge against the two lads, and they were told to leave the court. They did so, in such a hurry that they forgot to ask for the jewellery that was cluttering up the table. The Lord Advocate could have got a separate indictment against them, but he never did. They were lucky to be brought in along with us.

In the cross-examination of the police witnesses, I managed to confuse them on what they had alleged as having been said by Kirkwood. "You heard me speak?" I would ask.

"Yes."

"Now, think carefully. Don't you remember me saying such and such?"

A little bit hesitant, he would reply: "No, I think it was Kirkwood."

"Did you take notes at the time?"

"No."

"Then you cannot be sure. You would notice the very tall man standing at my side and his picture would be in your mind when, later on, you thought over what you had heard. Isn't that so?"

He would begin to lose his initial confidence and I would keep at him until it became obvious to the jury that the police were not at all certain who had made particular statements mentioned in their evidence.

I brought out, with one of the police witnesses, that as I was being half-led, half-dragged from the Square into the City Chamber he had made the pleasant remark: "You bastard, I'll give you something for that!" ("that" being a hefty clout I had landed before being knocked out). When I put this in the form of a question, he denied that he had made such a remark.

"But you and your colleague were sitting beside me in the corridor?"

"Yes."

"You remember Bailie Whitehead asking me if I would like a glass of whisky?"

"Yes."

"When I had refused it and after he had gone away, did you say: 'Aw, Wullie, ye should have taen it and gied it tae me'?"

"No!"

Of course, this had nothing to do with the charges against us, but I thought it would amuse the Court and the jury. Scott Dickson had to hold his head down to hide his grin.

I had had the blood washed off my face in the City Chambers and had then been led, with my head bandaged, through to the quadrangle where Davie was standing with his head down, having had a blow in the nape of the neck from a sergeant's baton. While we were standing there, guarded by four policemen, Jean came through to find me. She had heard that I'd been badly hurt. I told her I was all right, nothing to worry about. She was relieved, and expressed it by asking me severely: "What was that story you told me last night?" The previous night I'd been reporting to the committee at the Trades Council offices in Bath Street, and Manny had made a suggestion of a pretty desperate nature. I had told him I would do whatever the committee agreed, but if his project was carried out I would insist on all members of the committee being right at the head of the demonstration. The subject had been dropped. But later, as I was walking down Bath Street with Messer and Davie, Messer had said: "You've got to watch

that fellow Shinwell. He'll make trouble and leave you to face it." But I had a very high opinion of myself—one that was not justified by events. I assured them that they didn't have to worry. I knew Manny. He was smart, very smart, but I was as smart as he was and, I added: "If there is any trouble I'll see that his head goes under a baton before mine does!" I thought that was such a good one I couldn't refrain from repeating it to Jean when I got home.

Well, she slammed it back at me. Yes, she was there in the Square, and now she was in the court, sitting with John Wheatley, and watching me sitting side by side with Manny, brothers in affliction.

Lord Scott Dickson summed up very favourably, and it looked good for all of us. There was no case against us on any of the charges in the indictment. So there was no hesitation about acquitting Kirkwood, Hopkins, Ebury, Brennan and Alexander. Alexander should never have been brought into court. Just as a policeman had been about to bring his baton down on my already-bleeding face, he had thrown himself on me and had got the baton on the back of his head; he had been dragged up with me and put under arrest.

One of the jurors, a man named Kerr, kept a diary of this case, in which he tells how he argued and argued to get an acquittal for Manny and me, along with the rest. But I had admitted striking the Chief Constable; how could they let me go?

In my address to the jury I took full responsibility, as organiser, for all that had happened. I told them how I was on the plinth of the Gladstone Monument when the police made their unprovoked attack. While the workers were being batoned, I jumped down and ran towards the Chief Constable. Several policemen ran at me. "I struck out, I struck hard, and my only regret is that I didn't have greater strength to strike harder." I ended up my address by saying: "You gentlemen must now decide whether I sleep at home or sleep in a prison cell. I can assure you that whatever you decide I shall sleep with an easy conscience."

Hitting the Chief Constable, or any policemen, could only be considered as assault, and assault was not in the indictment. But they were adamant. They could not in their conscience absolve me. As for Shinwell, nothing was proved against him. There were only the subtle innuendoes of the Lord Advocate, in particular that it was an unofficial strike and what was he, an official, doing participating in it?

When the jury gave their "intelligent" finding, there was an amazing scene in the court. The foreman made his announcement. Lord Scott

Dickson sat straight up, looking forward. A silence fell on the court. All of a sudden, he got to his feet and went striding out. A wondering buzz of conversation broke out. After a few minutes he returned, took his seat, thanked the jury and, with anything but a friendly look, dismissed Davie and the other four. He then turned to the miserable specimens that were left. Had we anything to say?

Shinwell's Counsel, one of the best, made a special appeal for the consideration of the court. I then said that what I had done was done on behalf of my fellow-workers and in the same circumstances I would do the same again. I was now prepared to face the consequences.

Lord Scott Dickson then said: "Mr. Gallacher has played the game by his colleagues but he has been found guilty and I must pass sentence. I sentence him to three months' imprisonment. The prisoner Shinwell I sentence to five months' imprisonment."

I could hardly believe my ears. As the Judge left the court, I turned to Jean and Wheatley and said: "I can do it on my head!" It wasn't a case of bragging that I could "take it", but the desire to put a smile on the face of my ever-faithful Jean. For whoever has read what has gone before will realise that Jean had no easy life. But she was heart and soul with me in every phase of my activity. She was with me at all my public meetings, and from the first days of our marriage I did my share of the housework so that she could be free to accompany me. It may seem that there was little to do in a single apartment; but Jean had made it a really attractive home. With all who visited us, and they were many, for comrades were always dropping in, Jean was a favourite. All of them were full of praise for the lovely shining house—which I must say I was reluctant to leave when we got the offer of a two-roomed council house (the bath and the toilet, however, were the deciding factors). Most of the leading figures in Glasgow were ready to sing the praises of Jean's housekeeping and hospitality, even though, through loss of time at work, we were often on short rations.

Jean and I, amidst all our campaigning, were very happy with one another and with our comrades. But, like many others, we had our share of sorrow.

Shinwell and I had to go to prison, while the others went home to Glasgow. Before our trial in 1916 there had been German bombers over the vicinity of Edinburgh, and rumours had been spread that the "deportees" had been seen signalling. Strong feeling had been aroused against the "deportees" and against the other members of the Clyde movement. Quite a few people were gathered outside the court to

hoot Johnnie and me on that first occasion, as we were hustled into the prison van. But this time there was no prison van for Shinwell and me. Edinburgh had been out along with the Clyde, and now the feeling was all for us. We were taken out the back way, and loaded into a bus that was occupied, apart from two seats reserved for us, by policemen. Other police were at the front controlling the crowd, which was shouting and cheering—a real lively scene, I learned afterwards.

The bus drove into the gates of Calton early in the evening. Most of the warders were off duty, but the few who weren't were standing with the chief warder at the door of the reception. As I approached the chief held out his hand and said: "Well, it's our old friend back again." I gave his hand a right hearty squeeze, but I couldn't tell him I was glad to be there. The following morning Warder Calder came to fetch me first thing, and I was back on my old job again.

The second day I had a visit from my old friend the Rev. John Hunter. He seemed to have forgotten his parting words before my departure in 1917. "Why have you come back here?" he asked.

"I didn't come back voluntarily," I answered. But he insisted that this was no place for a man like me.

"It's all for the cause," I told him, smiling. He objected to that. There's no cause worth spending your life in gaol for, he said. So it went on, in the friendliest terms. Each week he made me a visit, and we always had a very pleasant chat. One Sunday, in the Chapel, he took for the lesson Paul's justification of himself; he was a real devotee of that Apostle. For those who never look at the Bible, I'd better give the lesson as he gave it to us:

Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? So am I. Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more: in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times I received forty stripes save one.

Thrice I was beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day have I been in the deep.

In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.

When he came around the following week for our usual chat, I took occasion to remark that I had been very much taken with his Bible

reading on the Sunday. Paul must have been a great fellow, I said, luring him on. It was easy. He gave a wonderful rhapsody about his favourite Apostle. When he finished, I repeated with a shake of the head: "Yes, a great fellow!" Then, as though it had just entered my head (instead of having been prepared from the Sunday previous), "But it's a good thing you weren't alive when Paul was preaching!"

"What do you mean?" he exclaimed.

"If you had been able to talk to him, you'd have told him there was no cause worth going to gaol for as often as he had been going, and no cause worth the stoning and stripes he had suffered."

I was smiling as I said this, but I could see that the gentle old lad was a bit hurt. All he could do was to mutter: "You know that's different." But how it was different he didn't say, and I didn't press him. I felt a bit sorry that I had led him into a trap. This interlude was soon forgotten, and we remained the best of friends until I left Calton, this time for good.

My last month was spent, except for the weekends, in the new Saughton prison. One block was already finished, and the prisoners who were about to leave were accommodated there. What a change from the grim, stone-cold cells of the Calton! An inset wood floor, clear sash-windows, the bottom half fixed and the top capable of opening six inches: steam pipes and—happy nights!—spring beds. The Calton is no more; all that remains of its once formidable structure (its site now occupied by the Scottish Office) is the governor's house, which was approached by a short avenue outside the prison.

Before leaving I wrote to Jean and enclosed a few verses of which I can only recall the last two.¹ I know the verses started with something about setting the world to rights, and went on:

Alas, my dreams have all evaporated
Like shallow pools when summer's sun has risen
My poor old head got badly decorated
And I am left to patch it up in prison.
I've gone quite thin and likely to get thinner
My mind's for ever flirting with a dinner.

¹ Mr. Kerr, the juror, later sent me his diary of the trial, which made very interesting and in some parts humorous reading. It could almost have been published as a small book. I read it and gave it to Jim Messer, and he passed it on to some of the others, and so it went the rounds until it was lost. Shocking, the letters and documents I have lost!

I dream of roast, of pork and steak and mutton,
See visions of a heavy-laden table.
A tale is told of one Rab Haw, a glutton,
Some wise folk sneer, and say it is a fable;
But I'll eat Rab and all that Rab has caten—
This is a hint to get abundant meat in.

Terrible! But it gives an idea of how I felt. It only remains to say that when I got home the table was loaded and I did it full justice. I'd had sufficient porridge for a time.

"I'm glad you asked that question," I said. "I'm thinking of the harm done to the working-class movement by that middle-class gent Daniel de Leon!"

They were up on their feet, all shouting like madmen, the third question (which was to have been directed to Wheatley) forgotten. Through the din Dennison could be heard yelling: "I challenge you to a debate!" When things quieted down, I told Dennison I'd be pleased to accept the challenge, and the meeting finished at that. John Wheatley his brother Pat, Kirkwood, the chairman, and one or two others congregated in the platform room. John was beaming. "Willie," he said, "you were wonderful. Dennison and his lads won't agree with that though—here they come!"

There was the clamp, clamp of resolute feet along the corridor. The door opened and in they all trooped, doing their best to look solemn. Dennison pulled out his diary, looked over the dates and snapped at me: "The 15th or 16th of November. That'll give you time to prepare."

"You're not trying to kid me, Dennison," I told him. "I don't need time to prepare for you fellows. I'll come here again tomorrow evening and knock hell out of you."

If he's still alive, I wonder if he ever thinks of that evening. He left Glasgow and got a job with one of the big national dailies, foreswore de Leon and himself became a "faker"—but that was later. Here in the cinema back room he yelled at me: "Don't bounce, Gallacher, don't bounce!"

Kirkwood stuck his neck out. "Gallacher's not bouncing," he shouted at Dennison. "If he says he'll do a thing he'll do it."

Oh, Dennison, how easy it was for you to be diverted! "What are you butting in for, you big clown!" he shouted to Davie. These two were old enemies. Might and main they went at it, and were still at it as we all moved out along the corridor. At the main entrance a good proportion of the audience was waiting to see how the S.L.P.'ers would end up with me. Instead they saw a couple of dancing dervishes shouting their lungs out, loud enough to be heard all over Shettleston. "That's enough, Dennison," I told him. "Keep your slanging till I come to Parkhead!" I told the audience that the debate was on, and further abuse would be held over until it took place when they would get more than they wanted. That got a laugh, and so the miserable scene ended.

I was not long out of Calton gaol before requests for my services

came in from all directions. One or two of them were from towns in England where I hadn't been before. When I got to these places, the comrades waiting at the station to greet me were always doubtful if I was the right man. At my trial the police witnesses had told such fantastic tales—that I had hit this one a heavy blow in the face, that I had butted another with my head, kicked yet another on the shin bone, and so on—true, I had hit the Chief Constable a blow on the cheek bone which broke the skin, but this I had admitted. Now just try to think of a little fellow, 5 ft. 5½ in. tall, surrounded by a group of big policemen all with truncheons swinging. The result was that people who didn't know me pictured me as a huge brute who had been throwing innocent policemen over his head. I would come off the train to see a group of men and women with badges in their lapels. "Excuse me," I'd say. "Are you waiting for me? I'm Willie Gallacher." "From the Clyde?" they would say, with unbelieving stares.

Two engagements in particular I want to mention. Davie and I were invited to speak in Belfast. The Belfast workers had come out solid with the Clyde for the 40-hour week, and now the engineering shop stewards had issued this invitation. Forgotten was the fact that the engineers had closed their hall on me a year before; there was no loyal Ulsterman waiting to challenge me about loyalty to the King this time. Possibly some of the group who had been at that Saturday evening meeting were in the huge crowd that now gave me a real workers' welcome. In recent years, when I have gone over to Belfast, one of two of the old timers always come along to shake my hand and remind me of those days long ago. There's grand stuff in the Belfast workers, despite all the bedevilment of religious sectarianism.

The other invitation was to give two lectures at Workington, in Cumberland, to the Workers' Educational Association. I was to speak on the Sunday afternoon and evening, and arrived at Workington Station on the morning of the same day. There were two lads from the Association waiting for me, together with Charlie Flynn, the Cumberland organiser of the National Union of Distributive and Allied Workers, and his wife who was also his secretary. They had a strike on their hands—a strike of Co-operative shop assistants. They were there to see if I could give them a hand to organise butchers, bakers, drapers and grocers, to which I agreed. They asked me to come to a mass meeting of the strikers in the public hall, when my meeting was finished.

When I reached this meeting three national officials had done their

stuff: John Jagger, the president, Mr. Orchard, national Secretary, and Ellen Wilkinson, national organiser. They gave me a welcome; they were faced with a very difficult situation. The shop assistants in all the villages and small towns of Cumberland were out, but the manager of the biggest Co-operative society, that in Carlisle, had been able to keep his workers from joining, and he was determined to prevent the Cumberland District Association from making any concession to the union. He was a strong man on the District Association and dominated the smaller societies; with his own staff all at work, he was in a strong position no matter how long the strike lasted. He was sure, of course, that the shop assistants would not stick out for long, especially as none of the Boards was prepared to meet their officials.

What were they to do? I said there must be a weak spot somewhere and we would have to find it and concentrate on that. "We've got to get the strikers on the march," I proposed, "from every town and village into a given centre where we think there is a chance of breaking down the resistance of the Board."

"But you won't get shop assistants to march," they said.

"They'll have to march," I said. We agreed that I should talk the situation over with Charlie Flynn the following morning, decide where we were going to concentrate and then go round the other centres and rally them to march on Tuesday.

The next morning we got down to the job. "Where is the Miners' Office?" I asked Charlie. "Cleator Moor," he replied. "Is Gavin Duffy there?" I asked, and he told me yes. "Is he on the Board?" Again yes. "All right", I told him. "We'll go around and see the active lads, if there are any, in each of the other towns and villages and get them persuaded to invade Cleator Moor tomorrow."

This we did. The "man of the moment" in Maryport was a very respectable Bethelite; he didn't like the thought of marching through the streets.

"Do you want to win the strike?" I asked him. "Or do you want that fellow in Carlisle to have the laugh of you?"

That got him. The shop assistants were all around us, wondering what was going to happen. We called a meeting there and then. We put the proposition, backed by the Bethelite, and the response was immediate. Yes, they would march. With Maryport won, we had very little trouble with the other places.

Next afternoon they came marching into Cleator Moor from all around the area. We held a mass meeting outside the Miners' Office,

and then a deputation went in to see *Gavin Duffy*. As spokesman, I said it was a sad day when a miners' leader, because of the domination of a manager in Carlisle, refused to see and talk to the union officials representing his employees; surely the miners' officials had battled often enough against that sort of thing and should be proof against such a practice themselves? Gavin was very apologetic. He wasn't against talking to the officials, he said, but the President of the Cleator Moor Society was the man who would have to decide. Right, we said, we would go and see him. We went, but he was away in Carlisle and would not be back until the next day. We gave notice that we would be back on Thursday. On Wednesday we held short meetings in the most important centres, reporting on what had transpired the day before and calling on every striker to take the field the next day. Tuesday's assembly had been good, but the Thursday turn-out nearly doubled it. All Cleator Moor was on the streets to see us marching in. I had them singing (despite the strong religious prejudice of some of them) "You'll get pie in the sky when you die!"

The President's house was literally surrounded with cheering, singing strikers. We sent in a deputation, mostly Cleator Moor employees, with the Bethelite from Maryport as the leading spokesman. On this occasion I kept out. The President was very nervous, but told the delegation that he had, on his return from Carlisle, had a talk with Mr. Duffy. Between them they had contacted other members of the Board and it had been agreed that the Board should meet the officials of the union the following evening. Word to this effect had been sent to the President of the union, John Jagger. He, with his General Secretary and Ellen Wilkinson, arrived in good time for the meeting with the Board. An even greater assembly of strikers had gathered to hear the result of this fateful meeting. The three national officials, representing the strikers along with Charlie Flynn and two or three branch secretaries, were in a happy, cheerful mood. Ellen Wilkinson had many a laugh in later times as she told friends of these respectable shop assistants singing "Pie in the Sky" and "The Red Flag". Of course, in these days when school-teachers, civil servants, nurses, technicians and scientists can be seen marching, displaying slogans and shouting down Whitehall, when the CND and the Committee of 100 make all kinds of demonstrations and a great combination of them organise the magnificent Aldermaston marches, it would cause no stir if shop assistants did the same. But forty-four years ago it was something to talk about—aye, and sing about, and they certainly did sing.

I got a surprise when John Jagger asked me to go in with them and meet the Board. "Me?" I exclaimed. "Yes," he was emphatic, "you brought about the meeting and you've got to be in it." The full Board was in attendance when we entered; all the members, while seated, managed to suggest a bow. The President welcomed the delegation, remarking that he knew the national officers and local branch officials but whom did Mr. Gallacher represent? John Jagger replied—to my surprise and I am sure to that of the President—that I was an official of their union.

"Oh!" said the President, gasping slightly.

I immediately arose and addressed him. "Mr. President, I have an idea that my close association with the demonstration will not have endeared me to some of your members. So, as I am sure that the national officers and local officers are quite capable of representing the employees without my assistance, and it is desirable that negotiations should proceed in a friendly atmosphere I will, with your permission and that of my colleagues, withdraw and leave you to discuss the serious matter before you."

The President looked around his members and said: "That is very generous of you. You can rely on us to do our best to get an amicable settlement of this unfortunate dispute." I bowed to the gathering and withdrew.

Outside, a high platform had been set up, and we had had a short meeting before the officials arrived. I mounted it again and told them I had had a few friendly words and had left the Board and the officials to get ahead with a settlement. I went on to talk about the value of the co-operative movement, and the responsibility the shop assistants had for its successful operation; with the trade union of which they were members, it was a powerful factor in the working-class movement.

I had been speaking for about an hour when the delegation came out, all smiles. The strike was over. The Cleator Moor Board had broken from the control of the Carlisle manager and had agreed to grant the increased wage the union was demanding. With this breakthrough, there was no doubt whatever that the others would follow suit—and that's what happened. Meetings of the various societies were held during the weekend and by Monday all were back at work. Even the Carlisle manager had to grant the increase, or it would have been his turn to have a strike on his hands.

So I was free to return home (of course I had written regularly to

Jean to let her know how things were going). But before parting with this subject, I should remark that I surely hold the world's record for the shortest period as a trade union official—strictly an 'un-official' official, a brain-wave of John Jagger's.

The strike had a sequel for me. I was invited—and I am sure it was Ellen Wilkinson who was responsible for it—to speak in Guildford to a conference of students and former students. The greatest value I got from that visit was hearing and meeting R. Palme Dutt; he made a very deep impression on me as an exceptionally clear-thinking Marxist. The more I saw of him after that meeting, the more I was impressed with his wide knowledge and his devotion to the working-class movement.

When I got back home to Paisley, I knew I was in for a lean time. Only Jean, no other, could have kept me going. There wasn't a job for me anywhere. If a foreman saw me coming he ran for the police. I tried a number of places but always got the "brush-off". Then someone told Sam Marston, who was foreman-engineer at Binnie's, Cardonald, that it was a shame about Willie Gallacher, "he can't get a job anywhere". To which Sam made answer: "Tell him to come and see me. I'll take a chance." I went to see him, and got started at a heavy horizontal-boring machine. I went to work in the morning a bright, cheerful fellow, but came out in the early evening half-dead with fatigue. On the second evening as I crawled out a Boy Scout handed me a leaflet: it was a message from a lad who called himself George V telling me to work harder and produce more! I wrote an article for *The Worker* that would have shrivelled him up if he'd read it.

A couple of weeks later, Jean and I were visiting Jean's folks. Her father had taken *The Clarion* from the first and was still a subscriber to it, even though Blatchford had deserted the camp of socialism and gone over to the warmongers. I picked up his current copy and had a look at it. I saw a big black headline: "The Blatant Beast".

"Is the old fellow still after the Kaiser?" I asked my father-in-law. "Read it!" was the laconic response. I read it, and found that I was the blatant beast. My article about George V had got the old loyalist on the raw and so Blatchford, who had had quite a share in starting me on the road to socialism, was now slamming his convert all over the place.

By this time I was out of a job again. I had only been two or three days in Binnie's when I saw the manager having a serious talk with Sam, and by the way they were looking I realised the talk was about me. When the manager had gone, Sam came over. "I'm very sorry,

Willie," he said. "I tried to save you but it was no use. You've got to go on Saturday." On Saturday I went—and Sam went along with me! He got a month's wages in lieu of notice. He claimed victimisation, and the union supported him. But, as in my case, "he'd got to go". When word got around the Clyde about this, there wasn't the slightest prospect of my getting a job anywhere.

But I got an unpaid job that same year which I accepted without hesitation. I was visited by a deputation of blind workers, who informed me that the workers in the factory run by the Royal Asylum for the Blind, in Castle Street, Glasgow, were the lowest paid in Scotland. This was a voluntary institution, with a board representing large subscribers: churches, trade unions and subscribing factories. The blind workers wanted to get me on to this Board to make a fight for better wages. They had already made arrangements to have me appointed as a factory representative. I told them I would get the question of the wages raised at the earliest opportunity.

When I got to my first meeting I was introduced to Sir William Read, the chairman, and to several other gentlemen, two ladies and a clergyman; two other Board members, the secretary of the Glasgow Trades Council and a representative of the Lanarkshire Miners, were old friends. We got the Minutes of the previous meeting, and a report dealing with produce, sales and what not, presented by the superintendent. General remarks were made by one and another, all expressing satisfaction with the report and with the gentleman who had made it. I asked the chairman if he would kindly inform me, as a new member of the Board, just how the institution was administered. He gave me the outline: there was a skilled foreman in the factory, who trained and supervised the workers, then there was the assistant superintendent and above him the superintendent. I was then given a copy of their annual report. All very pleasant, and I'm sure the new member had made a favourable impression. I walked some of the way home with Willie Shaw, the trades council secretary, who expressed his pleasure at having me on the Board—and he meant it, for Willie and I always remained good friends.

At the next meeting I was prepared. I had read the report and visited the factory, where I had talked with the Assistant Superintendent, the foreman and several of the workers. As a result, I had prepared a series of suggestions for increasing production in the factory and for extending the exhibition of the products with a view to increased sales. Along with these suggestions I had some drastic proposals for dealing with the

administration. When the usual report had been given I raised the question of wages, and put forward a demand for a 50 per cent increase for all workers. The Board members looked at one another aghast. They had never contemplated anything like this. The Chairman invited the Superintendent to put me wise as to the financial side of the business. The Superintendent obliged. He told me their income from all sources, and then all the different things that had to be paid, ending up: "So you see, Mr. Gallacher, it is not possible to increase wages."

"Suppose we take it the other way about," I replied. "We'll raise the wages and then pay this, that and the other with what is left."

This really made them gasp. Who, in the name of God, ever heard the like? Fancy anyone suggesting that consideration of the workers should come first! To a chorus of "hear-hear's" I was told that it would be impossible to administer the institution if they adopted such a suggestion. "So," I retorted, "I am to take it that your attitude is: 'starve the workers—good administration; feed the workers—bad administration'?"

Loudly they protested against this imputation, and the discussion waxed hot and heavy. I told them I could make proposals for increasing the income of the institution, and further proposals for economies. I went on, not in a very gentle manner, to say that I represented workers who were subscribing to the institution, and if the Board did not give serious consideration to my proposals I would report to these workers about the scandalous wages being paid, and I was sure they'd leave their work and come marching down Castle Street to make their opinions known.

When we got out of the meeting on this occasion, Willie Shaw was not so happy. He was still my friend, but he was in no mood for complimenting me: he told me I'd been too rough, too violent; that I would have got on better if I had been more considerate of the feelings of the other members of the Board, and so on. However, he promised to support me, and was sure the miners' representative would do likewise.

Had he known it, most of the others had also decided to support me. At our next, my third, meeting, my motion was accepted and the Glasgow blind workers, from being the poorest, became the highest-paid blind workers in Scotland. Then came the proposals for increasing the income, which were received with unanimous approval. We were getting along fine; smiles all round. But alas for the life of a revolutionary socialist! the smiles didn't last long. When it came to the proposed economies, my suggestion was that we should replace the Super-

intendent (£950 per annum) and the Assistant Superintendent (£450 per annum) with one official at £500 a year.

That really started a storm. It went on for several weeks, with letters appearing in the Glasgow Press warmly praising the Superintendent and comments of quite a different nature about "the Bolshevik on the Board". But finally I got it through, and we advertised for an experienced man who was prepared to take the job at the sum we offered. We got quite a number of applicants—among them, believe it or not, the Superintendent himself and his Assistant. Both of them were put on a short list of six, to be interviewed by the Board. When the Superintendent came for his interview I spoke very quietly and courteously to him, saying that I felt sure that he knew how important it was that in such an institution there should be good feeling between the Superintendent, the other members of the staff, and the Board. Would he, I asked, if appointed, be satisfied that the Board was treating him fairly, and on that basis give his best service to the institution? To this he gave a solemn affirmative. When he had gone out I looked around at my fellow members to see how they were taking it: I must say they seemed a bit uncomfortable. When the Assistant came, I asked if he could assure the Board that his experience was sufficient for him to take on the job as Superintendent. "To be quite frank, Mr. Gallacher," was his reply, "I've been doing the job myself all along." There was a cathedral-like hush when he had left. "That's good administration," I remarked. Some of the Board were about ready for getting under the table. Neither of the two were appointed: a very good man from St. Dunstan's became Superintendent. Some of the big subscribers thereafter began to lose interest in the institution, but the workers did not, and before very long we got the City Council to take it over.

That winter, I once again opened John Wheatley's season of public meetings in the Shettleston Picture House—but for the last time. The following year the Communist Party was born, and while John might still have wanted me to speak, I was too much taken up with the new, young party and its propaganda to have time for anything else. But that last meeting was a successful one: it went with a swing from beginning to end, without a word from the S.L.P. John, and Davy Kirkwood, who was as usual in attendance, were both delighted with it. I was pleased too, but far from pleased when, a few weeks later, I went to speak at an afternoon and an evening meeting in Sheffield. The meetings were all right. The trouble was my host, Dr. Chandler. He was, as I have said, a great little fellow; I liked him very much, and—

up to then—he liked me. But John McLean stood high above all others for him. When we got back from the evening meeting we sat down to a hearty meal, since I had to walk from his house to the station, about two miles away, to catch my train at 1 a.m. He asked me about John, and I tried to tell him about John's trouble. Jesus! but he went for me, right in the middle of the meal. He got up from the table; so did I. He went on at me in the most violent manner. *John MacLean was right* about spies. I was blind. I was playing into the hands of the government agents! I could not get him stopped. I tried now and again to get in a word, but I was hopelessly beaten. The only thing I could do was to take a sad farewell of one for whom I had always had a high and warm regard. I always think of him as he was before that disastrous evening—a kindly, genial comrade who was prodigal in laying out cash for socialist propaganda.

Some time later, Dr. Chandler published a pamphlet: *Spies in Britain* was its title, I think. He had been very much affected by a case in nearby Derby, where an *agent-provocateur* had wormed his way into the home of a Mrs. Wheeldon: she was a socialist and had taken part in the "Votes for Women" campaign; she had opposed the first world war from the outset, and when conscription was introduced her son Matt was a conscientious objector and went on the run. Mrs. Wheeldon had always been outspoken, but never more so than at this period; in the Market Place she let her views be known, often in somewhat immoderate language. Any conscientious objector on the run would always find shelter in her home in Derby. One evening a man called Alex Gordon came to her home, representing himself as a C.O. She gave him a home, with every care and comfort. One of her daughters was married to a quiet lad, a chemist. One evening, the family was sitting talking about the war: Lloyd George and Arthur Henderson were due to visit Derby in a week or so. Somehow the conversation got around to the subject of assassination, and how easy it would be for the *son-in-law*, a chemist, to get the stuff necessary for providing poison darts. Melodramatic nonsense! But a couple of days before the visit, the house was invaded by policemen. Mrs. Wheeldon, her daughter and her son-in-law were arrested. Next day the Press was full of screaming headlines: "Plot to Assassinate Lloyd George!" Alex Gordon, the only witness against them, was not a C.O. but an *agent-provocateur* planted on the family by Scotland Yard. Mrs. Wheeldon got ten years, the other two five years each. Alex Gordon was quietly smuggled out of the country.

By 1920, though the Clyde Workers' Committee was still functioning, its leading ranks were sadly depleted. Kirkwood's whole time was taken up with Clydebank, the parliamentary constituency he was contesting. Arthur McManus and Tom Bell were in England, mostly in London, engaged in unity negotiations with the representatives of the British Socialist Party and one or two other small groups, including a group from the I.L.P. (This latter group, like that of the Socialist Labour Party which McManus and Bell were leading, was unofficial.)

But J. M. Messer still remained as secretary, while we had J. R. Campbell as editor of *The Worker* and John S. Clarke as a columnist. J. R. Campbell ("The Boy" as he had been known before the war) was really amazing. He had left a grocer's shop for the army and had never been in a shipyard or a factory, but in the shortest time he got a grasp of conditions and problems that made him invaluable to many of the trade union officials in Glasgow. When they wanted information or advice, they would come up to our office in North Frederick Street, and I never at any time heard one of them speak otherwise than in praise of him. He is now, so many years later, equally invaluable to the Communist Party.

But not only trade union officials came to us for advice. Students coming to Glasgow from other parts of the country or from abroad were generally advised to call at the office of *The Worker* if they wanted information about the movement in Scotland. On one occasion a lad from Harvard University came to have a talk with me. After supplying him with the information he wanted, I invited him to come out for a cup of tea. I was meeting Wheatley and some of the others in Cranston's and I told him he would find the company interesting. As we were walking across George Square I heard a shout: "Hey, Willie!" I stopped and turned. It was a policeman. He shook me by the hand.

"It's the first chance I've had to speak to you since that bit o' trouble. How are ye?"

"Fine," I replied.

"No hard feelings?" said he.

"Naw, naw, tae hell, that's all past and forgotten," I told him. I introduced the lad from Harvard, who had been gazing at us astonished. He shook hands with the "cop" and then, as we went on our way, he put the question that was bothering him. "Who was that?"

"That," I informed him, "is one of the lads who bounced his baton off my head."

"It could never happen in America," was his comment.

The Clyde Workers' Committee was taking no part in the unity negotiations for the formation of a Communist Party, to which I referred above. We were all for industrial action; we had no faith in the parliamentarians and no time for parliament. John McLean, however, was invited to London as the leading member of the British Socialist Party in Scotland. He had a strong prejudice against the English comrades, carried over from the period of Hyndman's rule, and they found him extremely difficult. They were very anxious to get his support for the unity negotiations, as he had been appointed Scottish Consul for the young Socialist Republic. The English comrades, therefore, arranged for him to meet and have a talk with an old and valued comrade, Theodore Rothstein. Theodore, a Russian by birth, had lived in England from his early twenties but had retained his association with the Bolsheviks. He had taken a great interest in the unity groups and was always ready to give them his help and advice. A journalist by profession, he had done some translation work during the war for an official publication—the Daily Review of the Foreign Press, circulated to the newspapers; this was purely professional work that had no political implications, and was known to his friends. But what was not well known to Theodore was the sick condition of his visitor. He was quite frank with John, told him that he was the representative of the Bolshevik Party in Britain and that the comrades in Moscow were very anxious for John to take a leading part in the formation of the new British party. He himself was going on a visit to Soviet Russia, and said he would like to take the message that John would participate.

John listened to this and made non-committal replies. When he returned to Glasgow he openly told of this meeting and said that the cunning agent Rothstein had tried to fool him with a lot of talk about representing the Bolsheviks when he, McLean, knew full well that he was working for the British government. Theodore went for his visit to Russia. He was never allowed back in Britain again.

The Second Congress of the Communist International was scheduled to open in Leningrad in July; after the opening it would move on to Moscow. It was decided that the Clyde shop stewards should be represented there, and at a meeting in Glasgow John S. Clarke and I were appointed as delegates. John S. had a passport, but I had none. I made application for one, but it was held up. Finally I went to Newcastle, where I spent a week haunting the docks before I succeeded, with the help of a seaman friend, in stowing away on a ship bound for

Bergen. By coincidence, John S. had booked his passage on the same ship. When we reached Bergen we were able to get in touch with some comrades there; after giving us some food and a rest they got us aboard a ship going to Hammerfest, the most northerly town in Norway, where we had the pleasure of seeing the midnight sun. From there we crossed to the island of Vardo; after a couple of days' confinement in a room in a small cottage we shipped on a fishing boat across the Arctic sea to Murmansk. I had left a small bag containing a change of clothes in Newcastle; here I was with nothing but the worn garments I had on my back. Clarke was more fortunate; he had been able to carry a case with him. In one thing we were alike, however. We were neither of us carrying any papers to show that we were delegates. A powerfully-built Finn named Petersen was the Communist Party leader in Murmansk; he also led the Partisans who were harrying the forces of General Ironside. He viewed us with grave suspicion. Again we were confined in a small room while he communicated by wire with Leningrad. There, some of the English delegates who had already arrived were asked to vouch for us. They did not know Clarke but the description they were given of me satisfied them, so word was sent to pass us along. We were put on the train for Leningrad.

Near the shore of the White Sea, the train stopped—as it had been doing all too often. Discovering that it would be an hour or so before it could be started again, I went down to the beach, and washed my only shirt—using sand instead of soap. The day was very hot, so I had no trouble drying it. At Petrozavodsk, the capital of Karelia, we were conducted to the local Soviet, where we were given a meal—a thin fish soup with a piece of black bread. No luxury feeding in 1920. In front of the Soviet, which was in the city square, a huge proclamation had been stuck up—by none other than General Ironside. Yes, he had got as far as that! The proclamation called on the population to gather in the square the following day at noon, and to bring and stack any arms they possessed, on the usual pains and penalties. But the Red Army was near by. At 12 o'clock that night they advanced and struck. General Ironside had to retreat to Murmansk, harried all the way by Petersen's partisans.

Back we got on the train for the last weary lap to Leningrad, birth-place of the Bolshevik Revolution. A car met us at the station and took us to the Hotel Europa, where we washed and went to the dining-room. Two hungry voyagers—how we looked forward to a good meal! At the door of the dining-room the head waiter, in orthodox

dress, bowed; we bowed in return. Down the room two other waiters bowed; we bowed again. There was a long table with decanters, and flowers in front of each place; big glasses, small glasses, large knives and forks, large spoons and a variety of smaller ones. I smiled at Clarke as the waiters pulled out our chairs and got us seated. We were served—each with a small potato ball, a chunk of black bread and a glass of tea. On that we had to feast, with the addition of a pink-coloured liquid from one of the decanters. I could afford to lose a bit of weight, but Clarke was as spare as many men could ever wish to be: I could see that as far as food went he wasn't going to enjoy his visit to the First Workers' Republic.

The Second Congress of the Communist International. The football match. Meeting with Lenin. C.P. formed in England. Anti-parliamentarianism overcome.

AFTER our somewhat restricted banquet, a car called for us and we drove to Smolny, formerly a girls' school but now the centre of Bolshevik and Soviet activity, where we had to be provided with the necessary papers before proceeding to Moscow. We were shown into a waiting room, and each of us was given a book to read while we waited.

Mine was a copy of a newly-published booklet, in English, entitled *Left-Wing Communism, an Infantile Disorder*, by V. I. Lenin. I skimmed through the section on Germany, then turned my attention to the English. Suddenly I yelled: "Jesus! John S., would you look at this now!" This was a somewhat sharp presentation of one Comrade Gallacher as a bad example of "infantile disorder". It dealt with a letter I had written to Sylvia Pankhurst and though the criticism was couched in friendly terms it nevertheless came as a shock to me. I had travelled all the way from Scotland with the idea that I was somebody; right throughout the war, as chairman of the Clyde Workers' Committee I had been what you might call deferred to by the other members of it. They had always looked to me to make decisions, and naturally I thought I knew quite a bit about politics. I remembered an occasion when John Wheatley, giving me a queer look, had said: "You know, Willie, you're a great man!" I can honestly say that I have never at any time thought of myself as a "great man", but I certainly never dreamed that anyone would look on me as *infantile* in politics.

I had better give the history of my letter to Sylvia Pankhurst. She had written some time previously to tell me that she was going to a meeting on the Continent, and thought it would be desirable to have a message from me explaining the attitude of the Clyde Workers' Committee towards parliament and the politicians. I wrote the letter, which contained a strong presentation of my anti-parliamentarian ideas as well as criticism of MacDonald and Co., and of the B.S.P. (of which I was a member).

At that time I was being kept busy with meetings and debates where

I explained and defended the Bolshevik revolution. My first debate was in Edinburgh, where my opponent was Professor Sarolea, an authority on Czarist Russia but innocent as a child as far as the new, young workers' republic was concerned. (It was here that the chairman, another professor, accustomed to introducing his university colleagues at meetings, referred to me as "Professor Gallacher" which rocked the house.) Shortly after that the Perth Branch of the I.L.P. invited me to represent them in a debate with the Rt. Hon. T. B. Morrison, Solicitor-General for Scotland. T. B. Morrison was quite pathetic; I never thought it possible that a "learned" man could get on to a public platform with such a scanty knowledge of his subject. He even put the question: "Who'll do the dirty work under socialism?" which I thought had long vanished from the realm of polemics. "Mr. Morrison," I told him, "there'll be no dirty work under socialism. We'll close the law courts!" It had been decided from the start that this meeting should wind up with a vote. *All those for Bolshevism!* Close on 700 hands went up. What a vote for the Fair City! *All those against!* The occupants of the platform—mostly dukes, baronets and clergy, kept shouting to the tellers to count them too; they were in a fine panic. Result: 1,200 votes against. I'm not sure that the hall had the capacity to hold the numbers counted. The Perth I.L.P. were quite convinced that the aristocracy on the crowded platform had put up both hands.

By this time, Sylvia Pankhurst had gone to her meeting on the Continent and had returned to her headquarters in Roman Road, Bow.

The next invitation to debate came from the leading committee of the British Socialist Party. My opponent on this occasion was Sir Bernard Pares who, like Professor Sarolea, was an authority on Czarist Russia and a lecturer on that subject. The debate was advertised in the B.S.P. paper *The Call*, as well as by placards on the hoardings. Sylvia also ran a paper, *The Workers' Dreadnought*. In her paper, two weeks after the advertisement for the meeting, she published the letter which I had sent her months previously, giving the impression that I had sent it after I had agreed to represent the B.S.P. in a debate. I received a sharp letter from Albert Inkpin of the B.S.P., expressing his regret at what he thought was my action. I explained, and offered to stand down if they so desired. But they expressed themselves satisfied with my explanation, and insisted that I keep this engagement. I must say the debate was one-sided. Sir Bernard could only argue that the Bolsheviks would never be able to change the peasants: they were the rock on which the revolution would perish; they had a thousand years of tradition behind

them and it was something that would never be overcome. He made little or no impression on the audience. The Chairman made two mistakes. The first one rocked the hall with laughter, the second was foolish—and inexcusable for a chairman. He had recently been made a knight, so it was perhaps a natural slip of the tongue for him to introduce the combatants as Sir Bernard Pares and Sir William Gallacher. (A professor, and now a knight! If I had kept on debating I'd probably have ended up in Buckingham Palace with a crown on my head.) But at the finish, he got up, stood for a moment looking at the audience and then blabbed: "Ladies and gentlemen, we have listened tonight to *two* wonderful speeches from Mr. Gallacher. . . ." Terrible! I don't know how Sir Bernard felt.

But here in Smolny, I realised that instead of defending the Bolsheviks, I was in a position where I was going to have to defend myself against them. I knew without being told that it wasn't going to be an easy job when I got to Moscow.

I slept that night in a comfortable bed, the first since I had left Newcastle more than a week before. The following day we went on a tour of the city; it had a look of desolation, and many traces of the long siege and constant bombardment. We traversed the famous and historic Nevsky Prospekt, but there were few shops open or showing goods for sale. The workers of Leningrad, like those of the Soviet Union as a whole, had a long, hard battle in front of them, but the revolutionary spirit that was everywhere in evidence was proof that they would win out to victory.

We arrived in Moscow around nine o'clock in the morning. We were met at the station and taken to an hotel where many other delegates were housed, including several English and American ones. Among the latter was John Reed, author of *Ten Days that Shook the World*. There too were J. T. Murphy, Jack Tanner, William McLaine, Tom Quelch and an Irish-American called McAlpine; also there was Roddy Connolly, son of the Irish Socialist James Connolly who, with Padraic Pearse, had led the Easter Week Rising in Dublin. One or other of them broke the news that, being a worker, fresh from the Clyde, I would be expected to go and "do a Subbotnik" (perform voluntary Saturday work). Clarke did not qualify for such work; but the Soviet comrade who looked after the hotel sent me out to a small automobile factory, the "AMO", which had been started by an American firm. Like all other factories it was short of fuel and supplies, but the lads on the job were real enthusiasts and were working might

and main to get it fully going. (I went to see it again in 1960; it is now a huge concern with the original building still standing, surrounded and dwarfed by the great structures that constitute the ZIL Automobile Works.

I finished at eight in the evening and, after having travelled all the previous night in a train, there is no need to say that I was weary and worn, though anything but sad. On Sunday I woke as fresh as the proverbial daisy, ready if need be to do another day's work. But I was told, no work today. A Red Army officer had conceived the idea of international sports and a tribute to the meeting of the Second Congress of the Communist International, and we were all to go out to the hills (to the spot where Napoleon once stood and watched Moscow burning).

There was running, jumping and boxing; but the great event of the day was a football match between the crack Moscow team and an Anglo-American side. I was chosen as captain of the latter, and I tried to sort out a bunch of lads, none of whom had experience of the game. John Reed was, I believe, a crack at American football (a savage game similar to Rugby), but he was far short of international standards at soccer, and the rest of us were on a par with him.

It was decided that as I was the oldest I should take charge of the goal. What a time I had! The sharp Moscow forwards simply battered at the unfortunate keeper. I let through six, and lost count of how many or few I had saved. In the second half I went out to the centre, to try and change the course of events. It was no use. They still kept driving ahead on our side of the field. We managed to get a run or two towards their end; then—hold your breath!—I got an opportunity and sent in a beezer that the Moscow goalie never even saw. But after that they scored another five. It was a disaster for the representatives of British football, to say nothing of the Americans; but it seemed to them that my solitary goal had somehow saved our honour, and I got carried shoulder-high off the field.

When I got to the Kremlin on the Monday morning I found that there, as at our hotel, the old staff or most of them were still on the job: ancient, bearded retainers who gazed with wonder at the amazing specimens who now paraded through the hitherto sacred chambers. I was taken below to see the apartments of the Czar and Czarina—and immediately felt nearer home. There in the ornate bathrooms was the trade-mark and name of the firm that had supplied the washing facilities for the "anointed of the Lord"—Shanks of Barrhead!

Upstairs in the main corridor I met Karl Radek. I was introduced to him, and after saying he was very pleased to meet me he added that he had read my pamphlet. That didn't give me any pleasure. The pamphlet referred to had been written in collaboration with "The Boy" and was a combination, or mixture, of sectarianism and utopianism I would rather have forgotten (I can only hope that there isn't a copy extant anywhere). I wanted to change the conversation, so I asked Radek when the political commission was meeting, as he and I were members of it. He said that it would be announced at the full plenum, which was due to open at ten o'clock, but he expected it would be on Wednesday afternoon. We had a few more words about this and that but no more about the pamphlet, not then and not since.

With several of the British and Americans, we made our way into the main hall and then through a side door to where tea was served to thirsty delegates, with tables and chairs arranged so that groups could sit and chat over the various reports that had been submitted to them. While I was standing by one such group I heard someone say: "Comrade Gallacher, meet Comrade Lenin!"

I turned around as Lenin held out his hand and said: "Welcome to our country, Comrade Gallacher!" I said something about being happy to be there, and we chatted for a moment or two about the situation in Britain, which at that moment was of particular interest, with Churchill mouthing fire and brimstone like an inebriated dragon. But all the time I was trying to get my thoughts organised; in Britain I had met many important men, some of them very important—you knew they were important as soon as you looked at them. But high above them all, in the estimation of all the members of the leading body of the Clyde Workers' Committee, stood the name of the mighty Lenin, the genius of the great October Revolution, the world's most important, most decisive figure. And here he was, and he wasn't *important*! I wasn't thinking of Lenin, I was thinking of what was happening in Britain and trying to convey to him my understanding of the situation.

I tried to explain this, after I returned to London, to Francis Meynell the editor of *The Communist*. "When you're with Lenin," I told him "you can't think of Lenin, you must think of what he's thinking about and he's thinking all the time about the revolution. When you meet Trotsky you can't think of the revolution, you have to think of Trotsky." He published the first part about Lenin, but he wouldn't publish the bit about Trotsky; he said it would not be good to speak

so of one of the recognised leaders of the Bolshevik Party. I suppose he was right, but I also have the feeling that, as an intellectual who had made no serious contact with the working class, Meynell was perhaps drawn to the flashy, egotistic Trotsky. From his earliest days Trotsky had always had a small group of personal worshippers around him, almost all of them intellectuals, the type who believed that they had been ordained since the world began to educate the rude, rough working class. I have met in my travels many who, in order to appear revolutionary without having to accept any revolutionary responsibility, have called themselves Trotskyites. They didn't know Trotsky. He would have looked on them with contempt. He had no contact with the working class. He was an orator—as Bevan was—but a thousand times more egotistic, and that's saying something. He thought he had some influence among the officers of the Red Army; he found out his mistake in 1927 when he, with his group of "intellectuals", tried to stage a counter-revolution.

The plenum, the full session of the Congress, was a wonderful sight, with delegates in their respective groups from almost all the countries of the world. Zinoviev was in the chair; heavy-set and sleepy-looking, with a somewhat high-pitched voice, he opened a discussion on the general world situation after the times for the meetings of the various commissions had been announced. As Radek had mentioned, Wednesday afternoon was to see the first meeting of the Political Commission. This met in due course, and started with all kinds of suggestions as to what should go into a political resolution. The British Socialist Party was represented by McLaine, Tom Quelch and Joe Fineberg. Joe had been an active member of that party and of the S.D.F. from which it had sprung, but had left London and was now resident in Moscow; a grand little comrade; I worked with him often in later times whenever I was in Moscow, and always found him intelligent and helpful. He died in Moscow in 1957. The B.S.P. delegation was concerned mainly with one point, and that was that the party in process of being formed in Britain should make application for affiliation to the Labour Party. John Reed and I were Leftists, and discussed world affairs from a Leftist viewpoint. Tanner, being an Anarchist, had little to say but gave his blessing and support to a very voluble Italian Syndicalist—I cannot recall his name but he was certainly a most important fellow. When the Congress ended he went back to Italy and I don't remember hearing his name or anything about him after that. Maybe he carried on and came up against Mussolini, but I never heard of it. Tanner, his close

associate, refused to accept the resolution when it came before the Commission on the ground that nothing would ever persuade him to become affiliated to the Labour Party: these were his revolutionary Anarchist principles.

The Political Commission sat around a long oval table. Lenin, as chairman, sat half way down one side and I was his opposite number on the other side. McLaine and the other B.S.P. delegates sat on my right. McLaine was a souvenir hunter, and pestered all the prominent people for signed photographs. I wonder what he has done with them now that he is linked up with the one-time Kropotkin-ite Tanner in an anti-communist publicity business?

While the discussions were going on, Lenin occasionally passed me a note bringing some point to my notice. On one occasion, when it seemed to me that he was in agreement with the opportunist McLaine and I had said so, he got busy with his pencil and passed me a fairly long note which, in the sharpest manner, made it clear that he had no faith in the B.S.P. delegation.

I must mention here that at meetings of the leading body of the Clyde Workers' Committee I used, as chairman, to take notes of all that was said by my colleagues so as to be able to sum up the main points in the discussion; but I had made it a firm habit to destroy these notes before leaving the meeting. At the time of my arrest in 1916 I had a narrow escape which confirmed me in this habit. Before I got home that evening the C.I.D. men made a search of all the drawers in the house, looking for evidence against me. They opened a cupboard and dragged out a large trunk which they went through—fortunately paying no heed to an old jacket that was hanging behind the cupboard door. In the pocket of that jacket was a letter I had received from "The Boy", then serving in France, telling me that he had received copies of *The Worker* which I had sent him and that the lads were in full agreement with us when we declared it was time for the war to be brought to an end. Johnny Muir and I were charged with causing unrest among the civilian population; had the police been able to bring that letter into court, the Lord only knows what would have happened. So I made notes each day in the Political Commission and at the close of each meeting destroyed them, as of habit.

This note from Lenin about the B.S.P. delegation went the way of the others; it would have been a real shocker for McLaine and Quelch if they had seen it. But when I got back to the hotel, I could not resist telling Clarke about it.

"Where is it?" he asked me. When I told him I had torn it up with my other notes, I thought he was going to throw a fit. He would have torn his hair only he didn't have any (though comparatively young, he was shining bald).

"Lenin's writing, and you destroyed it!" He glared as if I had committed the unpardonable sin. "You should never have done that. If you get another note from him, keep it and give it to me!"

Just before the Commission wound up, two things happened. I had made a last desperate attempt to justify my anti-parliamentarian opposition to the resolution, during which I took occasion to point out to Lenin that it was one thing for him to write about me as "an infant in politics" when I wasn't there but I wanted him to know that I was "an auld hand at the game". When I finished, Paul Levy, a German lawyer, made an extremely vicious personal attack on me. Lenin upbraided him for this, saying: "You must not speak that way of Comrade Gallacher. Comrade Gallacher will make mistakes, but he will always be loyal to the revolutionary movement." He also passed me a note which read: "When I wrote my small book I had not yet met you."

I kept that note and gave it to Clarke. In 1958, when I was visiting Moscow, I was approached by a Soviet comrade who wanted to know what I had done with the notes Lenin had written to me; they were collecting up everything they could find that Lenin had written. When I told him what I had done, he was worse than Clarke: at the sight of his face I could practically see the prison doors opening. When he had recovered somewhat I told him I would try and get the note back. On my return I got in touch with John S., who was by now a Labour councillor. Had he still got the note? He had. Would he give it to me to send to Moscow? He would. He brought it to me, with a letter for the Moscow comrades in which he said he had "nursed this note for thirty-eight years and was now returning it to its rightful owner". In reply, they sent each of us a photostat copy of the note, and a present to John S. He was very pleased with the present. Unfortunately his health was bad, and a few months later he died.

There was a big, bulky magazine published entitled *The Communist International*. In the number which reported the decisions of the Plenum there is a report of a speech by Lenin that starts with "Comrade Gallacher makes a joke". But there is no mention of what the joke was. I had spoken a short time earlier, just after little McLaine had been patting himself and his colleague Quelch on the back, on the grounds

that the Bolshevik delegation had come round to their point of view with regard to affiliation to the Labour Party. I pictured these unfortunate Russians peering through the fog that shrouded Britain and quite unable to guess what was going on in that faraway island; then came McLaine, I said, with the brilliant light of his supreme intelligence dispersing the fog and giving light and guidance to those who had been groping in the dark. Lenin was very sharp with me about that. He said the matter was too serious for flippant treatment, and while Comrade McLaine had used the wrong arguments he was right to support affiliation and I was wrong to oppose it.

During my last appearance on the tribune a telegram was handed up to the chairman; I interrupted my speech while he read it out to the Congress. It was from London: "COMMUNIST PARTY FORMED IN GREAT BRITAIN DECIDES ON AFFILIATION TO LABOUR PARTY HOLDS OUT ITS HAND TO COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL." Radek jeered: "That will please Comrade Gallacher!" To which I made reply: "Comrade Radek seems to be easily pleased. You will note that it says 'hand', not 'hands'—one hand to the Communist International, the other to the Second International via the Labour Party."

That was my last fling as an objector to the resolution.

The Congress over, there was a mass demonstration in the Bolshoi Opera House. The stage, like the theatre itself, was crowded. Zinoviev was in the chair. Bukharin, Serratti, an Italian, Radek, Paul Levy and others made short speeches. I had been chosen to speak on behalf of the Anglo-American delegation. All those others were "professionals" of one kind or another, while the "top of the bill" was Trotsky, who waited in the wings to make a dramatic entry. He chose a bad moment for doing so: all those who were sitting on the front row of the platform had spoken, and he took this for his cue. But just then Zinoviev called on Comrade Gallacher, who was sitting towards the back. As I made forward to the front, Trotsky made his entrance. The audience were up on their feet, cheering—but not for Trotsky. "Rabochy! Rabochy!" they were shouting. Old workers pushed down to the front of the stage and I had to stretch away down to shake hands with them; it seemed that all kinds of delegations had visited Moscow from different countries, but never a worker among them and it was as a worker they were welcoming me.

Trotsky stood still at the wings where he had entered, and when I had concluded a very short speech of greetings to the revolutionary workers of Moscow, Leningrad and the young Soviet Republic, with

a pledge to fight against Churchill and the interventionist warmongers of Britain, he got a cheer as he made for the front. But I was in the dog-house with the majestic Trotsky; he was the only leading figure in Moscow who never shook hands with me and with whom I never exchanged a greeting. He was the type that affected young girls in much the same way as our present-day pop singers, or whatever they're called; the Hollywood treatment he got could never possibly have been conceived of in relation to any other Soviet leader.

The following evening, a car drew up at the hotel door with a message from the driver to say I was wanted at the Kremlin. I was shown into Lenin's sitting-room and received a warm, comradely welcome. We chatted for some time about the Congress and about the demonstration, of which he had been given a report. He kept his eye on me all the time, and was obviously giving me a thorough weighing-up. Then he got down to the all-important question.

"Comrade Gallacher," he said. "Will you join the Communist Party when you return to Britain?" To this I answered yes.

"Will you do your best to get your Scottish comrades to join?" I then told him about the difficulty with John McLean, of John's obsession with spies and his utter lack of faith in all who had participated in the unity negotiations, and in particular his "exposure" of Theodore Rothstein as a representative of the Bolsheviks in London under the belief that he was an agent of the British Government. This was unfortunate, said Lenin, but I must persuade McLean to visit Moscow.

"We have quite a number of comrades who, through the stress of revolutionary activity, suffered in the same way. We have been able to bring them back to their normal condition," he said, adding that he was sure they could do the same for McLean.

I often thought afterwards that I should have got him to give me a written invitation for John, but it never entered my head while we were talking. I told him I was sure the Scottish comrades would join up with the new Communist Party, and would do all possible to make it a powerful party of the working class.

But what about affiliation? he asked me.

"I don't like it," I said. "But I'll accept it."

That wasn't enough, said Lenin. I had got to believe in it. Once again I repeated what I had been saying in the Commission and the Plenum: that any working-class representative who went to Parliament was corrupted in no time. I started to give him examples.

"Comrade Gallacher," he interrupted, "I know all about these

people. I have no illusions about them. But if the workers sent you to represent them in Parliament, would you become corrupt?"

"That's not a fair question," I objected.

"It is a fair question," he urged, "I want you to answer it. Would you become corrupt?"

I sat and looked at him for a moment; then I answered: "No, I'm sure that under no circumstances could the bourgeoisie corrupt me."

"Well then, Comrade Gallacher," he said with a smile, "you get the workers to send you to Parliament and show them how a revolutionary can make use of it."

He was pleased with the result of our conversation, and we parted on the best of terms.

The following day, Sylvia Pankhurst went to have a talk with Lenin. Sylvia had also taken the stowaway route to Bergen, as had several others, but had turned up too late for the Congress. She had been having a bitter feud with the unity groups and in particular with the leaders of the B.S.P. She had already given me a long, long story about the persecution she had suffered at their hands, and now she was on her way to tell Lenin all about it. She came back to the hotel very excited after her interview. Lenin wanted her to join the newly-formed Communist Party, but she had said she didn't trust any of the leaders to deal fairly with her.

"He told me that I should join," she confided to me. "And if I had any trouble I should consult Comrade Gallacher—'you can trust him'."

Next day I learned that Sylvia, Tanner and Dave Ramsay were leaving that night for Leningrad, *en route* for Murmansk. I was getting ready to travel with John Reed to Baku; we were to be delegates from the Communist International to the Congress of the Peoples of the East.

The journey back to England. Stowaways. Scottish Communist Party links up with English. McLean's sickness and death. Communist Party organisation. Contests Dundee. Ireland betrayed. Jim Larkin. Germany 1923, crisis and betrayal.

I SAW Tanner, Ramsay and Sylvia off that evening, promising to meet them when I got back to London. But I was to see them very much sooner. The following morning a car came for me again: I was wanted at the Kremlin. This time I was ushered into Lenin's office. Very briskly he met me and shook hands, showed me to a seat and then said without preliminaries: "When can you go home?"

I told him I would not be leaving for some time yet as I was going as a delegate to the congress in Baku.

"No, no!" he exclaimed. "You must return to Britain as soon as possible. The workers have set up Councils of Action to stop Churchill's drive for war. You are needed at home: you can do more there than in Baku. Do you agree?"

What could I say, other than that he was right and I ought to get home as soon as possible.

"When will you go?" he asked next. I told him I had no packing to do and could go the next day.

"Why not tonight?"

"Tonight!" I exclaimed, "but I could not get the necessary papers at such short notice."

"You agree to go, and I'll see that you have all that is necessary," he assured me. Agreed. Beaming on me, he shook hands and wished me well. And so back to the hotel, to let John Reed know that he would have to get someone to take my place as his fellow-delegate. Tom Quelch was chosen. Back in Britain I got the tragic news that both of them returned to Moscow with typhoid. For John Reed it proved fatal. Tom Quelch had a long illness and I don't think he ever fully recovered.

Lenin had suggested that in view of the many spies who were around I should travel under an assumed name, so I took the name of John Thomson. My papers were thus made out, and that evening John Thomson boarded the train for Leningrad, the comrades there having been advised by telephone that they had to fix me up in the Hotel Europa. When I got to Leningrad I found the three from whom I had

parted in Moscow; we agreed to travel together that evening. Once again I went to Smolny for a talk with the leading comrades there; then having obtained my train voucher I paid a visit to a meeting of the Finnish Central Committee. I may have been the last foreign comrade to visit them. It was shortly after that that some Finnish fascists, passing themselves off as Communist Party members, entered the headquarters and shot all the executive members present. A bad, bad business.

We were driven to the station and shown our compartments: the three men were in one and Sylvia had a compartment all to herself. The train started and the four of us settled down for a chat about what we had seen and heard. We were soon disturbed—and I mean disturbed! The engine was burning logs of wood and was getting along quite nicely on that somewhat primitive fuel; we were feeling quite satisfied with things when the Control came to examine our train vouchers and identity papers. The others were all right, but I was all wrong! I had handed over identity papers made out to John Thomson and a railway voucher made out to William Gallacher! One comrade in Moscow had made out my papers and another, evidently, had telephoned Leningrad to say that Gallacher was on his way and to make him out a ticket for Murmansk.

We tried in a sort of chorus to make the guard understand. Other passengers gathered in the corridor; one of them spoke English and wanted to help, but we managed to edge him out and get the compartment door closed while we made the guard understand that we wanted him to telephone Leningrad at the next station. This he ultimately agreed to do. Having got this arranged, Sylvia went to her own compartment and the rest of us settled down to woo our friend Morpheus. But if we slept it was not for long. At about two in the morning we woke, choking; the compartment was filling up with harsh, penetrating smoke. We threw open the door and found the corridor filled with it. The front corner of the carriage was on fire. We were not alone in being roused: the attendant had wakened and signalled to the engineman, and the train was stopped. We were out of that carriage in record time. But Sylvia . . . ? I went back and found her nearly suffocated. I raised her over my shoulder and got her outside, where she quickly recovered. The fire was soon extinguished, and we got on our way again, but there wasn't much sleep. Although there was a large, balloon-shaped net attached to the funnel of the engine, red-hot ashes still made their way through, and we didn't know when we might have to jump out again. However, the guard got satisfaction from

Leningrad about my papers. We had no further fires, and arrived safe and sound at Murmansk.

It was now late August and there was no more round-the-clock daylight in the Arctic. Little knowing what lay ahead, we boarded a fishing boat for Vardo. We set off in the afternoon in a choppy sea. By night-time the little craft was almost turning somersaults. We were down in the forward cubby-hole. Sylvia could not stand the confined space and the strong odour that clogs the air in such vessels; she wanted out on deck, and I had to go with her. The seas were dashing across the deck but she wouldn't stay inside. I got a tarpaulin from one of the fishermen, got Sylvia to lie along the hatchway, and covered her with the tarpaulin; I wedged myself between the hatchway and the beam, and held her there all through the night, the sea behaving worse with every passing hour.

What a night! I had been in several rough seas on the Atlantic, but that little craft got a buffeting worse than anything I had experienced before. It got so bad, the skipper took what must have been a desperate chance. We were running head on, and after a particularly heavy sea he swung the little craft around. He was certainly highly skilled. Had we caught the next one on the beam it might have been all over with us. But he made it, and we ran with the sea towards the shore, into a cove where the water was calm and quiet.

This would be about seven o'clock in the morning. The skipper knew where he was making for; there, on top of a rising piece of ground, was a Soviet wireless station. We made our way up to it, and got a cordial welcome from the staff. They made us coffee—or rather it was a substitute, but it was wet and hot and just what we needed. They heated up some potatoes, mashed them and mixed them with chopped bully-beef. We told them it tasted good. They said we should thank Ironside when we got back home. (They were still living partly on the rations that General Ironside had left behind.)

It was a pleasant change to sit and chat with no wild sea jumping at us. We dozed a bit, for we had had no sleep all night. When we came off the boat I could scrape the brine off my face and of course I was soaked right through. Sylvia had come through it very well and though, like the rest of us, she had got badly shaken, she wasn't long in getting back to her old lively self with the staff at the station. And maybe she had forgotten that while I was holding her on the hatchway her mind had gone away back to her childhood days in the English country side. She had started reciting what was, I expect, a folk ballad, some-

thing about getting caught in a storm and about "the old oak tree that sheltered me". From under the tarpaulin she had peeped out and declaimed: "Gallacher, you're my oak tree!"

In the evening we set off again. The skipper thought the sea had fallen a bit. If it had, it wasn't long till it was up on its feet again. I must honestly say that it seemed worse than the night before, and the old oak tree had to function once again. In the early morning the Captain took another chance, and on this occasion ran us into the harbour of a village called Viadaguba. Sylvia was taken to a house on one side of the harbour, and rest of us got a room across the other side. It was decided that we should spend the night there and make another try in the morning. We were fairly comfortable, and we got enough to eat. Ramsay and Tanner occupied the only bed, while I made myself comfortable on the floor and enjoyed a much-needed sleep. In the morning, after a cup of coffee and a piece of black bread, I went across to let Sylvia know that the boat was ready to leave. The woman who came to the door looked at me in surprise when I asked for Sylvia. She waved her arm towards the mouth of the harbour and, I gathered, indicated that Sylvia had gone. I couldn't understand it. I went back to the other side and spoke to the skipper, who knew a bit of English, asking him if he knew what had happened. You could have knocked me down with a twelve-pound hammer when he told me that she had gone with a Soviet trader that had been lying over on her side of the harbour. The names we called her, when I reported to the others! To slip off like that, without a word—there's gratitude!

There was nothing we could do about it but get aboard our own craft and hope for the best. Well, it is always permissible to hope, but we don't always get what we hope for, and we most surely didn't get it on this occasion. That night, so help me, was worse than the two previous nights put together. During the worst of it, Ramsay, Tanner and I solemnly shook hands and prepared to meet our doom.

When at last we did get to Vardo the first thing we did was to send a cable to Moscow recommending that no more delegates should be sent by the Arctic route. Alas, before Moscow could get through to Murmansk another fishing boat had left. On board were three fishermen, a young French comrade named Lefevre and another French delegate; the five of them were never heard of again. A sad, sad tragedy.

After a day's wait we were put on to a Norwegian passenger boat; we had fine Norwegian names, but there wasn't a very keen look-out

kept by the Norwegian police, or we would easily have been spotted. We heard a stewardess telling some other passengers that though we had Norwegian names we did not know a word of Norwegian. (Although that was true, we had very little difficulty in making out what she was saying to the others.) However, we got to Tromsø, where we disembarked without incident, and from there we got a night train for Christiania, now Oslo. Between seven and eight in the morning we stopped at a station—the name of which I can't recall—where there was a station restaurant such as I had never seen before. The passengers entered the door and paid the equivalent of four shillings. Inside, waiters were busy laying steaming platters on a series of tables: eggs, fried, boiled and scrambled, all kinds of meat, hot and cold, fish, fruit, everything the heart or stomach of man could desire, plate after plate if you wished to play the glutton, washed down by unlimited cups of coffee. Satisfied, the "fed, not up but well" passengers returned to the train. We found Oslo an interesting city, with quite a brisk trade at the harbour. The day following our arrival, a message came from the comrades in Bergen to the comrades in Oslo: "*Sylvia Pankhurst wants Gallacher to come immediately to Bergen; serious trouble.*"

"For Christ's sake!" I appealed to the others, "what can it be now?"

It was a laugh to them, but not to me. The comrades insisted that I should go. They took me to the station (where strangely enough the assistant station master was a Dundee man), bought me a ticket and saw me on to the train. I was met at Bergen, and received the welcome news that Sylvia was aboard a ship and on her way home. The trouble? One of the comrades had helped her to slip aboard a ship the evening before we got her message: once aboard, a seaman had tried to "do her wrong" and she had rushed off the ship screaming, made her way to the Communist Party headquarters and told them, somewhat hysterically, that she wanted Gallacher. Then, while I was travelling, they had got her into the hands of a good Party comrade who was a trusted seaman and promised to take good care of her, so off she went with never another thought for me and my wasted journey.

But I found a couple of other helpless creatures at Bergen—Eamon McAlpine, the Irish-American, and Roddy Connolly. When the Bergen comrades wired for me they had made arrangements to get me stowed away on a ship that was sailing in a couple of days, on which there were several Party members, who would see that I was fixed up in comfort and got an occasional bite to eat. But this couple begged me to take them along. There was no chance of three getting into a

comfortable corner, and I told them it would be much better for them to try separately. But no, they wanted to have my company. After a while I agreed. I had a talk with one of the seamen comrades and explained how I was fixed. He said that if there were three of us we would have to be slipped down below into the coal-bunker by the top manhole. I broke the news to my new problems and they said they didn't care how they travelled if I was with them. So the coal-bunker was agreed.

On the afternoon of the night we had to get aboard we collected our provisions: a loaf apiece and a five-gill bottle of water. That had to do us two nights and two days. Late in the evening, before the officers and crew were due to come aboard, we were down at the dock. Waiting until the watchman was up at the forward end of the ship, we slipped on and made our way to the stoke-hold. One after another we got through the top manhole and made ourselves comfortable—if it's permissible to use that word—spread out over the coal. The ship was due to sail around midnight, and we held our breath till we heard the engines throb and all the rushing about overhead that indicated we were on our way. It was, of course, pitch dark in our "bedroom"; we were lying with our heads to the after-end of the bunker with our feet towards the manhole. The firemen in the stokehold were busily engaged shovelling coal from the lower manhole into the furnaces. As time and their work went on, the coal moved away from our feet and legs and soon there was a 'coal slide' and we went slithering down with it. We then had to grope around levelling out as best we could. As the height of the coal was reduced, odd lumps were left in the upper girders and as the ship rolled these came rattling down on the heads and bodies of the unfortunate passengers. Not only that; when we tore off a chunk of bread we had to accept a relish of coal dust with it, and pick little gritty bits out of our teeth. It is not a mode of travel I would recommend.

However, we got to Newcastle around midnight of the second day. I slipped up the companionway when all was quiet, to look out for the watchman. When the coast was clear, I gave my two mates the glad sign and we got off the ship in a hurry.

Black as sweeps, we made our way along the dock. Before we had gone far we met a policeman—and before he could stop us I hailed him. I pitched a story of a breakdown in the engine, and how we had been sent home without thought as to where we could spend the rest of the night, for we lived outside the city. He was quite sympathetic,

THE MOTHER OF WILLIAM
(ALLACHER



FAMILY GROUP WILLIE
SLATED AT LEFT



WILLIAM ALLACHER
ONE
JULY 1884

J. Cook



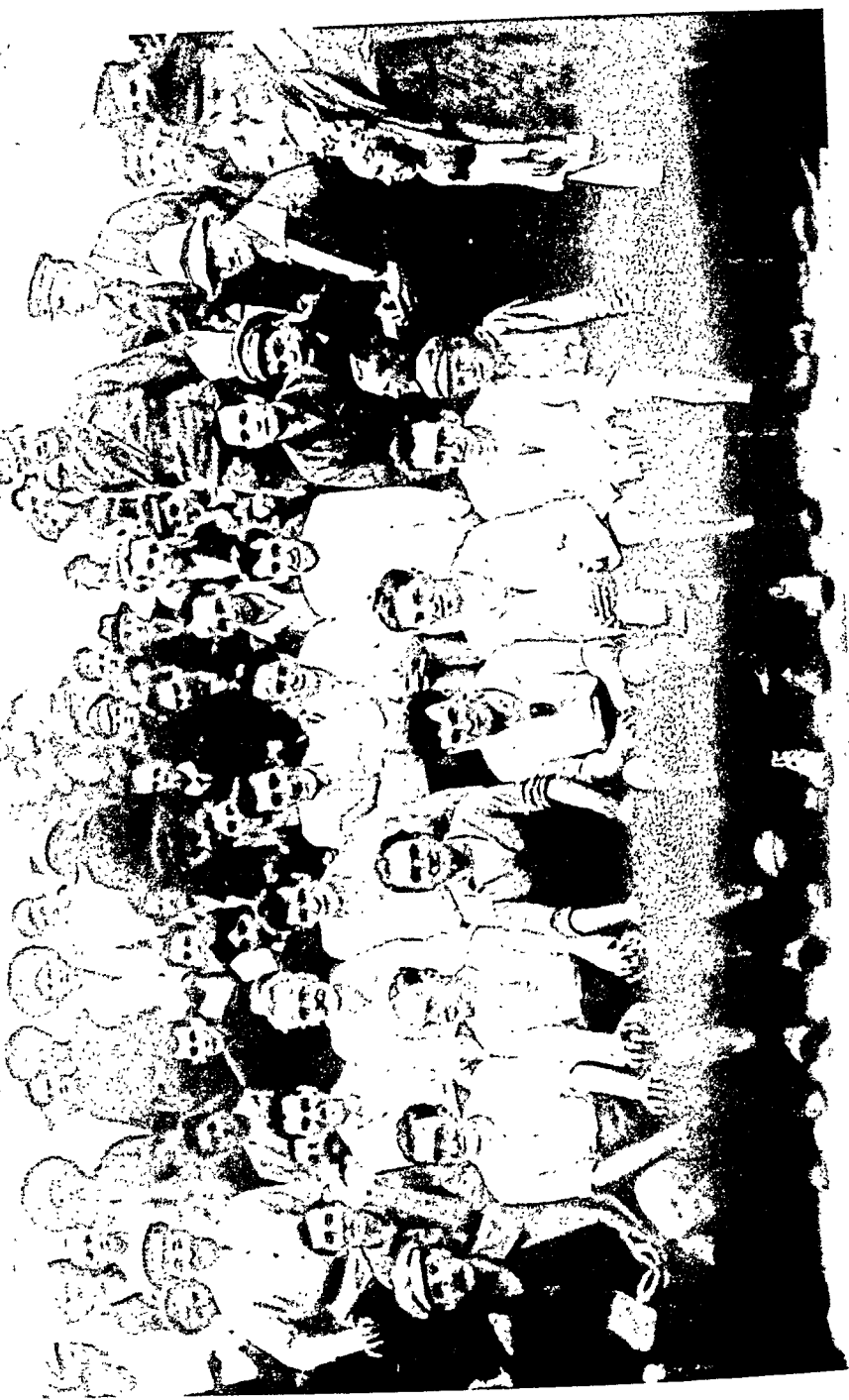
WILLIAM AND JEAN GALLACHER



WILLIAM GALLACHER c. 1918



SECOND CONGRESS OF THE COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL, 1920
 Seated, left to right: J. T. Murphy, William Gallacher, Jack Tanner,
 Interpreter, W. McLane, Sylvia Pankhurst, U.S. delegate. Standing,
 second from right: John Reed



THE INTERNATIONAL FOOTBALL MATCH, MOSCOW, 1920



A PICNIC AT ZION CITY, ILLINOIS, ON A SUNDAY IN 1913

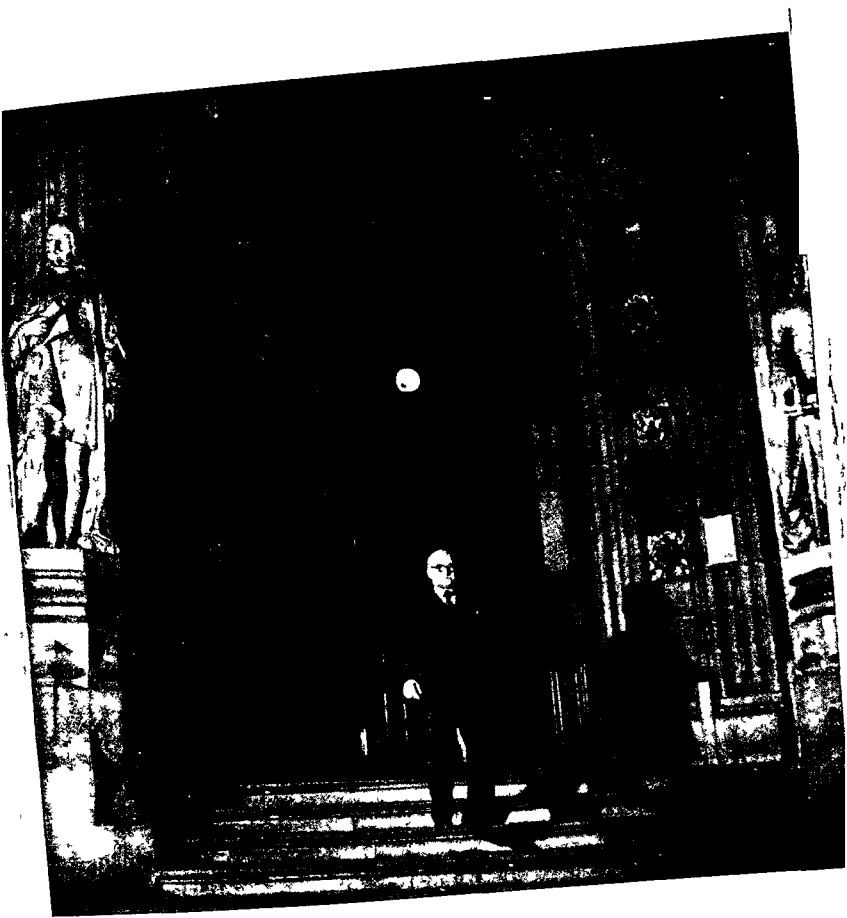
Standing at right (in white shirt) W. Gallacher. Among the party are Mr. and Mrs. John Taylor, Mr. and Mrs. Albrecht Schmutz ("Smitty"), Nicholas Velthuys, Charles M. Ullom, Fred Duchek and Theodore Rosenthal ("Deacon Moses").



DON AND JOHN ON THE SS "TUSCANIA"



JEAN GALLACHER WITH HER TWO ADOPTED BOYS



"ONLY A COMMON OLD WORKING MAN . . . BUT WESTMINSTER BELONGS
TO ME"



JARAMA, SPAIN, EASTER, 1937



(COLLECTING HIS MAIL FROM THE HOUSE OF COMMONS POST OFFICE)



CONGRATULATIONS FROM DR STEVENSON, DEFEATED TORY OPPONENT IN WEST FIFE



COMMUNIST M P BROADCASTS FOR THE FIRST TIME, JUNE 12, 1943

WELD UP THE LABOUR PARTY
AND COMMUNIST PARTY
RENEWED FOR PROGRESS



FEBRUARY 1951 AT PARK ROAD SCHOOL, HORNSEY

21st December 1961.



Dear Willie, Greetings and Best Wishes
on your 80th Birthday.

We who remember you and often
worked with you during your years
as Member of Parliament,
will never forget your great work
and above all your working class
integrity.

On your 80th Birthday we think about
you and your wife, whom you always
spoke so well about.

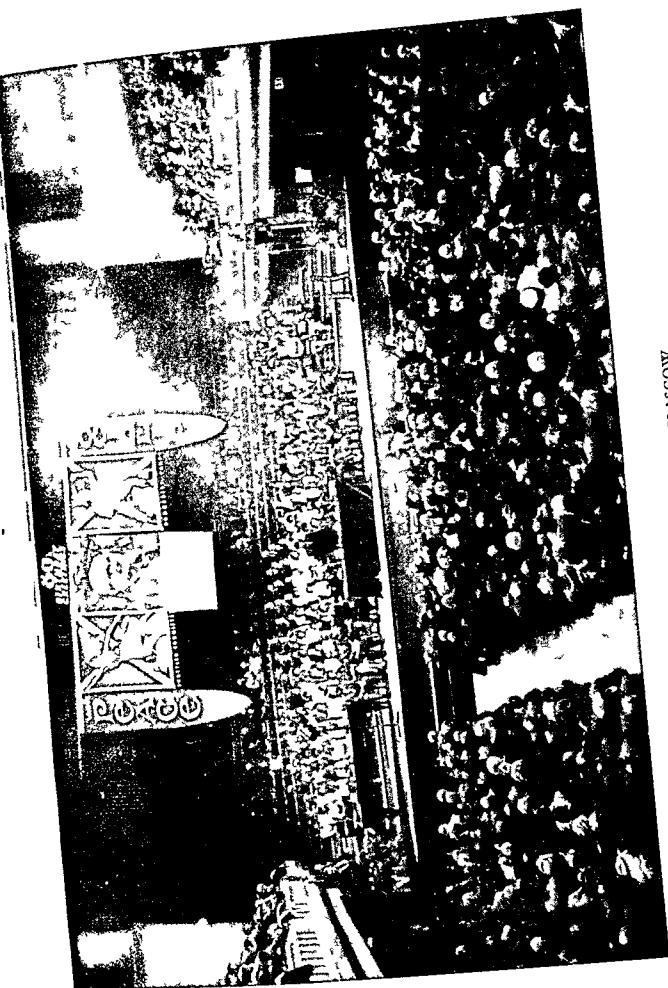
We salute you with affection and respect.

Signed / Ellis Smith.

Arthur Pearson / Tom Brown Miners Group
Chairman.

W. Glenvil Hall / Sydney Silverman. S. O. Davies.
George Pargiter / Charles Key. Frank Bowles.
John Parker / Michael Foot.

BIRTHDAY LETTER FROM OLD FRIENDS IN THE COMMONS
(Ellis Smith, Tom Brown, Ness Edwards, Arthur Pearson, Sydney Silverman,
S. O. Davies, W. Glenvil Hall, George Pargiter, Charles Key, John Parker,
Frank Bowles, Michael Foot.)



EIGHTIETH BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION AT ST. ANDREW'S HALLS, GLASGOW



JEAN AND WILLIAM GALLACHER ON HOLIDAY



WITH ABE MOFFAT AT THE
EIGHTIETH BIRTHDAY CELEBRA-
TION



RELAXING AT BOWLS



ADDRESSING A FACTORY GAIT MEETING A FEW MONTHS BEFORE HIS DEATH

followers, some members of the I.L.P. and what was left of the Socialist Labour Party were all represented. One of the S.L.P. group objected to my being allowed to attend, as I was not a delegate. The chairman was an old friend and he ruled otherwise; he said I would always be welcomed at a working-class meeting. There was a short bit of a wrangle and the chairman, Jack Leckie, put it to a vote. It was carried by a large majority that I stay and have the right to speak. John McLean was not present, but his lieutenant James Macdougall was representing him, and he voted against my presence.

Speaking on behalf of John McLean, Macdougall declared himself all in favour of a separate Party. The S.L.P. group made speeches to the same effect. After a time I asked the chairman to give me the floor.

I reminded them that the unity of the working class was something we had all earnestly advocated; that only through unity could we ever hope to make progress. True, it had to be unity based on a sound Marxist policy and programme—but had any one of the speakers here who were advocating not unity but division, had they said anything against the policy and programme of the Party already formed? Not one had done so. Apparently they did not like some of the members of the new Party as persons. At any rate, that seemed to be the burden of their arguments. I appealed to them not to go ahead with their separate Party but to appoint a committee to get in touch with the leaders of the new Party, to get from them a clear statement of their policy, come back to another conference and make a report, on the basis of which they could decide what to do. The chairman said that this was a wise suggestion, and counselled the delegates to accept it, despite protests from the opponents. A committee was elected; I could not be a member of it because I was not a delegate to the meeting. But Jack got over that by proposing that the committee should be given power to co-opt me. This was also agreed—much to the disgust of Macdougall and the remnants of the S.L.P.

The committee got in touch with the new Party, and out of the negotiations and a further conference, it was decided to hold a unity conference in Leeds, at which all official positions would be thrown open for election. Arthur McManus had already been chosen as President of the new Party and that position, with the others, was open to be challenged. Jack wanted me to stand for President. I was against it. The new Party would have a majority of delegates at the unity conference and they would undoubtedly vote for their own already-chosen President. Moreover, I had recollections of our comradeship

during the first years of the war and I had no desire to give the impression, by standing against Arthur, that I had no confidence in him as a leading official of the Party. There was a further drawback, which I didn't mention. Anyone who stood for the position of President could not be nominated for the Executive. So I held back, but Jack and the other Scottish comrades were adamant: I must stand. I let them put my name forward, and, as I had expected, all the Glasgow delegates voted for me and all the others voted for "Little Mac" as he was familiarly known. So President and Executive were elected and I remained a member of what, at that time, we called the rank-and-file.

The following week I made a point of seeing and talking to John McLean, when I told him that Lenin had expressed a very strong desire to see him. John knew that his work was well known in the young Soviet Republic; he had been appointed Consul for Scotland, and one of the docks in Leningrad had been given the name of the John McLean Dock. Quite apart from the message I had brought from Lenin he appeared keen to make the trip. He had certain commitments to fulfil but assured me he would not take on any more and when they were concluded he would make the journey to Moscow. I was very happy at the outcome of this task, and despite his anger at what had happened with regard to the separate Party, we were on the friendliest possible terms.

About a month later I learned that he had decided not to go to the Soviet Union. I went to see him again, in the Ingram Street hall where he was using a room as headquarters of what he called "The Tramp Trust" but afterwards changed to the Scottish Communist Republican Party. I found him in the company of an ex-policeman from Dundee, Sandy Ross. This fellow was one of a number of harpies who were clinging like parasites to John. Up to the last, John got mass support from the working class and, with his public meetings and Marxist classes, he drew in sufficient money to maintain this ex-policeman and something to spare for two or three others. Strange, that with his obsession about spies he should have such a questionable customer as his constant companion. I tried my best to get John to keep the promise he had made me.

"How do I know that what you told me about Lenin is true?" he said. "Why are you so anxious to get me away from Scotland?"

I gazed at him, astonished. "Has someone been suggesting that I want you out of the country?" I asked. He shifted his eyes to Sandy Ross.

"You big, white-livered bugger," I said to that subject. "Is this some of your work?"

"I had nothing to do with it," he muttered.

One thing led to another, and at last I found that a prominent member of the S.L.P. had told John that I was jealous of the standing he had with the working class and wanted him out of Glasgow.

I was mad, blazing mad. When I got home I made a very bad blunder, one of many of which I have been guilty on occasions. I wrote a letter. I marked it *Private and Confidential* and sent it to the secretary of the S.L.P., a lad named Mitchell, asking him to put it before his Executive. I explained what had taken place between John and myself, when he agreed to go to Moscow, and how a prominent member of the S.L.P. had succeeded in getting John to call off the visit by telling him that I was jealous of him, a very silly statement and one that would have had no effect if John had not been a sick man. I went on to say that this was a very serious matter; that John was suffering from hallucinations and, if he didn't receive treatment, it could mean the end of him as a working-class agitator and teacher. I pointed out that he would get the treatment he required in Moscow, and it was criminal on the part of one of their members (whom I named) to stand in his way.

That's roughly what I wrote. What happened? Mitchell telephoned the lad who was doing the dirty work, read the letter out to him, and asked him what he should do. "Make copies," was the answer he got, "and give one to John McLean!"

How do I know this? The following Sunday evening at a packed meeting in St. Mungo Hall, John told his audience: "Gallacher is trying to make out that I am mad. He wants to get me in an asylum." He produced a copy of the letter, told how it came into his possession, and read it out then and there. What comrades! And poor John did not realise how rotten they were, that they could play such a dastardly trick not on me, but on him. As sure as I write this, they killed him!

The remnant of the S.L.P., without a future, thought maybe they could get a blood transfusion through association with John's Scottish Republican Party; a conference was arranged between them. It was arranged for a Saturday afternoon in the S.L.P. Hall in Renfrew Street. I told my friend Stirling I was going to force my way in and challenge them about my letter and the sickness of John McLean. He said he would like to come with me. I told him there was a chance that I would get thrown out. "All right," he grinned, "I'll be there to catch you!"

The two of us went to Glasgow and made our way to Renfrew

Street. The S.L.P. Hall was L-shaped; the door opened at the toe of the short leg of the L; the platform was at the corner looking into the long leg, which of course could not be seen from the door. I opened the door and pushed in; pushed in is correct, for all the seats were occupied and a whole number of people were standing in the entrance.

When Stirling and I appeared, there was a sort of hushed gasp. The chairman, James Macdougall, could hardly believe his eyes. He glared at me for several seconds, then shouted: "What do you want here?"

"I want to make a short talk about a letter I wrote and about Comrade John McLean," was my reply.

"You'll make no talk here!"—he was still shouting—"Get out!"

"After I make the talk," I responded.

"If you don't go out you'll get thrown out!" he threatened, looking towards the ex-policeman, who was standing near the door.

"There's no use looking at Sandy Ross," I told him. "The other day in the presence of John I called him a white-livered bugger and that's what he is. Didn't I, Sandy?"

He mumbled something like: "Naw, ye didnae!"

"Well, I'm telling you now!" I said.

All this time, John McLean kept repeating "Gallacher, you're a waster! Gallacher, you're a waster!" Then I heard someone from the long leg of the hall addressing the chairman. I had no idea who it was, but a very clear voice said: "Mr. Chairman, I think we should hear what comrade Gallacher has to say."

The chairman gazed in that direction as if he could not believe his ears. Then, as if speaking more to himself than to the lad who had made the remark, he muttered: "Ye bugger, ye're another o' them!"

I got the opportunity, and said a few words about the shocking action of the official who had given my letter to McLean, about McLean's promise and how he had been persuaded to go back on it. I warned them that they were endangering the health of our comrade and appealed to all those present who had any real regard for McLean to stop the harpies exploiting him and let him get a chance to have a rest.

But they kept him at it. Towards the end his voice gave way and he could only force out a hoarse croak. In the winter of 1923 he was laid low with pneumonia. In his weak, exhausted condition he was unable to combat it and after a few weeks of suffering he closed his eyes on the world and its trials.

What of the harpies? Shortly after John's death the ex-policeman

got a post in India as foreman or policeman in an Indian mill; the lad who advised Mitchell to give John a copy of my letter joined the Labour Party and thrived exceedingly.

The lad who made the interjection in my favour at the Renfrew Street meeting, I learned afterwards, was Aitken Ferguson, a member of the S.L.P. Some time later I was introduced to him by a friend; he joined the Communist Party and we've been close friends and comrades through all the years that have followed. All my Glasgow comrades know that Wednesday forenoon, every week, is set aside for a visit to Aitken. He knows my weakness for writing letters, and often he will tell me that I ought to write to this paper or that, and what I should say. Dutifully I carry out his instructions. Occasionally a letter gets published, but my, oh my, the letters I've written that have never made the columns of our great free Press!

Although I was not an official of the Communist Party I was a very busy man. Meetings all over the country—street meetings, indoor meetings, mass meetings and small meetings; I'm certain that no one in this or any other country could beat my record for public meetings and street demonstrations. Of course, there were many other comrades participating in the organisational and propaganda work, but despite the devotion of many good men and women the Party was not flourishing. Things, in fact, were quite otherwise. The revolutionary tide that had arisen on the Continent had had a big effect in this country: so much so that the Labour Party Executive published a document, *Labour and the New Social Order* in which we were told:

Labour, whether in office or in opposition, will do nothing to help in the restoration of capitalism but will do all in its power to bury it with the millions it has done to death.

The Labour Party had also, for the first time, set the goal of socialism as its aim.

But by 1921 the tide was showing signs of ebbing. On the main hoardings of the country could be seen appeals, with pictures, of Labour leaders who had already forgotten their own document and were loyal to the bourgeoisie, urging the workers to work harder and produce more.

Our Party was likewise feeling the effect of the receding tide. Many enthusiasts who, like the wealthy people of the year One Thousand when it was prophesied that the balloon would go up and the elect would go with it, had poured a goodly portion of their wealth into

the coffers of the Party, were now falling off. Others, who had expected spectacular things to happen with the formation of the Party, began to drift away from it. The situation was giving concern to the leadership. At an Executive meeting it was suggested that my experience of the ups and downs of movements might be helpful, and it was decided to co-opt me on to the Executive as Vice-President, with power to make recommendations for stopping the decline and for getting the Party on the upward path once again.

As I found out very early, I had taken on a tough job. Not only was the membership at a very low ebb, the financial situation was extremely threatening too. It was obvious that several full-time functionaries would have to go and find a livelihood elsewhere. It would scarcely be worth while to list all the organisational changes that were made, though it may be mentioned that I set up two committees in an effort to draw all members of the Party into its work. I set up what were known as the organisational and political sub-committees. These became recognised organs of the Party. As for finance, I proposed the cutting down of expenses in various ways, including head office and district office expenditure. Several sackings had to be made, of which I will mention only one, because of a sequel that will be mentioned later. I sacked Jack Braddock, Bessie's husband. And how I wish I had kept the correspondence that passed between us; like so much else, it has gone.

It was drawing towards the autumn of 1921 when I became Vice-President, and I found that I was just in time to go with a delegation of Communist Party leaders to meet a delegation from the Labour Party Executive, to discuss our application for affiliation. Our delegation consisted of Albert Inkpin, Secretary, Arthur McManus, President, Tom Bell, National Organiser, and myself the newly-appointed Vice-President. Representing the Labour Party were Sidney Webb, Philip Snowden, Arthur Henderson and the National Agent, Egerton P. Wake.

It was decided that I should put the case for the Communist Party. I thought the President ought to open, but he and the others were against this: I wondered about it at the time and we weren't long in the joint session before I found the reason for it. I thought I had made out a good case for our affiliation, and I certainly got a courteous hearing. But no sooner had I finished than Sidney Webb got a Press cutting from among his papers and said to me: "You have made out a very good case for affiliation. Now tell us what this means"—and he handed me the cutting.

It was from our Party's weekly paper and the date was a week after Party's formation in the previous August, while I had been in Moscow. I was completely knocked off my balance when I read it, though I tried not to show it. It was a very short note, written by McManus to reassure those members of the S.L.P. whom he had been able to bring with him into the new organisation, all of whom had throughout the conference remained firmly opposed to affiliation. He told them they had nothing to fear, that our application for affiliation was being made so that we could "disrupt the Labour Party from within"!

Talk about fighting a losing battle! We were routed before we met in conflict. I tried my best, but they always returned to the question of loyalty, in relation to which they could put no trust in us. I waxed wroth at this, addressing myself to Snowden. "How can you raise the question of loyalty with us?" I asked him. "I was loyal to the movement when many of those you are associated with now had gone over to the enemy. You were in Glasgow when I was out on bail and you warmly congratulated me. Isn't that so?"

He agreed, and said that he would take none of it back. He would welcome me, and others of our members, into the Labour Party, but not the Communist Party itself. The Party could only hope to gain its aims by disrupting the Labour Party. And we couldn't get past that. They were solidly against affiliation.

At the subsequent St. Pancras Congress of our Party, our late and ever-revered comrade, Tommy Jackson, inadvertently gave our enemies a further opportunity of misrepresenting the Party's policy. In answer to a question someone had put to him, about shaking hands with Arthur Henderson, one of the men responsible for the shooting of James Connolly, he made the typical Jacksonian remark: "Yes, I'd take him by the hand as a preliminary to taking him by the throat!" For years that was presented on the platform and in the press as: "The Communist Party has openly declared that it would only shake hands with the Labour Party as a preliminary to taking it by the throat." This distorted version was spread so rapidly and continuously that it was impossible for us, with our limited means, to overcome it, and so the membership of the Labour Party got an entirely wrong impression of our Party and its policy.

At this same Congress, which was held in March 1922, the Executive proposed that a Commission of eight E.C. members should be set up to go into the whole question of Party organisation, including finance, policy and leadership. An amendment was moved, and carried against

the E.C. by 87-38, that the Commission should consist of non-E.C. members; this represented a victory for those who at that time regarded themselves as the constructive opposition. It was eventually decided that a three-man Commission was adequate, and I was very strong in demanding that R. Palme Dutt, the young student I had met at Guildford, should be its chairman. Having achieved this I was quite satisfied that the other two should be Harry Inkpin, brother of the Party Secretary and a fine young chap, and a young comrade, Harry Pollitt, who had come from Manchester to work in London. The Commission did a great job for the Party. Comrade Dutt was obviously the guiding and directing force in its work and achievements. The report presented for discussion gave all of us—whether in the country or at headquarters—a clear idea of how a Marxist, a Communist Party, should organise and carry on its work, and the correct Marxist policy on which that work should be based. The report didn't immediately solve the problems of finance and membership but it started us on the way to solve them.

In the meantime, there was an election coming on, and I had been chosen to contest Dundee as Communist Party candidate. Dundee was a *single constituency with two representatives*. Churchill at the time was one: I cannot recall the other. Labour put up Tom Johnston and, though not openly making a pact, encouraged their supporters to give their other vote to Eddie Scrymgeour, the Prohibitionist. Eddie had stood on several previous occasions, and this time there was an amazing sweep of sentiment around the slogan which could be seen and heard all over Dundee: "Give old Eddie a chance!"

And by God, it got old Eddie the votes! "By God" is correct, if we were to believe old Eddie: at the declaration of the poll it was to God, not to the electors, that he rendered thanks. Eddie and God were an unbeatable combination—while the sentiment lasted.

But we had a terrific campaign nevertheless, directing all our fire against Churchill. I had a great band of workers—most of them, like Eddie, Prohibitionists. There had been a split in the ranks of the Prohibition movement some time before: Bob Stewart was the leader of a group that wanted socialism to be made the goal of the movement. Scrymgeour's social programme, if such it could be called, was Pic in the Sky. On this the split took place and the socialist Prohibitionists, led by Bob Stewart who had a good knowledge of Marxism, joined in the unity negotiations that led to the formation of the Communist Party. As a branch of the Party they were very active, with the advan-

tage of having a hall, not a very large one but useful for all kinds of meetings.

This hall was our centre in the election campaign, and it attracted many supporters outside the ranks of the Party, in particular a small group of lads who were heart and soul with the I.R.A.

We got tremendous meetings, with ever-growing enthusiasm. Churchill's meetings, whether he was present or not, began, continued and ended in uproar. And in the uproar could always be heard the "accursed" name Gallacher, never the name of any other candidate. How he must have hated the sound!

When "the tumult and the shouting died" we gathered in an upstairs room to hear the Sheriff read out the results. At the window were the two victors, Eddie and Johnston. Between them and me sat Churchill and his wife. His face was drawn into a scowl as he kept pulling at his underlip; his good lady was softly weeping. It was an awful blow for them.

Old Eddie at the window scarcely bothered looking down at the crowd below: he gave most of his attention to his Pal up above. Johnston then said a few words, after which the Sheriff, half turning, said: "Would you care to speak, Mr. Churchill?"

Churchill, with his back to the Sheriff, did not turn his head, just gave it a negative shake. Before the Sheriff had a chance to close the proceedings I called out: "Hey, I'm going to speak!"

A sort of electric current appeared to animate Churchill. I thought he was going to get up. It was as if he was thinking: "If that bastard can speak there can be nothing to keep me from doing the same." But the current wasn't strong enough. He sank back, his scowl darker than before.

Sixteen years later when Tories, Liberals, Labour and I.L.P.'ers were cheering Chamberlain and wishing him God-speed on his treacherous pilgrimage to Munich, Churchill sat in his corner seat "below the gangway"—the only member beside myself who made it clear, by his silence, that he was against the betrayal of Czechoslovakia. Head lowered, he was scowling much as I had seen him scowl at Dundee. When I spoke, amid the jeers and yells of the Tories, I saw the electric current stir him again. That's twice I almost forced him to his feet; but the weight of Toryism on this occasion, like the lack of it at the polls that other time, made his knees rubbery.

I got over 6,000 votes in that election. There was another election within two years and I stood again and got over 10,000. It was thought

by the comrades that I was well on the way to win the seat. But new tasks had come on the scene for me, and to make clear what happened, I will have to go back to early 1921.

I was in gaol when the Easter Rising of 1916 made its historic declaration, establishing Ireland as an independent Republic. The Clyde Workers' Committee kept close touch with the Irish movement, several of our members having had a long association with James Connolly through the Socialist Labour Party. Then, when what De Valera called "the four glorious years" started, we were ready to give our fullest support to the Sinn Féin government in the heroic fight it was making for an Ireland "free and independent, one and indivisible". In all our campaigning on its behalf, we kept in close contact with the leaders in Dublin. We had two valuable contacts in Glasgow: Joe Robinson, whose brother was an officer in the I.R.A., and Charlie Diamond, who ultimately got arrested and deported to Ireland, only to have the deportation order withdrawn and compensation awarded to him when the Treaty was signed.

In November 1921 the Lloyd George government, realising that the strong feeling in this country and America would sooner or later overwhelm them if they continued their utterly ruthless and brutal war against an heroic people only asking to be free, decided to open up negotiations with President De Valera and the Irish government. De Valera, who had £5,000 or £7,000 on his head, dead or alive, came to London and had a session or two with the tricky Welshman. But nothing Lloyd George could say or do could shake or change the Irish President. No allegiance to the Crown, no partition, Ireland Free and Independent, One and Indivisible! All the threats of an all-out, terrible war made no impression on him. He and his government were bound, not only to the living but to the dead, to face whatever perils might lie ahead to ensure the realisation of their centuries-old struggle. He went back to Dublin and reported what had taken place in London, to prepare if necessary to face a further period of armed struggle. Then came the proposal for a conference, couched in very ambiguous language, from the British Cabinet. In Dublin it was decided to send plenipotentiaries, as it would be an advantage for the President of the Republic to remain in Ireland. The plenipotentiaries were Arthur Griffiths, Michael Collins, Robert Barton, Edmund Duggan and George Gavin Duffy. Also with them was Erskine

Childers who, with a team of capable young journalists, was responsible for publicity.

Before the Treaty was actually signed, word of what was going to happen was conveyed to me through one of these journalists. I immediately reported this to our Party headquarters, and it was decided that I should take the night boat to Dublin and make contact with the Labour leaders and with the Defence Minister, Cathal Brugha. This I arranged through Countess Markiewicz who had made occasional visits to my home in Paisley.

I had no trouble in getting Tom Johnston, the leader of the Irish Labour Party (no connection with the woeful specimen in this country), to agree to accompany me to a meeting with the Defence Minister. We got to the appointed meeting place. There were several other young officers with the Minister, the Minister of Labour and Countess Markiewicz. When I told them that a Treaty involving partition had been drawn up and was ready for signature, they simply refused to believe it. The plenipotentiaries would never dare sign such a betrayal of what they had fought and hoped for! De Valera was in Galway, reviewing several regiments of the I.R.A., and he was as firm as ever for "Ireland, One and Indivisible". There in Galway he was pledging his word that he and his government would be prepared to face a renewal of terrible war rather than yield on this great and inviolable principle. I could only keep on pressing them that they must believe it and decide what they were going to do. I told them that I had brought Tom Johnston along because a combination between Labour and Sinn Féin, in such a situation as was about to arise, was absolutely essential. Action was essential: I suggested that they should arrest Griffiths and Collins as soon as they landed and then issue a call to the people of Ireland to prepare for whatever might eventuate. But this would call for a declaration of policy. I asked the Defence Minister to give his consideration to a document I had prepared, setting out a programme for his government to follow in order to make life better and brighter for the workers and small farmers.

This was too much for Cathal Brugha. He was the iron man of the Republican Government and one of the most courageous, resolute fighters for Ireland I ever met: one look at his strong, sharp-featured face and you knew that here was a man who would never yield in his devotion to the Irish cause. "Ireland, One and Indivisible" was engraved on his heart, and for Ireland he would live or die. Alas!

he chose to die when he might have lived. He was a businessman and a Roman Catholic—two reasons for his antipathy to communism, in fact to anything of a radical character. In response to my suggestion he said that I would always be welcome in Dublin, but not to try and get them to accept communism. I tried to show him the urgent necessity of making preparations for an entirely new situation: co-operation with Labour as represented by Johnston, and a programme that would make a broad appeal to the people of Ireland, would enable them to counter any move made by Griffiths and Collins.

It wasn't enough to have guns, I told him. The man who understands politics will always have the advantage of the man who relies on guns alone. I pointed out that many people in Ireland were hoping for an end to the tragic years, and that the influential pro-British elements would play on this. Griffiths and Collins, if they were allowed to take over, would be very pleasant and accommodating until they had got themselves established; then they would suppress all armed opposition. Countess Markiewicz told me I was talking utter nonsense: that Michael Collins would never turn against the men with whom he had fought side by side. To this I replied that he had already turned against them by making a deal with Lloyd George and Churchill, and that history had provided abundant evidence of such betrayals. Once again I urged that the wise course would be to arrest the two of them when they landed in Dublin. To this Cathal Brugha declared: "I won't be the man responsible for shedding Irishmen's blood."

"All right," I retorted. "It will be the wrong Irishmen's blood that will be spilt."

A few more words, and we parted. But not before an official messenger had arrived and whispered in Cathal Brugha's ear. He got up and nodded to his aides, and they went hurrying off. It was obvious that Erskine Childers had got the tragic news across.

Griffiths and Collins returned with the Treaty that had been signed without reference to the President of the Republic—who recognised that the two great principles that he and those close to him had always fought for had been thrown overboard in London. But instead of taking action against the perpetrators, De Valera issued a summons for a meeting of the Dail to discuss the Treaty. Deputy after deputy spoke; some for, some against. Two outstanding speeches were made, one by Liam Mellows and one by Harry Boland. But I will just give a quotation from the speech of Cathal Brugha, taken from *The Four Glorious Years* by David Hogan:

Here, when we are so strong . . . and England so weak, and with so many enemies as she has now, we are asked to do such a thing as this. Why, if instead of being so strong, our last cartridge had been fired, our last shilling had been spent, and our last man was lying on the ground and his enemies howling around him and their bayonets raised, ready to plunge them into his body, that man should say—true to the traditions handed down—if they said to him “Now will you come into our Empire?”, he should say and he would say “No! I will not!”

And of this David Hogan could say: “I can hear again Cathal Brugha on this last day of the Debate foretelling his own death.”

Yes, the last day of the debate, and drawing near the last day of Cathal Brugha. For the debate ended with a vote of 64 for the Treaty and 47 against. As David Hogan says: “And within a very little time more than four men who had voted for the Treaty were back in the ranks of those who voted against it.”

A near thing, but near enough to put power into the hands of Griffiths and Collins. When the vote was declared, De Valera said a few words and then broke down and cried. He had reason to cry, for he had failed the Republic. The new government of the “Free State” adopted a friendly, passive attitude towards the still-remaining armed forces of the I.R.A. until it had built up its own armed forces. Then, urged on by its British overlords, it launched a full-scale attack on the Four Courts held by Rory O’Connor and the headquarters of Cathal Brugha. Cathal and his lads held out until further resistance was useless; he ordered what was left of his forces to make their way out at the rear where there was a good chance of escape. For himself, when they had gone, he went dashing out of the front door and fell under a hail of bullets; and there, in the dust of O’Connell Street, the great Irish patriot gasped out his last breath. Yes, De Valera had reason to weep.

In April 1923 I went to Southampton to meet another great Irishman, Jim Larkin. Big Jim as an agitator was truly terrific. As Sean O’Casey says of him, he found the Dublin transport workers on their knees and aroused them to stand up on their feet. Their 1913 battle with Murphy and the other Dublin bosses is a magnificent episode in the history not only of the Dublin working class but, in view of the part played by the British working-class movement including the co-

operatives, of international solidarity. Big Jim, with James Connolly, had participated in building up the Irish Transport Workers' Union, of which he became general secretary. In 1914, he went to the United States on a fund-raising tour, and took an active part in the Left Socialist movement there. In 1919, when Communists and Lefts were being attacked, he was arrested, put on trial, and sentenced to from five to ten years in Sing Sing. In 1923 he was set free and was deported to Britain. There were four of us at Southampton to receive him: Delia Larkin, his sister, Daly of the Dublin Trades Council, the Irish-American (now Australian) Eamon McAlpine and myself.

It was clear from his conversation on the road to London that he was in a belligerent mood. He had no time for "the gun-men"—as he then and always referred to the sections of the I.R.A. that were still carrying on the battle for the Republic against the Free State government. And he was going to have something to say to, and about, the leaders of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union. I tried to persuade him to let things rest for a time until he got a proper grasp of the changed situation, but he wouldn't listen. He knew what the situation was. He had been kept in touch with all that was going on and now it was time to make a clean-up.

When he got to Dublin the working class turned out *en masse* to greet him. I don't suppose there was ever anything like it since the reception given to Parnell. Dublin was his—if only he had kept it so! Not long after his arrival he made a speech in which he came out against the "gun-men" that alienated some of his followers; but the real storm arose in connection with the union. He started out to clean it up but ended by being expelled. The leader of the union, following the death of James Connolly, was Bill O'Brien, a very clever demagogue who could talk about and write about Connolly as though he were his devoted disciple while he pursued a policy in complete contrast with the militant spirit that was common to both Connolly and Larkin.

Between 1923 and 1927 I was a fairly regular visitor to Dublin, and Big Jim and I were very close friends and comrades in that period. He and his brother Peter had formed a new union, the Workers' Union of Ireland, with headquarters in Marlborough Street. Before his expulsion from the I.T. & G.W., he and I, with Madame Maud Gonne McBride, had addressed a mass meeting from the window of the union headquarters, Liberty Hall. It was the anniversary of the martyrdom of young Kevin Barry. Cosgrave was Prime Minister at

this time, and Kevin Barry's sister was in prison, and had been taken from her cell to the prison hospital where she was seriously ill as a consequence of going on hunger strike. Following the meeting we formed up and marched to St. Kevin's Church where a Mass was being said for Kevin Barry. The demonstration packed the church, and Big Jim and I stood in the rear. Just before the service began, a side door near the altar opened and who should come in but Cosgrave, with two members of his bodyguard. An indignant murmur swept over the church at this intrusion (as it was referred to afterwards), especially as it was his government that was holding Kathleen Barry in gaol.

But Big Jim was now banned from Liberty Hall by a court order. His new headquarters were opposite the pro-Cathedral, and I used to be amused when a bunch of Jim's members, coming straight over from the church, would accost me at the entrance and would tell me, in very un-devout language, what they thought about the bosses, with an occasional crack about old Bill O'Brien.

I went to see Bill once or twice in the hope of being able to patch things up between him and Big Jim. But I couldn't get anywhere. Old Bill had a very able lieutenant called Cathal O'Shannon, who had been in the Citizens' Army and had fought with Connolly in the "last stand" at the Post Office. Very cynical he was about the Big Fella.

"He's come back here thinking he's a hero," was his caustic comment. "He forgets that while he was away there was an Irish hero behind every bush."

I brushed that aside. It might be very clever but it was not very helpful. "Don't forget," I pointed out, "that it was Larkin who inspired the workers and made the Transport Workers' Union a reality. Whatever you may say now, you are benefiting from the invaluable service he gave before he went to America."

There might be something in that, he agreed. But the fact that he had been there at the start of the Union did not necessarily mean that they should allow him to destroy it. From that they could not be moved. Of course, Big Jim was a difficult man to work with; he couldn't bear contradiction and did not hesitate to browbeat any incipient opposition. He was a powerful figure of a man, topping six feet, strong of build, with a lion-like head and a voice that could be as gentle as a dove's or if need be as loud as the lion's roar. He was a passionate speaker: he knew poverty and hardship and he hated those responsible for it. He was, in that sense, the voice of the insurgent

working class. But while I would class him among the greatest agitators I ever heard, I couldn't say the same for him as a propagandist. Like such speakers as A. J. Cook and Jimmie Maxton, he never prepared a speech; and his lack of preparation often led him into contradictions that were difficult to get over.

An outstanding example of this I recall when he was standing as a candidate for the Dail in 1927. I was over for the whole of the campaign and, with his brother Peter, was kept extremely busy. During "the Troubles", proclamations were regularly issued from Westminster through Dublin Castle, and we therefore decided to issue a proclamation of our own. It was a dandy, and wherever it was posted attracted a great number of interested readers. It proclaimed what Big Jim was going to do if he was returned to the Dail. In large type in the centre of the proclamation was the promise immediately to demand the repeal of the Public Security Act that had been pushed through by the Cosgrave government, an oppressive act as bad as the worst Coercion Act ever used by the British occupation against the people of Ireland.

One evening we had a monster meeting on the far side of the Liffey. Jim got going first—Jesus! but he had his audience enthralled. As his hearers got worked up so did he, until he declared in a passion of eloquence: "We are not complaining about the Public Security Act. We welcome it. We'll see that it boomerangs. When we get power, as get it we will, it will become the weapon for crushing those who have exploited and oppressed us for so long!"

That's what he drove home, and by the Lord, they cheered him! Pete and I could only look at one another and shrug our shoulders. That was Big Jim; he always had the audience with him even when he was contradicting his own policy.

Big Jim got elected, but he was not allowed to take his seat as he had been declared bankrupt following a libel case, which he lost, brought against him by the Irish labour leader Tom Johnston. A few years later he and his young son Jim were both elected.

But back in 1923, after seeing Big Jim off to Dublin, I got ready for a visit to Moscow. Jean came with me. I could only remain there for a very short time as I had to go on to Germany to address a series of meetings there. Jean, after travelling so far, decided that she would remain for a bit. She had become friendly with Anna Louise Strong and some of the other occupants of the Lux Hotel where we had been provided with a room. There was a communal kitchen in the

Lux, and residents brought their own food and in most cases did their own cooking. Jean had no trouble with the shopping: she had a very keen ear and quickly picked up sufficient words to enable her to get her groceries and other supplies.

I left Jean quite happy in Moscow, and returned to London in time for a meeting of the Party Executive, where decisions were taken to put into effect the proposals on organisation of R. Palme Dutt's commission, adopted at the previous Party Congress. Then I went north to speak at several meetings in Lanarkshire, where our lads were having a ding-dong battle with the "Old Guard" in the Lanarkshire Miners' Union. From there I went back to London and thence to Berlin.

The situation in Germany in 1923 was appalling. Day by day the value of the mark went down. When a worker got his wages he had to spend them without delay; if anyone was foolish enough to hold on to his money, he would be lucky if the following day he had lost only half of it. A million marks for a box of matches! Soon a million-mark note was being kept as a souvenir.

Our Party was very active, and was attracting greater and greater support. Our meetings, wherever they were held, were always packed out, with many disappointed people outside. I spoke at a terrific demonstration in Berlin, with a Communist Reichstag representative as my interpreter, and he could certainly put it across. Whether or not he was always accurate was a question that did not arise until we got to Cologne. Before that I was in the Ruhr, which was then under French and Belgian occupation. I spoke in several Ruhr towns, including Essen; but when I spoke at Hamborn the platform room was suddenly invaded by a group of French and Belgian security officers. They told me I was under arrest, and demanded my passport. As I was handing it over, the German comrades started to crowd in on the invaders, shouting all sorts of protests and acting in a very threatening manner. The security men started jabbering excitedly and attention was momentarily turned from the victim, who was very efficiently removed from the scene. Out of a back door I went, on to the pillion of a motor-cycle and *whish!*—through a dark, wet night, out of Hamborn to an unknown destination. Not until we had travelled many miles and drawn up at a darkened house in a dark street did I get a chance to see the size and shape of my rescuer. He had looked a likely lad in the dark, and when I got into the house, through a dark room to a little kitchen at the back where the light was on, I saw a tall young lad with a fair, smiling face, who was happy to

introduce me to his lovely young wife. He gave her what was obviously a graphic description of what had happened; her eyes were quite round as she listened. When he had finished, she shook hands with me again. I responded by shaking her husband's hand and trying to convey to her that he was the one to be congratulated. Neither of them knew a word of English and I knew only a word or two of German, which I pronounced very badly, but after she had made a pot of *ersatz* coffee we managed with the aid of gestures and hieroglyphics to carry on a sort of conversation.

At bedtime, the young lad led me into the front room, which contained a very large double bed. He stripped and I stripped; he invited me to occupy the far side of the bed, then he got in beside me. The young wife then came in, opened a drawer and took out a night-dress; I wondered where she was going to sleep, for there was no other accommodation apart from the small kitchen. A few minutes later she came into the bedroom, put out the light and got in beside her husband. That was the first experience I ever had of sharing a bed with husband and wife.

In the morning she was first up and by the time we were dressed she had our breakfast prepared: the same *ersatz* coffee, the same black bread and substitute margarine that we had had the evening before. Terrible, the privation that was inflicted on the working class—yet in Berlin we saw the usual squandermania in the west part of the city that can be seen today.

After thanking these hospitable young comrades, and leaving them an English £1 note which they could hold until something special cropped up, I got to the station and set off for Cologne. This area of Germany was under the control of the British, and I had gathered from the German comrades that they got on better with the British than with the French. Nevertheless, I got a surprise when I entered the platform room of the hall where I was to speak. There were two British security officers there.

"What's all this we have been hearing?" one of them asked me.

I told him that I had had my passport taken away in Hamborn and had been threatened with arrest.

"They're going too bloody far," he said, to my utter astonishment. "Something will have to be done about it. Never you trouble, we'll get your passport back!"

I gasped. "I thought you were here with similar intentions," I said, hardly able to believe my ears.

"Not at all," he assured me. "We're here to see that the people are properly treated and we are not going to tolerate any bullying. I hope you have a successful meeting."

If you find this hard to believe, wait till you hear what happened at the meeting itself. I can only tell it as it happened.

The Security men came on to the platform with me, and it was the usual packed, enthusiastic meeting. When I finished my speech with a call to the German, French and British workers to unite and use their mighty strength to defeat their imperialist oppressors, there was a tremendous cheer although I spoke in English (or as near English as I can get). They were able to grasp what I had been proposing and reacted accordingly. This seemed to inspire my interpreter, for on this occasion he excelled himself, and soon had the audience raising the roof. But as they cheered and cheered again, they noticed that one of the officers was on his feet. The cheering died into a silence that could be felt. There he stood, a typical, self-assured British officer. In the silence he told the interpreter that he had wrongly represented my closing words.

"Mr. Gallacher did *not* use the word insurrection," he said, "and you must make this clear to the audience."

As he was speaking in German, the audience already heard it, and the interpreter could only confirm what the officer had said.

When we moved from the platform I asked him why he had done what he did. He assured me that he regretted having had to interfere but that they would have to make a report and they did not want any stories going around that I had been shouting for insurrection, as such language could quite possibly get me into trouble. I told him that what I had said actually amounted to insurrection, even though I had not used the word, to which he made the diplomatic reply that he would not report what I meant but what I had said and he was sure his superiors would not take exception to it. Well, there may have been something in that, but I did not like the diversion he had created; it would be talked about next day, and what I had said would get secondary consideration I was sure. However, they got my passport and sent it back to me. The French had stamped across one page that I was undesirable. On my return I sent it to the Foreign Office and got a new one.

But no sooner had it arrived than I was invited back to Germany. A crisis of the first magnitude was working up to a head, and as the key to the situation was in Saxony I was booked up to speak at a series

of meetings there. When I got to Berlin, I found the Party faced with the responsibility of carrying through a revolution, the crisis having taken such a rapid turn. In Saxony a United Front government of socialists and communists had been elected, and proposals were being put forward for drastic changes to the advantage of the working class. On my arrival in Berlin I was informed that the Reich government, goaded by the British and American imperialists and by their own Junkers, was contemplating action to suppress the Saxon government. This had sharply raised the question of a general strike; such action would certainly have called for the overthrow of the Reich government. Conscious of this, I went off to Saxony with a grand young German comrade, Fritz Heckert, a leader of the Saxon miners. Medium tall, with a full, fresh-complexioned face, a fine head and fair, sun-bleached hair, he was the ideal companion for such a campaign. I had a truly grand time among the miners of Saxony. Being with them made me feel I was back in Lanarkshire or Fife.

In Berlin, and on the train travelling south, I had heard much talk about the pending revolution and the changes that were hoped for when the communists took power. It was expected, and certainly among the miners in Saxony, who were standing by, as it were, ready to take the field. Away in the north too, in the Hamburg area, the word had gone out to prepare for action.

Then the die was cast. The Reich government despatched General Mueller, with a Reich army, to suppress the United Front government. An emergency conference was called by the Saxon government, the Communist Party and the Socialist Party, for Sunday, October 24, in Chemnitz, an important industrial centre. I was invited as a fraternal delegate.

There was a tense atmosphere as the delegates mustered that morning in Chemnitz. Around the hall were large numbers of armed "Proletarian Guards". Outside the sky was blue, with the sun shining high in the heavens. Inside, the banners and slogans raised the hopes of many of the delegates up towards the blue sky and the glorious sun of a new day about to be born. There were three Communists in the United Front government, and one of these occupied the chair. He made a short opening speech, in which he said that it was intended to submit a decisive resolution which he hoped would be unanimously accepted by the delegates. But first there would be a report of how the present situation had developed, and the efforts that had been made to come to an understanding with the Reich government.

This report was made by a Socialist member of the government; it took up quite a long part of the forenoon and raised quite a number of questions, all of which, considering what transpired, seemed to have been arranged beforehand. There was a short break for a snack—and for consultation among the leading Socialists. When the conference assembled again, the leader of the German Socialist Party made a well-prepared conciliatory speech, in which he drew attention to the dangers that confronted them and all Germany, and suggested another effort, before it was too late, to get a negotiated understanding.

As there was a majority of Socialist delegates, this seemed to me extremely serious. I asked Fritz Heckert what had happened to Brandler and Thalheimer, the leaders of the Communist Party, and he told me they were in a room upstairs, preparing a manifesto.

I made my way up to them, and got a cheery greeting. Brandler was a heavily-built working man, with a very short neck that gave the impression of his being slightly humped. Thalheimer was an intellectual and looked it, tall and distinguished. Another lad named Jacob something-or-other (who turned up in London years later as a Trotskyist) was with them. I asked them why they were not down below. They were drawing up a very important manifesto, they replied, which would make a special appeal to the British workers. It was headed "*Hands off Free Germany!*" A great piece of work, no doubt, if it had ever seen the light of day. I told them there would be no free Germany unless they got below and took the conference out of the hands of the Socialist capitulators. They tried to assure me that everything was all right, when I knew from what I had heard and seen down below that everything was all wrong. I watched them until they got their momentous manifesto finished. Then we went below, to find that the conference—and the revolution—was finished.

Tragic, it was! The workers all over Germany were waiting for the call that never came. Up north in Hamburg they were so sure that a decision would be taken for a general strike that the leaders there had already issued the call and the next day the city was out. Meanwhile, the way was left wide open for Mueller through the last-minute betrayal of the Socialists, aided and abetted by the futility of Brandler and Thalheimer.

I made a very critical report about these two Party leaders. But the real indictment of their conduct came from the comrades at Hamburg. There, led by Ernst Thaelmann, a big, friendly docker, the workers had fought alone but had been overwhelmed by the forces of

the Reich. From the discussions that followed, a new Party leadership emerged, with Thaelmann to the fore. Soon he was the outstanding leader of the German Communist Party. He was arrested in 1933, and murdered in prison by the Hitler-Himmler gang as the Red Army approached Berlin.

II

Miners' Reform Movement. Imprisoned for "sedition" 1923. Reorganisation at C.P. headquarters. The Minority Movement. First Labour Government.

DURING the war I had given a lot of attention to the mining areas of Lanarkshire and Fifeshire. In each of these areas, unofficial "Miners' Reform Movements" had been organised. There were six county unions in Scotland, each with its own executive and administrative staff. These county unions sent delegates to a Scottish conference, where the leading officials of the county unions had themselves elected as a Scottish Committee. This so-called Scottish Committee was what convened the Scottish conference, and later on, when it became obvious that they were going to be voted out, they sat tight and deliberately refused to convene it. (All this and much more interesting material will be found in *The Scottish Miners* by R. Page Arnot.)

The Miners' Reform Movement was directed towards breaking the bureaucratic powers of the local officials and the more-or-less spurious Scottish Committee. It had a rough, uneven career, but it played a significant part in the developments that led to a single union for the Scottish miners.

In Lanarkshire, one of the leading figures of the Reform movement was James Welsh, who later became an M.P. and, in a weak sort of way, an anti-Communist. He was secretary of the Ponfeigh branch, and his first outstanding effort at speech-making was at a packed meeting of that branch, where Robert Smillie was attempting to get a vote of no confidence passed against him and trying to get the branch to repudiate the Reform Committee with which he was associated. In the course of his speech, Smillie accused him of being a disruptive agent acting under the instructions of Willie Gallacher of Glasgow. The reference to Glasgow was made to avoid confusion with Willie Gallacher of Larkhall. This latter, a very likeable co-operator, came into a bit of publicity shortly after the war ended. A fellow named Mutch got a contract to write a series of articles for *The Empire News*, a Sunday paper. These were to make an exposure of those who were "notorious in their support of Bolshevism". The first article dealt with John McLean, and John had given the writer

a refusal: so, as soon as the miners started going in, I made my entry and sat near the front. The floor of the Gothenburg Hall, a very large one, was packed with miners, and the gallery was packed with miners' wives.

The meeting was opened by the Chairman, who called on Adamson. Adamson got a rough passage, the women joining in the barracking. When he sat down, John Bird got to his feet. He had made an interesting discovery, he said, with simulated astonishment: "There's Willie Gallacher down there. Let's hear what he has to say about this!"

Cheers and more cheers. Willie Adamson tried to make a protest, but his voice was drowned by shouts from the floor and the gallery. I got on to the platform. Willie tried to protest again. "Sit down, you old this and that!" came from all over the hall.

I mention this incident—though some readers may get the impression that I spent most of my time getting into meetings where I had no legal right to be—to give, if possible, an idea of how I stood with the Fife Miners during and immediately after the first world war.

Well, early in 1921, the mineowners were threatening the wages of the Scottish miners, and I was speaking all over Lanarkshire and Fifeshire. But this campaign had to be broken into by a number of meetings organised by the National Shop Stewards Committee. One of these was in Birmingham, in the month of February. It was held in the Bristol Street School, which held around 150 or 200 people. Entering the door, the platform was on the left, with the audience around it in a semi-circle. Bill Brain, a lively lad, was in the chair. I was the only speaker, and sitting over on the right was my old comrade Jack, from Glasgow, who was doing a spot of work in Coventry and had come over to hear me. Also in the audience were two C.I.D. men, taking notes. I spoke for an hour, paying no attention to them. When I finished the chairman, instead of inviting questions as usual, said: "I see our old friend Jack — over there. I think we ought to ask him for a word or two." Nothing loath, Jack came bouncing on to the platform, and—let himself go. He attacked the C.I.D. men in the most violent manner. He had the audience up on their feet and I could see that the C.I.D. men were getting scared. They were sitting far from the door. Jack told the audience they should copy the I.R.A.; two or three lads on the roof with rifles would put an end to these snoopers. The wilder he got, the wilder the audience got. It was an unexpected end to a meeting that had been advertised by leaflet and poster as being called by the Shop Stewards' National

Committee. However, it did end, with the C.I.D. men hurriedly getting away from the vicinity, white-faced and shaken.

From Birmingham I went to Sheffield and from there to Liverpool, for meetings at the docks. I was on my way to the docks one forenoon when I was stopped by two Liverpool cops; they had a copy of a warrant for my arrest, issued in Birmingham. I was taken to the Bridewell in Liverpool and kept there pending the arrival of an officer from Birmingham. He arrived a few hours later and took possession of me. He told me he was supposed to handcuff me, but he didn't think that would be necessary. I was in full agreement with him on that. He let me know that Arthur Greenwood was his cousin, and that he wasn't unsympathetic. In the train we chatted away like a couple of old pals, with other passengers joining in the conversation. When we got to Stafford he proposed we should have some refreshment. There were several mail vans on the train, so we had to walk quite a way back to the refreshment room. I got a cup of tea and a Bath bun; he got a bottle of stout. Half way through, he let out a yell: "Come on, Willie, the train's starting!" and away he went. He had been standing at the counter while I was sitting at a table. He got a flying start of me, and there I was, running along the platform after my captor. The carriage door was open and he jumped in; the train was beginning to get up speed as I made a desperate leap and got safely into it. I found him at the end of the corridor, squatting on his hunkers, I squatted beside him. Suddenly he burst out: "My God, Willie, what would I have done if you'd missed the train!"

I have to laugh when I think of it. Of course there would have been no sense in my not facing what lay before me. As a working-class agitator I could not go into hiding, and I could not have let this lad down after the decent way he had treated me.

When we pulled into Birmingham the chief of the C.I.D., McCardle, and two of his men were waiting for us; one of them was the lad who had been taking notes at Bristol Street School. I spent the night in gaol and was remanded on bail for a week next morning. When I came up for trial, W. H. Thompson had arrived from London to advise me on the conduct of my defence. Right off I objected to the charge: it was a charge of sedition in a speech delivered at a Communist Party meeting. I said that on the date alleged I wasn't at a Communist meeting; my whole day had been spent at a Shop Stewards' meeting. Lord Ilkestone, who was on the bench, looked at Day, the prosecutor, who blandly told the old fellow that the Shop Stewards were a branch

of the Communist Party. To this I answered that the Shop Stewards movement came into existence in 1915 whereas the Communist Party was not formed until 1920, so it was absurd for the prosecution to make such a statement. But the old lad on the bench ruled against me regardless of legalities. Day next told the old bloke that I was a very clever speaker and while my whole speech breathed sedition there was no part of it he wished to quote. It must be considered in relation to the speech made by the speaker who followed, and he would call witnesses to give evidence of the effect this speech had had on the audience.

I strongly objected to this. I didn't mind facing up to anything I had said or done, but it was out of the question that I should be held responsible for what a member of the audience had said or done. No use! The old fellow was putty in the hands of the clever Mr. Day. The lad who had taken the notes was brought into the witness box. He quoted some of the things Jack had said and then added a bit of his own: "The audience shouted itself hoarse." This seemed to be the only phrase he could think of. It occurred half a dozen times in his report. The prosecutor then asked if anything had happened when they were coming out of the hall.

"Yes, the audience was very threatening."

When it was my turn I asked him in what way the audience was threatening: were they making faces or what?

"They were using very strong language."

But how could they? I asked him, after having shouted themselves hoarse several times—or must we take it that he had been exaggerating what had happened? He looked towards Day, who remarked to his pal on the bench that it was a form of speech. I objected to the prosecutor butting in when I was cross-examining a witness. Objection overruled.

The trial was a farce. W. H. Thompson, who was in the court, told me I should appeal, and that the verdict and sentence would surely be quashed. I ought to have taken his advice, but we still had a strong sectarian attitude to the courts: they might drag us to them but under no circumstances would we besmirch our principles by *appealing* to them. Stupid, you say, and I agree—now.

So I served three months in Winson Green Prison where the diet, at any rate, was much better than what was served in Scottish prisons. My escort from Liverpool, I must mention, was very indignant at the verdict, and he too urged me to appeal. He never forgot the run I

made along the platform that saved him from dismissal (and would have barred him from the important job he got a short time later in the Civil Service). For many years after that, whenever I spoke in Birmingham, I always got a message from him.

Having served my sentence I hurried home and spent a week's holiday with Jean. Then back to the fray.

Hodges had let down the miners, and had given the partners in the Triple Alliance the excuse for refusing to support them, leaving the miners to fight alone. When I got to Cowdenbeath station, my first engagement, the street was packed with striking miners, with a brass band playing loud and clear. It was the greatest reception I ever received. We formed four abreast, with the band at the head, and marched up to the fountain, then back to what was known as Stein Square, a wide open space at the end of the High Street. A platform had been set up there, and I spoke for close on an hour. That was the start. From Cowdenbeath I went on a tour of all the principal mining villages. The local comrades were enthusiastic about this campaign.

But through the Reform Movement in Fife, an actual split took place and Philip Hodge became secretary of the Reform Miners' Union. As a result of this, Hodge was put forward as a prospective parliamentary candidate against Willie Adamson. Willie considered that West Fife belonged to him; he had been the candidate since 1910. Hodge, however, offered no real challenge to Adamson: he was non-party and it might also be said non-political, for he had little to talk about except what rascals Adamson and the gang around him were.

So following this 1921 campaign, the lads in Fife began to talk more and more of me as a candidate for West Fife. They were upset when I stood the second time for Dundee and protested to Party headquarters with a demand that I be allocated to their constituency. While this was being considered a General Election took place: it was the election following the defeat of the first Labour Government. I did not stand. I was suspended between Dundee and West Fife. Bob Stewart took on Dundee, his home town, and with a short but vigorous campaign also got over 10,000 votes. This was not Bob's first parliamentary campaign for the Communist Party. He had stood as a Communist candidate at a by-election in Caerphilly; this had been used against us in our application for affiliation.

But in 1922 J. T. Walton Newbold, a Communist, was selected as Labour candidate for Motherwell and got returned in November. He

was a terrible fellow. He sent a wire to the Communist International: **MOTHERWELL WON FOR COMMUNISM**. His manners were very offensive. We were continually getting complaints from comrades who gave him hospitality when he visited their towns for meetings. "Can't you keep that brat quiet!" he would say to the mother of a lively child, and it didn't go down well. During 1923 I was keeping contact with John Wheatley and the other lads from Glasgow, and at the same time trying to keep them off Newbold's neck. One evening I got a phone call at the Party headquarters where I was working late, to come down right away to the House of Commons. Newbold was in trouble. When I got there I found him locked in a room with a group of Glasgow M.P.'s outside the door, one of them, Neil McLean, swearing that he would "knock his bloody head off".

Another incident with the Glasgow group of M.P.'s may be worth mentioning. John Burns told me he would like to meet some of them. John Burns, of Battersea fame, was a character all by himself. No matter where he met you, in the middle of the Strand or in a restaurant, he treated you like a public meeting. He had been one of the early Labour members of parliament, and he was also with Tom Mann and Ben Tillet in the historic fight for the "Dockers' Tanner". I took him down one evening to meet Wheatley, Neil McLean, Maxton and Campbell Stephens. They never had a look-in; he talked to them like a school-teacher to a backward class. And he kept nudging me with his elbow as though to emphasise that they were poor specimens compared with him. By the time he finished they were blazing mad; there were no tender farewells. I laughed about it the next time I saw them, but they couldn't see anything to laugh about.

A short time after this Jimmie Maxton, incensed at the treatment of the unemployed, got up in the House and called the Minister of Health a murderer. When called upon to withdraw, he refused and was expelled from the House according to rule. Three of his colleagues, Wheatley, Stephens and Buchanan, followed his example and likewise got expelled. This happened within two weeks of the Summer Recess. It caused a great sensation in the country, and masses of eager supporters turned out wherever they went, giving Maxton in particular a very enthusiastic reception. Wheatley at that time was staying at a small hotel near Russell Square, while Jean and I had a couple of rooms in Marchmont Street just round the corner; we were thus in close contact, and on the Friday, a week before the adjournment, I went down to the House to try and get other Scottish members to make a

scene and if need be get themselves expelled in a fight for the lifting of the ban on their fellow-members. At that time, expulsion meant that you were out until a motion was moved by the Prime Minister. I saw Tom Johnston, Johnny Muir and one or two others, but they were not prepared to do anything. I also had a word with Neil McLean, who was Scottish Whip. He told me there was no need to get anything stirred up because MacDonald had got the Prime Minister to promise an announcement on the following Tuesday, lifting the ban. MacDonald thought it would be a calamity if the expelled members were allowed to roam the country all through the Summer Recess as martyrs, with all the trouble that that could make for "orderly procedure", which was his fetish.

With this unexpected news, which was, of course, being kept quiet, I hurried off to see Wheatley. He had been counting on the Summer Recess campaign to arouse terrific support for the group and for himself as its leader. After expressing himself in anything but complimentary terms about MacDonald, he asked: "What can we do?"

I told him there was only one thing left for them. Get out a statement, pointing out the injustice of disenfranchising your constituents and saying how it wasn't possible for honourable members to submit to such disenfranchisement, and that you therefore had decided, whatever the consequences, to make your way into the House on Tuesday and if force was used to prevent you taking your seats the responsibility for what followed would rest with the government. Do that, I told him, get it put out tomorrow and it'll get the Sunday Press and the Monday Press; no matter what MacDonald or the Prime Minister may say afterwards they will never be able to persuade anyone that you have not forced them to yield.

John looked at me, his eyes gleaming behind the thick glasses. "That," he smiled, "is a great idea. Will you make a draft? Maxton is returning here tonight and I'll have a talk with him about it."

I made a draft and left him to work on it with Maxton. The statement went out to the Press and created a sensation in the labour movement. Would they really go? What would happen if they tried to force their way in?

On the Tuesday three taxis were ordered. Wheatley and Maxton rode in the first, Stephens and Buchanan in the second, and in the third, a good bit back, Lachie Weir, another Labour member, and myself. The first two taxis drove to the entrance. Lachie and I got out at the bottom of Whitehall and strolled across, like others, as interested spectators.

A police Superintendent with several henchmen was guarding the gates. Maxton stepped forward, the other three close behind him, and asked if the Superintendent meant to block their entrance. The Super was extremely civil:

"Mr. Maxton," he said, "I have been ordered to keep you out and I must do my duty."

Maxton then addressed him, somewhat in the manner of old John Burns, so that all around could hear, and pointed out that he was being used by the enemies of democracy, the enemies of the people, and so forth. He had to keep it going for a bit; we had timed it so that they arrived shortly before the end of Question Time, as it was then that the Premier would move his motion. It worked. Just as Maxton was reaching a fitting peroration, there was a rush across Palace Yard, Pressmen and Members of Parliament vying with one another as they shouted: "It's all over, you've won!"

There was a great hand-shaking. Maxton was highly elated. When they were able to get away we adjourned to a tea-room in Tothill Street, where we congratulated Maxton for having kept the show going until the psychological moment. It was a great day for these four. But it was a bad day for Neil McLean, although he didn't know it. On the previous Friday afternoon I had been seen talking to him; MacDonald must have put two and two together. The consequence was not felt until 1924. But the protest demonstration made by the Glasgow members brought about a change in the rules regarding the expulsion of members. Thereafter, if a member refused to withdraw an offensive remark, his suspension applied only to that sitting; he could turn up next day as bright as paint.

The House of Commons was not the only place where changes were taking place in 1923. The commission set up by our Party had brought in its report, and for the first time a real Communist Party was beginning to take shape. Hitherto, the procedure at headquarters had been as follows: each morning the various officials would, at given times, enter the presence of the President and inform him of what they proposed to do that day; he might or might not have a word or two to say about their proposals; they would then depart, each to a separate room. Not one of them knew what another was doing. The Executive Committee consisted of representatives from each district, and was more of a federation of districts than a centralised leadership.

The commission's report, which was accepted after considerable

discussion, put an end to the district form of Executive Committee. The best comrades were to be nominated and elected, regardless of what district they might be from. The President's post was abolished, and that of Vice-President. I had no complaint about this; indeed it was one of the suggestions I had made when I gave evidence before the commission. A Political Committee was to be set up from the Executive; it would meet regularly between Executive meetings, would give regular guidance on the building of the Party, particularly on the turn towards factory branches, strongly stressed in the report. It would also prepare material on all important national and international Party questions for the consideration of the Executive. In short, the commission—comrades Dutt, Inkpin and Pollitt, had given a real start to the Communist Party as we know it today (1963).

The Party Press also underwent a process of change. In February 1923 the *Worker's Weekly* was begun as a new paper, replacing *The Communist*; from now on it was more of a weekly newspaper, depending quite a lot on news contributions from the lads in the factories and trade unions, with ordinary items of news from towns and cities. The editor of the new paper was R. Palme Dutt.

So the Party got started on the right road and it was to keep on growing and improving its understanding of what a Party meant, and of the mighty task that lay before it.

I was no longer the Vice-President, but I got another job. There was a growing left wing in a number of trade unions, that was very dissatisfied with the failure of the right-wing leadership to pursue a policy consistent with the best interests of the workers, employed and unemployed. Harry Pollitt was well known and respected in the trade union movement: he was a regular delegate from the Boilermakers' Union to the Trades Union Congress and the Labour Party Conference. It was decided that I should take the responsibility for organising a conference of left trade unionists, out of which we hoped to set up a national unofficial movement, with Harry as its secretary.

It proved to be quite a task, involving considerable correspondence, and for this I was given the help of a young comrade called Fotheringay, a typist and book-keeper. He was a bright, keen young lad with a round face and a healthy complexion, neat and tidy—the picture of a lad who could be relied on to do a good job. That was how he struck me as I watched him typing out letters, his nimble fingers flying over the keyboard without the aid of his eyes. His eyes, I realised, were more on me as I worked among the litter of papers and correspondence

that cluttered up my desk. After two or three days he evidently reached the conclusion that I needed a certain amount of leading. Very pleasantly he told me that he wanted to have a frank talk. My correspondence was in a woeful mess; I had no filing system, and that could lead to mistakes and general confusion.

"Now, Willie," he said in his quiet persuasive manner. "It would be a big advantage if you could do your own typing, and I'll clear all this up"—indicating my desk—"and I'll get books and a filing system so that you will have what you want, when you want it, at your fingertips. Sit down and I'll show you how to use the typewriter. You'll find it quite easy."

"Who the hell do you think you are? I'm boss here, not you. You sit down and get on with your typing!" Did I say that? No. I sat down and got instruction on how to pick out letters with a finger of each hand.

The next day, two old comrades dropped in to see how I was making out with arrangements for the conference. They saw the young lad at what had been my desk, and me dabbing away at the typewriter on his. "Now, don't keep Willie off his work," he warned them. "He's getting along fine."

The lad and I were getting along fine—so long as I did what I was told. I had booked the Memorial Hall in Farringdon Street for the conference, and all the omens pointed to a very successful meeting. Then, like a bolt from—not from the blue, from the yellow—the yellow press, i.e. the *Daily Mail*, came a lamentable attack on this fellow Gallacher. The following day I received a letter from the President of the Memorial Hall trust, a clergyman, informing me that the booking of the hall was cancelled. When they had granted the let, they had not known it was to such an undesirable character.

What could I do? Ask any clergyman the question what is the shortest verse in the New Testament and when he gives you the answer you can say: "So did Gallacher."

All the invitations out. Only a week to the conference. And—no meeting hall.

"What's the matter?" asked young Fotheringay. I handed him the letter. He read it, then gave me a look as though to say "You poor, helpless, miserable craitur". Putting on his neat-fitting hat, which he wore at the least bit of a jaunty angle, he remarked: "Leave this to me. I'll fix it," and out he went.

What a lad! An hour later he came back with a cancellation of the

cancellation, signed by the same gent that had sent me the first. I gaped at the lad.

"How did you manage this?" I asked. Cool as you like, he told me.

He had gone and had a talk with the President. He had expressed his regret that the booking had been cancelled, though he understood how the President must have felt when he saw the *Daily Mail* article. But he would take the President into his confidence. He and the others also knew Gallacher's character, and they had decided to get rid of him. He could give the President a solemn assurance that this man would be replaced at this very conference by a sterling young trade unionist, Harry Pollitt, who—the President would find if he made enquiries—was respected by all who knew him. Was he sure? the President asked. "Absolutely," was the reply. "I give you my solemn word we shall finish with him at this conference; you can help in this by allowing the conference to take place."

"You ought to have seen him, Willie!" said the gleeful lad. "He not only shook my hand and gave me his blessing, he phoned the Caretaker and told him to put every room at our disposal. I gave him *my* blessing too!"

The conference went with a swing. Exactly as we had hoped, Harry was appointed Secretary of the Minority Movement. I'm sure when he got the result the President would congratulate himself at having contributed to this desirable outcome.

Ramsay MacDonald was the nicest man ever when he was speaking to anyone of whom he thought he might be able to make use to serve his own ends. He was all milk and honey to leading people in Scotland who were likely to become members of parliament. I had frequent arguments with Maxton, Dollan, Stephens and others on this subject, saying that he would use them and then throw them aside. But no, MacDonald was the leader of the I.L.P. of which they were members, and I couldn't shake their faith in him. Following the Caerphilly by-election to which I referred earlier, the victor, Morgan Jones, wrote a dirty attack on the Communists in *Forward*. He was supported by a broadside from a lad named Emrys Hughes who, at that time, was unknown outside his own part of Wales. I wrote a long article for the same journal, slamming both of them; in it I took exception to a snide remark MacDonald had made about the Communists being "bought" or words to that effect. The following week MacDonald put in a short statement swearing by all the gods, if I may so put it, that he had

never for one moment meant anything he said to be applied to Willie Gallacher. Was this out of regard for me? Not a bit of it. He knew that I had a good deal of influence with the Glasgow lads, and he wanted to make sure that he missed no chance of keeping their allegiance, so important for his ambitious desires.

When in 1922 victories sent so many from Scotland to the Labour benches, MacDonald nursed them very assiduously. In 1923 an election was due for the leadership of the Labour Party, and J. R. Clynes was being supported by a strong group of trade union officials, outstanding among them Will Thorne. While the election was pending, I was down at the House one evening having a talk with the Glasgow group and had left them with the intention of going home when I ran into Tom Johnston.

"Are you going away?" he asked. When I answered in the affirmative he said I ought to wait. "I'm going to explode a bomb at the adjournment," he said portentously. Well, I told him, if there's a bomb to be exploded, I'd like to be there. At that time the adjournment of the House was at eleven o'clock. Any Member dissatisfied with the answer to a parliamentary question can give notice that he will raise the matter on the adjournment. Half an hour was allowed for this, and the Member was expected to take fifteen minutes presenting his case, with the Minister concerned having the same time to reply.

So at eleven o'clock that evening Tom Johnston gets to his feet. With lips compressed and brow drawn down, he presented the appearance of a modern Guy Fawkes. The trouble was about a Corporation that had been set up to develop cotton operations in Egypt in a big way. On the board of this Corporation was a relative of an important politician—whose name was hissed across the chamber—and the government had handed out to this lot a subsidy of two million pounds. Slam! it went across, and I, sitting in the seat below the gallery, expected to see the government benches go up in smoke. Instead, the Minister got up smiling all over his face. The Minister was not quite sure what purpose the Member had in view, he said, when he raised the matter. The Corporation referred to was going to make an effort to cultivate new areas for the production of cotton. A very representative delegation had come from Lancashire to press the government to assist the Corporation because of the benefit it could bring to that county... a very representative delegation, the Minister repeated, and the leader of the delegation was one of the hon. member's own leaders, the Rt. Hon. J. R. Clynes!

Johnston's bomb had turned out to be a damp squib, but by the Lord Harry, the Minister had thrown it back across the floor and it exploded with noisy reverberations along the Labour benches.

What a to-do! The Clynes supporters were convinced that the sensational manner in which the matter had been raised had been deliberately designed to prejudice Clynes in the coming election for the leadership. Whether or no, MacDonald, with the solid support of the Scottish members, became the chosen leader of the Labour Party and thus in 1924 went off to Buckingham Palace to get the seals of office or whatever form the transaction of becoming Prime Minister takes. The monarch was Wee Geordie, the Sailor King. According to Sir Harold Nicolson, who wrote a book called *George V*, he was properly upset at having to receive a "socialist"—and no wonder! If it had been you or I, we would have told him that he was now redundant and would have to look around for a useful job of work. But lo! when MacDonald appeared before him, there was no more loyal subject than he, fervently promising, as I mentioned earlier, to deal with the "extremists" who sang *The Red Flag* at meetings.

When MacDonald came to select his Ministers, he was particularly careful to ensure that each would be allocated to an office of which the less he knew the better. He didn't want any successful Ministers, he wanted all of them to be dependent on the Permanent Secretaries. The only exception to this rule was John Wheatley. He tried to get John to accept a minor office; John refused, reminding him that he was only interested in Housing and Health. He assured Ramsay that he didn't have to bother about him, he would be quite comfortable on the back benches. Sure he would; but would Ramsay be quite comfortable with such a dangerous competitor leading the Scottish division from the back benches? He realised he would have to yield, and Wheatley became Minister of Health.

Another very serious problem for MacDonald was E. D. Morel. Everyone expected him, with his wide experience, to be made Foreign Secretary. But precisely because of his experience, Morel would be a dangerous man in such a decisive post. How to deal with him? According to the story that was told later, MacDonald persuaded Morel to believe that J. H. Thomas, an impossible choice for the job, was pressing him hard and that the only way he could keep Thomas quiet was to take on the heavy responsibility himself; he managed to get Morel to accept this story and support him in taking on Foreign Secretary as well as Prime Minister.

There were two members who felt sure they would get jobs. One was Keir Hardie's brother George, who had qualified as a mining engineer or inspector and felt sure he was headed for the Mines department. The other was Neil McLean, who had given good service while in the opposition as Scottish Whip and was surely scheduled for promotion. Neither of them, as it turned out, was among the chosen few. When all the jobs had been filled without them I had a session with them down in the tea room. Such language! I never heard the like of it in all my born days.

And to think that Mannie, who had been an organiser for the Seamen's Union, should be sent to the Mines Department, and Morgan Jones, the Miners' man, was set afloat on the deep blue sea and put in the Admiralty. After nine months, this government of all the mis-directed talents came to an end, and MacDonald killed any chance of a Labour victory at the following election by publishing the notorious forgery known as "the Zinoviev letter".

No sooner had the Tories won the election than MacDonald and Co. began a new attack on the Communists, which culminated in a resolution presented at the Liverpool Labour Party Conference in 1925.

Before the General Strike. Communists excluded from Labour Party. Arrest, trial of "the twelve", and incidents in Wandsworth.

FOR a short time, in 1924, John Wheatley was a very happy man. All through the first world war, and for years before that, he had been vigorously campaigning for homes for the workers, and here he was in a position to provide them. Right away he got on to the job of preparing a truly ambitious Housing Bill. I was much in his confidence and he liked, when he had time, to come along to our place in Marchmont Street for a cup of tea and a chat. At his request I got George Hicks and Dick Coppock to come along to the House and meet him. They were actually the first trade union officials, apart from those who were Members of Parliament, that he had met. As they represented the building trades he was anxious to have their advice and co-operation, and they willingly gave him the full measure of their assistance.

When he was all ready to go before the House with his Bill, he came up against a snag. Snag?—a road block would be nearer the mark. Philip Snowden was Chancellor of the Exchequer—Snowden, of whom an editor had written, in a series of character sketches entitled *Prophets, Priests and Kings*, that he was such a ruthless socialist that nothing would ever get him to swerve in the slightest degree from the path of socialism. So here was John Wheatley with his Bill to provide the workers with homes "at a rent the poorest can pay" and it provided for a fund to be raised by the government that would cut out the moneylenders. Did that "unswerving socialist" give the Bill his blessing? Far from it. Wheatley found Snowden unswerving in his determination to protect the City, the sacred rights of high finance and, of course, high interest rates. Wheatley took the matter to MacDonald who, after listening impatiently to Wheatley's complaint, coldly told his Minister of Health that on financial questions he was not prepared to interfere with, or question the correctness of, his Chancellor.

Wheatley was blazing mad. I tried to persuade him that his best course would be to offer his resignation and, if it was accepted, to fight the issue in the country. He was not prepared to do this; but, sitting there in that little place of ours in Marchmont Street he made the

prophetic remark: "If the Tories had any sense they'd make MacDonald the leader of the Tory Party."

It's a pity he did not live to see that come to pass.

Wheatley never took to the life in London, nor to the sham and hypocrisy of official receptions and gatherings of that sort. I recall how one evening, when he had accompanied me to an open-air meeting in Finsbury Park, we got a bus back to the Angel and went into a Lyons café for tea and buns. John was pleased with the meeting; it had been like a breath of fresh air after all he had to go through with these abortive Cabinet meetings. "You know, Willie," he said, "it made me feel that I was back home in Glasgow."

An honest, earnest socialist, was John, but without any understanding of Marxism. Although he had put up such a grand fight against the Encyclical misnamed "The Workers' Charter" he was nevertheless a staunch Catholic, and that kept him from any real understanding of dialectical materialism or the materialist conception of history. Thus, instead of placing his faith in the organised power of the working class, he had the idea that if he had a few outstanding men whom he could influence and direct, he would be in a position to change the world. For a time he placed a lot of hopes on Davy Kirkwood; but he soon realised that Davy was not directable. Davy was a problem for anyone who had to handle him. Give him room, lots of room, and let him loose, and his proletarian background and experience would come gushing forth. But try to give it direction? Not possible.

In 1925, which was to prove a fateful year for our Party and for the working class, Wheatley was very dissatisfied with the general situation. His experience as Minister of Health had convinced him that MacDonald and Snowden were betraying the movement and he could see no further hope for the Labour Party until they were got rid of. Yet he would not come out into the open and make an effort to win the constituency Labour Parties to his support, and while he quite openly associated with me he would not do anything that put him in the position of being associated with our Party. Early that year he made an amazing suggestion to me. If our Party would put up ten candidates, standing as "independent Labour" he would find the necessary finance to see them through. Apart from the undesirability of such an undertaking, I was too busy with my Party work to give him much attention. A decision had been taken, with the backing of several Left trade union leaders, to bring out a new Sunday paper. On March 15, the *Sunday Worker* made its first appearance, first under the direction of

William Paul, followed by Walter Holmes, who left the *Daily Herald* to edit the new paper at half the salary he had been receiving there. I was accepted on the editorial board as a sort of link with the Communist Party, which had taken an active part in campaigning for and helping to bring out this new champion of the workers' cause.

The new paper was sorely needed, for we were in a really shocking atmosphere of confusion. MacDonald was bemusing the workers with language that seemed to mean something but actually meant nothing. Into this confusion came confusion twice confounded: H. N. Brailsford, a facile journalist who had somehow got himself a reputation as an economist, had made a discovery of an earth-shaking character. He had discovered, all by himself (tell it not to the lads at Dagenham!), that Henry Ford had shown the way out of the jungle of capitalism. Fordism, not Marxism, would emancipate the working class! As Brailsford was the 'theoretician' of the I.L.P., that party was soon involved in this fantastic illusion. MacDonaldism and Fordism formed a combination that soon had the workers squint-eyed, while the mine-owners, with the backing of the Tory government, were preparing an attack on the miners.

Wages and hours for the hewers of coal should have been taking up all the attention of the labour movement, industrial and parliamentary. Fortunately, the miners had a secretary who was not a MacDonaldite and who could never be fooled by the absurdity of Fordism. A. J. Cook was a Welshman, with all the fire and passion that are credited to that volatile people. He was a powerful, if somewhat erratic, speaker; he made no preparation beforehand no matter where he might be speaking. But he had a slogan that provided him with his text, and it never failed: "Not a second on the day, not a penny off the pay!" And with that to guide him he battered away at the coalowners and the government and aroused, as no one before him, the fighting spirit of the miners.

So strong was the feeling in favour of action throughout the trade union movement that the General Council of the Trades Union Congress had to make a move. When the mineowners, on June 30, 1925, served formal notice terminating the existing agreement, with a demand for reduced wages and an extension of hours, the Miners' Federation made an official appeal to the General Council for its backing. The General Council at that time had a fairly progressive chairman in the person of A. B. Swales, and a very capable secretary, Fred Bramley (Fred was ill and his office was being filled by his assistant, Walter

Citrine). July 31 was the date set for the introduction of the new agreement, and the Miners' Federation had no intention of accepting it, which meant a lock-out. On July 30, the officials of the Miners' Federation had an interview with Stanley Baldwin, the Tory Prime Minister. This gent, he would have his hearers believe, was a simple honest countryman whose heart was at all times ready to bleed for the suffering unemployed or the hard-wrought and low-paid miners. He could work his "Adam's apple" like nobody's business: when emotion got too much for him, up went the old apple and he had to pause a moment till it came down again. It was working double time at the meeting with the Federation officials: if ever there was a man who sympathised with the miners, they were looking at him right there; he knew the hazards of the work the miners had to do, he knew the hardship of their lives, but—up went the Adam's apple—"you see what we are up against in this country, the crisis that confronts us. No one could be sorrier than I am, but all of us must be prepared to make sacrifices, the miners as well as the others, even if it means a reduction of wages."

"Does that mean that all workers will have to accept a wage reduction?" he was asked.

To that he answered: "Yes".

When later it was said that "Baldwin stated that all wages must come down," he was able to say that he had not used such words. On the request for a subsidy to the mining industry that would avoid a cut in wages, he again drew attention to the critical state of the country's finances, and expressed with regret the impossibility of taking that way out. No, he was sorry but the miners would just have to make the best terms possible with the mineowners.

The Federation Executive got in touch immediately with the T.U.C. General Council; the General Council got in touch immediately with the unions concerned with transport. These sent out strict instructions: "No coal under any circumstances to be handled from July 31." This applied to road and rail. If wagons of coal were on the railway line, they were to be left there. No coal was to be shipped, loaded or unloaded. The government, faced with a situation for which they were not prepared, capitulated. It was announced that a subsidy covering nine months would be granted to the industry in order that wages could remain as they were for that period. Meanwhile a Royal Commission, with Sir Herbert Samuel as chairman, would be set up to investigate the situation in the mining industry and report.

The following day the *Daily Herald* came out with the striking

headline: "Red Friday!", while Swales and Citrine issued a statement declaring that this victory would be a great stimulus to the trade union movement. It wasn't a stimulus to MacDonald, though. Quite the contrary. He was seriously concerned about the concession, and at an I.L.P. Summer School he had this to say: "The Government has simply handed over the appearance, at any rate, of victory to the very forces that sane, well-considered, well-examined Socialism feels to be probably its greatest enemy." This was the kind of twaddle he always spoke. And this was the leader that was raised high by the I.L.P. for the worship of the masses. What an evil influence this man had in the working-class movement—and still has, as will be seen later.

Joyson Hicks, Home Secretary—the man who on another occasion said: "We won India by the sword and by the sword we will hold it"—snarled on this occasion: "Is England to be governed by the cabinet or by a handful of trade union officials?"

And this is the all-important question that time and time again must face the exploiters until the "handful of trade union officials", backed by or backing the parliamentary arm of the movement, puts them out of business for good and all.

A. J. Cook expressed a realistic view when he said: "This is the first round. Let us now prepare for the final struggle."

Alas! there was no preparation on the side of the unions, but every form of preparation on the part of the government, the mineowners and the bourgeoisie as a whole. And to all of these may be added MacDonald and the MacDonaldites. For he was still the god above all other gods when the Labour Party Conference met at Liverpool. There was another god there—a lesser one, it is true, but nevertheless a god: Sir Oswald Mosley! When he got up to the tribune the ovation he received was almost equal to that given to MacDonald. And it was such a conference, worshipping such tawdry gods, that excluded the Communist Party from the Labour Party!

I was a delegate; so was my old comrade Aitken Ferguson, a boiler-maker. There was a resolution down to ban the Communists from any participation in the Labour Party. Before it came up, we had a meeting with Henderson and the Labour Party organiser. I expressed the opinion that the proposed ban was directed not only against the Communist Party but against the Labour Party, to weaken it and make it more acceptable to the bourgeoisie. To this Henderson replied that he and his buddies had protected the Labour Party in the past and they would protect it in the future. I turned to Aitken and asked him:

"Did you ever hear anything like that?"—then to Henderson: "We up in Glasgow were defending and protecting the Labour movement when you were standing on the door-mat waiting to see if Lloyd George was going to take you back."

Aitken says he never saw a man go so white. He jumped to his feet and went out of the room as though Auld Clootie was after him. Maybe I should have been more judicious, but I knew they were determined to go ahead with the ban, and nothing I could have said would make any difference. When it came up for discussion I did my best, but what chance had I against MacDonald?

Consider the feeling of the conference. I was there beside Ernest Bevin when he got up to hit back at MacDonald for the trick he had played on the dockers while he was still Prime Minister. The dockers had come out on official strike, and MacDonald almost immediately applied the Emergency Powers Act: Bevin, to save the movement from disruption, he claimed, called off the strike. Big Ernie was becoming one of the outstanding men in the Labour movement. Yet here, as soon as he mentioned MacDonald and his action against the dockers, there was an uproar wild enough to shake the roof. Yes, sir, Ernie Bevin at a Labour Party Conference got shouted down for daring to question the integrity of Labour's own immaculate deity. So what chance had I in such an atmosphere?

Some hard things were said about the Communists, not least by MacDonald himself. When I spoke, I commented on some of these, and remarked: "You've heard some vicious things said about me and my comrades, but one thing you won't hear is anyone accusing us of wining and dining with the enemy, as those who want us out of the Labour movement take such a menial delight in doing!" I said much more, and repeated what I had told Henderson, that it would weaken not strengthen the Labour Party to ban the Communist Party.

But that first sentence had a sequel. When Fergus and I went out to the corridor for a breather we met MacDonald and Tom Johnston; they stopped to have a friendly word or two, during which MacDonald, in his most pleasant manner, said: "Willie, I'm sure you don't include me among those who wine and dine with the enemy?" That's the God's truth—*MacDonald* asked me that! "Of course I do," I answered.

He denied that he ever kept such company. "I may go to Buckingham Palace or Balmoral," he said, "but you wouldn't call that the camp of the enemy!"

"I certainly would," I told him.

"You're wrong, wrong, Willie." He was still smooth as smooth could be. "I'll take you to Balmoral whenever you care to go and let you see for yourself."

"All right, I'll take you up on that," I offered. "I'll go just as I am now and I'll talk just as I talk to the lads at the street corner, and I bet I won't get asked back again and you won't get back either, for taking me."

I don't know how this would have gone on, for at this point we were interrupted. Many years I had known Bessie Braddock's mother, a grand comrade whose memory I will always cherish. Visiting Liverpool I was always happy to enjoy her warm-hearted hospitality, and I must say I was quite fond of her lively daughter Bessie. But here was a different Bessie coming along the corridor of the conference hall. She had been in the visitors' gallery and I can't say whether or no she was interested in the conference, but she was certainly interested in me. "I'm going to expose you!" she shouted for the benefit of all and sundry.

MacDonald gave her a look of astonishment blended with contempt, and with his Scottish lieutenant walked away and left me to my fate. And I didn't half get a bawling-out.

"Who are you to insult Jack Braddock?" Jack Braddock was her man and apparently I had "done him wrong". "You're not fit to wipe Jack Braddock's boots! Jack Braddock wouldn't be seen on the same side of the street as you!" . . . and so it went on. I got away at last, with Fergie, thinking it was a good laugh. But next day she pounced again. I stood it as long as I could. Then I said: "For God's sake, woman, have you no shame? Tell your man to come and talk to me if he has any complaint to make. I could talk to him, I can't talk to you!"

That only made things worse. I never got such a storm of bullying before or since. I was given to understand that she had not finished with me, and that I would be very small beer by the time she had done so.

What a woman! But later when we both got to parliament all this was in the past—forgotten. She was a Marxist and I was a good comrade. She and several others were going to make a big change in the Labour Party, and she knew they could rely on me to give a helping hand. One evening she told me that Jack was in the public lobby and would like to have a talk with me. Out I went with her, and

there sure enough was the cause of all the trouble at Liverpool so many years before. We shook hands and settled down to chat like old pals, and I heard some more about the imminent changes that were going to take place in the Labour Party. The change came all right, but not in the Labour Party—in Bessie!

MacDonald offered to take me to Balmoral, as I have said. I didn't go, however, as I was in better company. I went to Wandsworth Prison, one of the twelve leaders of the Communist Party who were arrested following a raid on the Party headquarters. Quite a nice piece of combination was operated to get us there: George V, Churchill, MacDonald and Joynson Hicks, each in turn did his little bit to get us isolated and confined as part of the preparation for the attack on the miners.

I was at home in Paisley when I was arrested on a warrant from the Home Secretary. When, under escort, I arrived in London and was taken to Bow Street, I realised that I was one of many. George Bernard Shaw offered to stand bail for me. In Scotland the bail money has to be put down on the table: in England, the bailer has to satisfy the Magistrate that he has property to the amount of bail.

At Bow Street we came before a really majestic bloke, Sir Chartres Byron. He would have been an ideal subject for Dickens: very pompous and fully conscious of his high responsibility for the safety of the realm, he looked with obvious disfavour at the culprits who lined the dock. When Shaw was called to enter the witness box and take the oath as a guarantor for the bail of £200, the majestic fellow looked at him, not without a certain air of scorn, and barked: "Mr. Shaw, are you worth two hundred pounds?"

Shaw moved his head from side to side and made answer in a tone of regret: "I wouldn't like to say that." Then, brightening up, he added: "But I've *got* two hundred pounds!"

There was a burst of laughter in the court, and almost a burst blood-vessel on the bench. "Mr. Shaw, please remember you're not in the theatre now!"

When we came up for trial at the Old Bailey we never had a chance. Hailsham's old man was in charge of the prosecution, and he served up the sort of stuff that was later used by Senator MacCarthy. You could see the jury lapping it up. When the bloke on the bench, Rigby Swift, got going, they had plenty more to lap up. He was a true example of the sycophantic legal luminary who grovelled to the establishment and raked in the shekels; representing the mincowners

in opposing compensation claims made on behalf of injured miners. There was no attempt made to kid the jury that he was delivering an impartial summing up: he simply stroked the t's and dotted the i's or the Attorney General, with a chunk of his own thrown in. "You bastard," I said under my breath during his speech to the jury. I would have liked to say it out loud, but I knew it would only mean double what he was going to confer on us.

All twelve of us were found guilty. Harry Pollitt, Albert Inkpin, Wal Hannington, William Rust and I got sentenced to twelve months, each having had previous convictions. The other seven, who up till then had had blameless records, were told that if they would promise to leave the Communist Party they could go free. They all refused this shameful offer, and were put away for six months. The whole affair was a shocking piece of political persecution: that offer, made by a High Court Judge, was clear proof of it.

Wandsworth Prison had an association where prisoners, sitting a couple of feet apart, engaged in the production of mail bags. It was a large hall, with a cutting table at the end opposite the doorway. Midway on either side was a platform on which a discipline warder sat, keeping a watchful eye on all that went on. Another two warders were in charge of the work and, in general, took no notice of whether or no the prisoners engaged in conversation. "No Talking" had been a very strict rule here, but shortly before we arrived the rule had been withdrawn. We were therefore at the mercy of the discipline warders. You might exchange a few remarks with a neighbour, and then hear the warder shout: "That'll be enough talking!" If you continued, you'd be for it, not for talking but for disobeying an order. (That's how it worked when we were in: I don't know if it is still the same.)

Anyhow, there at the cutting table—a pleasant enough job—were Harry Pollitt, Alfred Inkpin and Wal Hannington; they could chat away until further orders and no one bothered them. At the "tab" table right in front of them sat Tom Bell, a six-monther, and William Rust and myself, both twelve-monthers. The other six, Robin Page Arnot, J. T. Murphy, E. Cant, Tom Winttringham, Arthur McManus and J. R. Campbell, were upstairs in the Tailor's Shop.

Some of the other occupants of that shop gave me my first insight into what has now become a common subject: homosexuality. A group of them passed through the association every other day, carrying bundles of clothing from the tailor's shop to the store. As they walked through, with a feminine strut, the "hard cases" would start

chirping to them, and damned if they did not accept this reception with coy pleasure and an extra swing of the hips! I could not have believed it if someone had told me before I saw it.

The one thing that troubled us more than anything else was lack of news from outside. So when Wal Hannington was summoned to meet a visitor one afternoon we all waited impatiently for his return, to hear the latest from the class-war front. About half an hour was the time allowed for a visit, and when the time was up the two at the cutting table and the three at the "tabs" had all eyes on the door. He didn't appear, and we wondered if something had happened. It had. When at last he did return his face was white and it could easily be seen that he was upset. There was a spell of whispering at the cutting table, and then Harry came round to the table behind me and told me that I must put down for an interview with the governor and talk straight to him about the treatment Wally had received. The situation, as it was whispered to me, was this: when we received a visit, instead of speaking through a gauze screen, we had the use of a room with a double door. The visitor came in at one door, the prisoner at the other; between them was a table against the wall, with a warder on the other side. Wal's wife, with a baby girl in her arms, and Frank Smith, were his visitors; and when he saw them Wal wanted to embrace his child. The warder blocked the child's way; very naturally Wal had a wrestle with him and the visit had ended in disaster. So they wanted me to tell the governor that we weren't going to put up with such treatment, and that he'd have to allow greater freedom when wives or relatives were the visitors or there would be trouble.

When we knocked off that day I told the Hall warder to put me down to see the governor the following morning. Next day after breakfast we had the usual hour's exercise parading around the ring in the exercise-yard before going to the association. J. T. Murphy, who was a "narrow craitur" managed to get in behind me, and there ensued the following exchange:

"I hear you've put down to see the governor?"

"That's right!"

"What are you going to say to him?" (Murphy, I should mention, had little faith in my discretion.)

"I'm going to say 'Look here, you old bastard—' " I got no further.

"I knew it, I knew it! Well, you're not speaking for me! I can do without kissing my wife till I get out of here!" He was shouting so loud by this time that he got a warning from the warder.

In due time I was summoned for my interview. "Do a good job!" whispered Harry as I left.

Up in the governor's room I found him sitting behind his desk; his deputy, a fairly young man, was on his left and the Chief Warder stood at his right. The warder who brought me in barked: "Toe the line!" and stood to attention. The line was chalked about a yard in front of the desk.

"Well, Gallacher?" the governor enquired.

"I've come to see you about that unnecessary interference with Wal Hannington during his visit yesterday." ("Say 'Sir' ", interjected the chief warder).

The governor was sharp. "You're a prisoner here. You can't speak for another prisoner."

"I'm speaking for all our lads," I told him. "We want to get through this as quietly as possible. We don't want any trouble, but if it's forced on us we will act."

"We have means of dealing with trouble," he assured me.

"I know," I answered. "You can deal with trouble in here, but if we make trouble there'll be greater trouble outside and you've no means of dealing with that!"

We went on like this for a bit, with the chief warder continually interjecting "Sir!" and me repeating it after him with an aspect of resigned humility. (If only Murphy could have heard me!) The interview ended with a promise from the governor to think over what I had said.

Back I went to the association, where Harry and the others were eager to hear what had happened. I told them that the governor had informed me right off that I could not speak for the others and had then given me his attention while I did speak for them. The matter, I went on, is now taken to *avizandum*. Going from the association back to the cell block, we marched in single file. As we reached the centre of the cell block the chief warder, who was giving us a passing inspection, called me out. "There will be no more trouble with your visits," he told me. "The governor would like it, if any of your people have a complaint of any kind, that you should come and see me about it."

And that's how I became the first Communist shop steward in Wandsworth Prison.

We left the association at half past four and then there stretched in front of us the long silent evening and night. But two nights a week there was an escape. A school teacher named Bell had organised a

group of other teachers who were ready to take classes on a variety of subjects within the London prisons. A prisoner could put his name down for two of these. Our lads, Harry, Albert and Wal, were in the English class; I don't remember if they took any other. I didn't trouble with the classes at the beginning; I was too busy reading and writing. We were supplied with exercise-books and I had started and finished a short history of the British Labour Movement from the time of the Chartists. Each day I would take the previous evening's work down with me to the association and, while making tabs, read out what I had written to Bill Rust. Tommy Bell, the six-monther, had gone out and Bill and I had the table to ourselves.

Then one day Harry mentioned that one or two of the laundry prisoners attended the English class and that he'd heard that they always had tobacco. Tobacco! What a magnet! (Nowadays, I understand, with the pay they receive, prisoners can buy cigarettes and tobacco in the prison store.) I went straightaway and put my name down for that prison version of the promised land. We were marshalled upstairs to a fair-sized room by a warder, who locked us in and left us free to chat away until the teacher arrived. I looked around at my classmates in an effort to locate the laundry men. My attention was attracted by a striking-looking lad over on my right; with his *pince-nez* and his lofty air, he was the picture of a real English aristocrat.

"Who's that?" I asked Harry. "I don't know," he replied. "He looks like a fascist to me."

The door opened, and in came our teacher, a short, middle-aged man, with a sharp, narrow face and small, piercing eyes, evidently a man who knew quite a lot and was ready to impart it. He was using *The Tempest* as a textbook—and I use the word "text" advisedly. He would ask one of us to read a few sentences from the play and then would lay himself out to draw a religious moral from it. I whispered to Harry: "Does this go on all the time?"

"Now, don't start anything!" Harry growled. "It's a very pleasant class and we don't want it broken up."

The pedagogue, however, had apparently got his eye on the new boy. "Will you read this next part?" he asked me. I read it. "Ah!" he said kindly. "Here's someone who knows how to read Shakespeare." To this I replied: "I may or may not know how to read Shakespeare, but I know you're taking advantage of this class to put your religion across while you ignore the part played by slaves, serfs, workers and wage-labourers in advancing human society."

He slammed at me and I slammed back at him. It was quite a rough-house for a spell.

The next time we went up to the class-room, the Aristocrat seated himself next to me. "Are you going to go after him tonight again?" he asked. "It depends what he has to say," I replied.

"We all enjoyed it," he continued, and then he asked: "Do you use tobacco?"

When I answered yes, he reached down to his stocking and produced a piece of thick black twist. We were pals from then on. He told me he was a smash-and-grab man and was in for eighteen months. Some years later I met him again as he was about to cross Cambridge Circus. Tall and handsome, he was a credit to the costliest tailor in Bond Street and was leading two lovely Borzois. Smash-and-grab seemed to be paying big dividends. We stopped to have a chat, and a laugh or two about that English class.

For the battle went on, every Tuesday evening until Mr. Bell himself turned up one night. He was very annoyed. The governor had told him that, according to a report made by one of the students, the English class was being used for Bolshevik propaganda! He reminded, us that at the beginning, those who attended the classes had been told that if they had any comments or suggestions to make they should ask to see him, Mr. Bell. He thought it very undesirable that anyone should by-pass him and go straight to the governor.

As he spoke, all eyes were turned in one direction. It seemed there was no doubt as to who was the nark. When the teachers had gone the warder showed us out: we had to go down a spiral stair, one warder at the rear and one waiting at the foot to see us safely on our way home—they were always very considerate in that respect, they didn't want any of us to lose our way. But in the centre of the spiral, unseen from above or below, there were sounds of a fair scuffle, and the informer got a rough handling.

However, despite the governor's complaint, the discussion went on. Towards the close of the class the teacher got so irritated that he snapped at me on one occasion: "You're the most intolerable man it has been my misfortune to meet. If there were only two of us in the world, I wouldn't be on the same island as you!"

That didn't sound very friendly. But the following Tuesday was the last of the series of classes, and while we were waiting for the teacher to arrive, Harry proposed (and it was carried unanimously) that I should pay a tribute to the teacher for his patience, his tolerance

and his erudition. I made him a short speech, therefore, in which I said I was speaking for all who had attended when I said that his class had been truly interesting and educative; that as for the interruptions I had sometimes made, I was sure he would understand that they were made because of the keen interest he had aroused, an interest that was evidently shared by all the rest. Whatever memories we might have of Wandsworth Prison, I said, there would always be a warm memory for the English teacher; on behalf of all the scholars I wished him a long, happy and useful life. Well, it was something like that.

He seemed very pleased, and in reply said some nice things about the class; how glad he had been to have such appreciative scholars and how much he would like to meet any or all of us in the days ahead—though not, he hoped, in Wandsworth. Then Mr. Bell came in, and Harry Pollitt made him a speech, thanking him for the classes he had organised and saying he was certain that every prisoner who had attended them would feel he owed him a debt of gratitude. Altogether it was a very pleasing finish.

We were having quite a lot of visitors, special visitors as well as the regular ones. Jean had come to live in London and she was always bright and cheerful when she came to see me, and always had a full volume of news to impart. Apart from Jean, my most regular visitor was the deputy governor, Mr. Hilton. He would drop into my cell of an evening or a Sunday afternoon to have a talk about prisons and prison reform. I used to tell him that there were too many rules and regulations; that the warders watched the prisoners and the prisoners watched the warders, with mutual distrust that often led to hatred; I thought there should be a minimum of rules and regulations, with the understanding that the prisoners were expected to recognise them and keep them. I made many suggestions for reform, but he thought I wanted to go too far. Yet some years later, when he was appointed governor of Wakefield Prison, he introduced reforms away ahead of anything I had thought of suggesting. I went to visit Wakefield when I was in Parliament and was shown all over it, including the "open prison", a very valuable experiment. Mr. Hilton was a fine administrator; perhaps one reason for our close collaboration was that he was a Scotsman, from Perthshire.

The General Strike and its betrayal brought quite a number of short-term prisoners into Wandsworth; we used to note the newcomers when they appeared at the morning exercise. Wal Hannington, the fearless and resolute leader of the unemployed, was easily the

best known and most popular man in the prison. Morning after morning you could hear, from one side or the other: "Good old Wally!" When Tommy Jackson appeared, he got a real reception. He was marched in by a warder one morning when the association was in full working session. Tommy was a brilliant writer and an equally brilliant speaker, but he gave little attention to his outward appearance. He had a sharp-featured face with a high forehead, surmounted by a mass of thick black hair that spread almost to his shoulders at the back. Short-sighted, peering with his head slightly forward, he passed right down the length of the association and was set to work beside me at the "tab" table. We were delighted to see him.

Twice a week the barber (a prisoner) came to the association to give shaves and haircuts. Those who wanted smartening up gave their names to the discipline warder on the left of the "tab" table. I put Tommy's name down for a haircut. The morning after his arrival I told him that the barber would be around between ten and eleven and that the warder would call out his name and he'd have to get his hair cut. Tommy was indignant. He didn't want his hair cut. I told him: "When your name's called you'll have to go or else face three days of bread and water." Tommy cursed, not loud but deep. When the barber arrived and his name was called, he got up very reluctantly and peered his way to the chair, with a louder cheer than he'd had at his reception. The barber didn't trouble using the scissors. The machine went over and around the victim's head and when Tommy came away he was a new person—but a new person he didn't cotton on to himself. Muttering curses on all warders and prisoners, he sat beside me while I tried to comfort him by telling him it would grow again. But he was inconsolable. When his ten days' sentence was up and he returned to his former haunts, he learned that if someone hadn't put his name down it would not have been called out; then, following a visit made by one of the comrades, he discovered that it was Gallacher that had put down his name.

Did he curse Gallacher? No. He went home to where he had a little garden; there was a small cluster of weeds in one corner; he christened those weeds "Gallacher" and every morning first thing, he went out and watered them (if you know what I mean). But by the time I got out of gaol it was all forgotten, and Tommy and I remained the best of comrades until his death.

Before the six-monthers left there was an incident that might have

lost me my post as shop steward. In the exercise yard there was a wide ring for the young and agile, and a smaller ring for the older and not so spry. J. R. Campbell had won the Military Medal in France, but had lost half of one foot and the toes of the other through frost-bite. This slowed him up a bit, so he did his routine march in the smaller ring. We had as warder on exercise a real nasty type, one of only two or three bad ones. One morning when I was on the far side of the ring I heard him shouting to Johnny: "Hey! you with the bad feet, stop talking!" When I got round to where he was standing I stepped out and accosted him.

"What was that you shouted to my friend in the small ring?" I said.

"You've got no friends," he snarled, "you're a prisoner!"

"Mister," I said, "I've got several friends here and he is one of them, and don't let me hear you shouting anything like that again."

"You've no right to talk to me," he blustered, knowing he was in the wrong.

"You can be thankful that I am talking to you. If you ever try anything of the sort again you won't know what has hit you!"

"Get back in the exercise!" was his final word. I got back, unsure whether or no he would report me. All the others expected that he would, but when we got to our cosy corner in the association I told them he would be too scared, for he would be hauled over the coals for using insulting language to a prisoner. And there was no report. Let the governor sleep sound; the prison with its discipline was running as smooth as a well-oiled machine.

Alas! two days later some grit got into the machine, and great was the creaking thereof. The same warder, in his most offensive manner, snarled at another prisoner as he was passing round the ring: "Stop that gabbing!"

"Go to hell!" was the immediate response of the prisoner. He was put on a report. In the forenoon he was conducted from his job to appear before the governor. He stood on the line while the warder repeated what he had said in reply to the order for silence.

"What have you to say?" asked the governor.

"This warder has been deliberately provoking us on exercise," pleaded the culprit. "So much so that Gallacher stepped out the other morning and threatened to hit him!"

"Is this true?" the astounded governor enquired.

The shivering warder could only admit that something of the sort had happened. He was ordered to fetch me.

A short holiday. Campaigning on behalf of the unemployed miners. Wheatley and the Labour Party. Trotsky in 1927.

WHEN we were released from prison, the Party decided we must have a couple of weeks' holiday before any campaigning. There was a Party conference in France the week following, and Albert Inkpin and I were chosen as fraternal delegates. One of my good comrades, who had a brother in the travel business, arranged for Jean and me to go to a villa in St. Brieuc, in Brittany, when we had finished with the conference. Albert and his wife Julia (such a good comrade she was!) were going to St. Malo. We arrived at the villa in the late afternoon. Apart from the wife of an English Canon, who was there with two children and a maid, we were, we were told, the only boarders. It was well into the autumn and the busy season was at an end.

The hostess was an attractive woman in her late thirties or early forties, with a husky son fourteen years of age. When we got settled in we were served a very acceptable high tea, and then got chatting with her. She was, or rather had been, a Russian princess; her fine big lad had been named Nicholas after the Czar. While we were enjoying a very pleasant chat the doorbell went with a repeat that indicated urgency. When opened, it was to admit a lad from the Paris office of the travel agency that had fixed up our holiday. He wanted to have a word with me. We went into the library, where he unburdened himself. There was a message from his London headquarters to say that we must get out of the villa immediately. When they had booked us for this place they had had no idea of whom I really was and now there was likely to be bloody murder, or words to that effect. I told the lad from Paris that it was a lot of nonsense. Jean and I liked the place and were getting on grand with the hostess and her boy; he and I were already pals and Jean and our hostess were already on the happiest terms. Of course, as is well known throughout the movement, everyone she met was soon on friendly relations with Jean: she had a sympathetic nature and a devotion to the Party that won her friends wherever she went, not only in Britain but in near and far-off countries too.

We had a happy holiday over there in St. Brieuc. I don't know if the hostess ever actually got to know who we were, but she made it clear

she knew our sentiments. She was quite open about the revolution having given her a shaking and set her thinking. The aristocracy of Russia treated the Russian people as a sort of sub-human louts. They took them into their households as menials and treated them as such, even to the point of treating them rough. For tutors or "cultural companions" there was discrimination—no Russian need apply: French and German were the recognised intellectual equipment of an aristocratic home.

"We got what we deserved," our hostess told us frankly. And now she was finding out what it means to be looked on and treated as a "menial". There had been a small wing added to the villa and this was occupied by the Canon's wife, her two children and the maid. Coming from a country parish in England the lady found it unthinkable that she should hold converse with the help (or even with the lady in charge) of a holiday boarding house. She kept herself and her children strictly apart from our hostess and her son. The hostess was very cynical about the wife of the man of God.

"She is so like what we were before the revolution. I suppose if she knew that I could call myself a princess she would bring her children to curtsy to me. But that is in the past. I would not have mentioned it to you, but the young man from Paris told me he had let you know."

She now felt of some use for the first time in her life, she told us. She was in charge of the villa during the summer months, and she had a travelling job between London and Paris for a large dressmaking establishment in the winter. All this she told us during the evenings when the light was fading into darkness and we sat for an hour or so before retiring. She was not the only Russian in the vicinity, not by a long shot. Up above the villa was a château and it was occupied by the Grand Duke Cyril or something (I cannot remember exactly). Every morning as Jean and I were making our way along to an exceptionally attractive bay for a dip and a laze in the sun, we would meet him and his retainers out for their morning walk and would greet him "Good morning!" Jean and I were having a happy, peaceful holiday and I had no evil in my heart toward any of my fellow men.

The days went rushing by, and after two restful and enjoyable weeks we took an affectionate farewell of our hostess and her son Nicky (who had become quite a pal of mine), and set out for home again.

I had made the most of my holiday, but now I was keen to get back to Scotland and to Fife. I had already received a call from the lads up there, as soon as I came out of prison, asking me to get up as soon as

possible. But when I got back to London, where Jean went back to the comrades with whom she had stayed while I had been in prison, I found that I had been booked to do a week's meetings in Durham. There was a good left-wing movement in Durham, and I had been there on two or three occasions. If I remember rightly, one of the bright lads there was a young fellow named Sam Watson. It's a long time since I last saw him and he may have changed a bit during the stormy years that have passed since that amazing week I put in during the great seven-months-long battle of the miners.

On arrival I was immediately taken to a village where I spoke at a large open-air meeting. I had just finished when a high-ranking police officer appeared and read me out an official document from Joynson Hicks, the Home Secretary, which banned me from speaking within the county of Durham. No more meetings, it warned, or the police would take action. To hell with the police, and to hell with Joynson Hicks! I got in touch with the officials of the Durham Miners' Union and they agreed with me that we couldn't let "them" get away with anything as raw as that. So from one village to another the word went round. Official branch meetings were organised, presided over by the union officials; then I would appear. The Chairman would say: "Now Willie Gallacher is going to say a few words." I would get going for forty or fifty minutes, and then out and away. By the time word had percolated through to the police I would be gone and they had no idea where I would turn up next. This went on for the full week. The meetings were packed. I was enabled by the courtesy and assistance of the Durham officials to carry through all the meetings I had been scheduled to fulfil.

Thanks, Sammy! That old devil Hicks in 1924 made the famous (infamous) brag: "We won India by the sword and by the sword we will hold it." He did not live to see the sword rusted and broken, with the only hope of the imperialists to try and keep a grip, not of the sword but of their Indian bourgeois pals, as a means of continuing to suck profits out of India at the expense of the suffering Indian people.

After my successful campaign in Durham, I went straight to Fife and on to Cowdenbeath. What a reception! The lads were waiting on the station platform. "How are you, Willie?" Shake hands with this one, with that one, with the other. Pulled this way, pulled that, I thought it was never going to stop. Then down the pathway we went to the main street, bands playing, miners cheering, more hand-shaking as a prelude to the march to Stein Square. Meetings, speeches, more meetings and

more speeches: every day, afternoons and evenings, they kept me going the rounds. I had early learned how to use and save my voice and so was able to keep going without strain to my vocal chords.

When I got to Lochgelly my hosts were Jeemie Stewart and his wife Annie, a grand couple. Jeemie was a member of the Party, one of the most loyal and (as all Communists should be) devoted to the service of the working class. He was for a time a burgh magistrate in Lochgelly and, on the bench, went easy on all who came before him. I recall that he had a lad before him charged with stealing coals. He told the lad that his parents and the parents of others like him had been robbed for generations by the coal-owners and their class. "But," he went on, "you must understand that you cannot get anywhere by individual action. I'm going to admonish you, lad, and at the same time advise you to attend the May Day meeting in the Public Park, and there you'll learn how the workers, through organised effort, can get all the coal and all else they require." The well-to-do folk, small shopkeepers and the like, didn't much fancy Jeemie as a magistrate and they got rid of him at the earliest opportunity.

But here he was in 1926, right up to his neck in work, doing his share of speaking and taking a leading and very active part in the Community Centre which occupied the Miners' Institute. This was a real Community Centre; clothing, shoes, food, money, help of every description was there organised to help the miners and their families in this period of urgent need.

Annie noticed that I was getting a bit down at heel. "Take his shoes down for repair while he's resting," she suggested to Jeemie. "Off with them!" he ordered. I handed them over; they were back in time for my evening meeting—with a fine Red Flag painted on each instep, and orders that at the various meetings I had to address I should sit with my toes turned well up before it was my turn to speak.

When Jeemie died, the Party lost a grand and valiant comrade. Annie was a great lass in her own way. She would not join the Party; Jeemie had given up the Church but she remained a practising Catholic, though always willing to give the Party a hand. I last saw her in 1961 or 1962; I was at a village in the Lothians and just before the meeting Annie came into the hall to shake my hand; she had married again and I hope she will keep well and happy.

Another couple of dear friends must now be mentioned in connection with that campaign in 1926. Another Jeemie—Jeemie Hope of the Glebe, East Wemyss. Jeemie had played for Stoke in his football

days, and there he met and married his wife Sue. Jeemie had developed T.B. but kept going, even though he was as thin as a rake. And how Sue looked after him and the children! A wonderful woman, and both of them such dear friends to me and Jean. Neither Jean nor I had great family ramifications: I had never known a grandfather or a grandmother. But Jean and I had, and I still have, so many real, genuine friends who have comforted us through all the years, friends who never failed us and who made us feel that any service we gave to the cause was well repaid. Jeemie Hope and his dear wife Sue were two of them.

Well, there I was campaigning in Fife, and from Bowhill I had to cut across to Methil and from there to Buckhaven. Something went wrong with the schedule at this last place and I was half an hour late getting to the meeting. Jeemie Hope was holding the fort when I arrived on the platform; a pawky speaker in "braid Scots", it was a treat to hear him exclaim: "Here's auld Wullie the noo. Am gled auld Wullie's late. Here A've been speakin' a' a packed meetin' an' if it had been ca'ed fur Jeemie Hope thur widna hae been hauf-a-dizzen here. Some folk say we're a loat o' young irresponsibles, bit here's auld Wullie, he's as auld as ony o' them, the only difference is auld Wullie's kept his mind young."

By the time he got through, to the accompaniment of constant laughter, I felt as though I had a long grey beard reaching to my knees.

Jeemie and Sue are long since gone from our midst, both of them, but their memory is warm in my heart.

After seven months of hard, bitter struggle, the miners returned to the pits, leaving very many on the unemployed register. The Baldwin government, quite certain that there was no fight left in the General Council of the T.U.C., or for that matter in any of the union executives, set about preparing what a short time later became the Trades Disputes and Trade Unions Act. One feature of this attack on the unions was to reverse the clause on the Political Levy. The Liberal Act, following the "Osborne Decision" had allowed members of a union to "contract out" on condition that they signed a form provided by the unions for the purpose. Now came this Act substituting "contracting in" for contracting out. This was intended to paralyse the political activity of the unions and to weaken them generally; it should have been fought, not only in parliament but by nation-wide propaganda, mass demonstrations and strike action wherever possible—even though of short duration. But the General Council did nothing and the opposition in parliament was merely formal. There were well-founded

suspensions in the movement that MacDonald and several others were not at all strongly opposed to the Act despite the fact that it meant loss of revenue for the Labour Party.

Not so the Communist Party. We were violently opposed, and went driving ahead with a campaign that was doomed from the start. We proclaimed, through the *Workers' Weekly*, the *Sunday Worker* and the *Worker* (which was still coming out in Glasgow) that the one and only answer to this nefarious Bill was—a general strike. In propaganda meetings all over the country we were getting resolutions passed in support of this quite unrealistic proposal. Not only were the General Council and the principal unions not prepared for action of any kind; they were, as was seen a few months later, thinking along entirely different lines. After a month or two of hectic propaganda, our agitation for a second general strike, less than a year from the betrayal of the first, faded out; as a result of presenting our members with an impossible task, we suffered a serious loss in membership.

We have to learn from our mistakes, and this our Party has always tried to do. If only some of the trade union leaders would recognise their mistakes, what a far stronger position our movement would occupy today! But you can search their official documents from the earliest days and nowhere will you find mention made of a mistake in policy—and as a consequence, no possibility of an open correction. Thus there was no suggestion of a critical examination of the situation that had led to the calling of the general strike, nor of what led to its betrayal.

This failure prepared the way for a new betrayal of the working-class movement. There can be no question whatever that the bourgeoisie got a shake-up, a real fright, from the resolute and active spirit of the workers during that fateful Nine Days. But they, or the clever ones among them, were aware that the Labour and trade union leaders had had a bigger fright still.

In prison, as I have mentioned, we got supplied with large exercise books, and I was using mine to write a short history of the early Labour Movement. (I got this finished, but I didn't get it out. The governor took possession of it—but we'll leave that for now.) I used a page of an exercise book to write out my opinion of how the general strike would terminate. In this, which I passed on to Harry to read, I pointed out that for the first time we had in Britain what Marx called "the open confrontation of the classes". Two classes and two governments. The bourgeoisie recognising and taking their instructions from

the Baldwin government; the working class, with their Councils of Action, taking their instructions from the General Council and repudiating the Baldwin government. The Russian word *Soviet* means "council", and here were the British workers, deciding through their "soviets" or "councils" what would move and what would not move in all the important industrial districts of the country. Even the police had to obtain a permit to drive prisoners from one gaol to another. In general, the functions of the local and county councils were taken over by these Councils of Action. The big question, therefore, which no one dared mention, was: would the General Council push out the Baldwin government as the Councils of Action had pushed out the local authorities, and take over the government of the country? That was the issue that was inherent in the situation: either a revolution or a betrayal, and in view of the make-up of the General Council a betrayal was a foregone conclusion. That, roughly, is what I wrote at the time, and there is not the slightest doubt that Bevin, Thomas and the others realised where they had got to, didn't like it, and were ready to hurry away as far as they could get from such an appalling responsibility.

One of the cleverest representatives of the big capitalists was Sir Alfred Mond, of Imperial Chemicals. He knew that the leaders of the unions and particularly the members of the General Council had got frightened out of their judgment. So he got some cronies together to discuss "industrial peace". The General Council grabbed at this like a hungry dog at a bone. Sir Ben Turner, as chairman of the union group, rightaway became all palsy-walsy with Sir Alfred Mond. Alf slapped Ben on the back and Ben reciprocated—such a happy gathering! There were no signs of snobbery on the part of the employers, no suggestion of condescension; all they wanted was good relations that would redound to the benefit of employers and employed. Just what we want too, said Sir Ben. So the negotiations, known as the Mond-Turner get-together, got started, and continued until the Swansea Trades Union Congress the following year, when Mondism—"industrial peace"—was decided on, with war against the Communists and the Minority Movement.

While this was being hatched, John Wheatley was getting seriously worried. The movement was getting more and more into the hands of MacDonald and the right-wing. Something had to be done. He sent me an urgent message: I must come and see him. When I got to his hotel he told me that something drastic must be done to break the reactionary control MacDonald exercised over the movement. With this I was in

complete agreement. But how—if Wheatley refused to come out into the open and expose him? That was not the way, said John. That would create a split in the Labour Party that might never be healed. The best way was to win the movement away from MacDonald without openly attacking him. How was that to be done? He had had a wonderful idea. I knew a number of trade union leaders, among them A. J. Cook. Could I get Cook to join with Maxton in a great campaign covering the whole of the country with a real progressive policy and programme? I told him I thought Cook would be delighted to partner Maxton. Would I bring him down to the House one evening for a talk? I would.

This was arranged, and for the first time John and Maxton met this great leader of the miners. Wheatley outlined his idea, which was to embrace if possible other trade union leaders and members of parliament. At the moment, none of the latter were ready to identify themselves with the venture, but once it got going he was sure they would come flocking round it. It was to be the biggest and most ambitious campaign ever launched.

I was given the task of writing a manifesto, which was to be ready for a meeting to be held in Cook's office in Russell Square the following week. At that meeting, along with Wheatley, Cook and Maxton there were George Hicks and one or two other trade unionists. The manifesto was read to the meeting and was unanimously approved. The first great send-off for the campaign was to be held at St. Andrews Hall in Glasgow, with George Hicks in the chair.

The manifesto was published and created quite a stir. The *Sunday Worker* gave it a good show. Cook was on the editorial board, and it was to be the semi-official organ of the campaign. Wheatley was in his seventh heaven. It was clear to all that something really big was in the making. This combination of the popular parliamentarian and the fighting leader of the miners struck the imagination of the masses and gave every promise of realising all Wheatley's hopes.

I tried to get my Party comrades at headquarters enthusiastic about it, but one or two had grave doubts as to whether it would lead to anything worth while. But it was a pleasure to be with Wheatley while the first big meeting was in course of preparation. Behind his thick glasses his eyes were a-twinkle. I am sure now—although I didn't think of it at the time—that he saw himself as the popularly-chosen leader of the Labour Party, with MacDonald and Snowden swept into oblivion. "Get busy," he told me. "We don't want anything to go wrong, so write out a speech for Maxton and one for Cook; even if they don't

actually read them it will serve as a guide for the line they must take."

I set myself to prepare a really popular speech for Maxton, and handed over to J. R. Campbell the task of writing one for A. J. Cook. (There was nothing odd about this, we often wrote speeches for various trade union leaders at that time. One, in particular, when being congratulated in a pub on the speech he had made over the radio, casually remarked: "I thought myself it was very good. It was Harry Pollitt who wrote it.")

Preparations for the countrywide campaign were meanwhile going on. Halls were booked in several centres; the idea was to have a different trade union or parliamentary leader in the chair at each meeting, with the two champions hurling defiance at capitalism and all its works and incidentally knocking away the props from underneath MacDonald.

The great night arrived. Long before starting time the crowds were gathering. It was going to be the night of nights, and Wheatley could scarcely restrain himself. Only one fly in the ointment: while Cook had been very pleased to accept the fine speech Johnny Campbell had written, Maxton had refused to accept my notes (which had been enthusiastically endorsed by Wheatley). Directly the doors opened an excited, expectant mass of working men and women flooded into the hall till it was packed, leaving many disappointed outside. We had omitted to prepare for an overflow, but decided to take care of that at subsequent meetings. Wheatley, his Glasgow lieutenant Willie Regan and I stood just outside the platform-room, where we could see one side of the hall without being seen by the audience. All eyes were on Cook and Maxton as they strode on to the platform preceded by their chairman, George Hicks.

What shouting! What cheers! Cries of "Good old Jimmy! Let them have it!" and so on. This was the start. I looked at John and he looked at me beaming. Let MacDonald look out, his evil reign was coming to an end. Tonight a tocsin would sound: a new, exciting policy and programme that would arouse the masses as they had never been roused before.

George Hicks made a fine introduction for A. J. Cook. Never had there been such a fearless fighter for the miners, and for the working class as a whole, a leader they could be proud of. Cheer upon cheer resounded through the hall as Cook took the floor. Although he had never been accustomed to reading a prepared speech, he made a good job of it and got the audience in the mood where it was the easiest

thing imaginable for an experienced speaker to put his message across with ready and full approval for what he had to say. An ideal situation for a speaker like Maxton, who played on the emotions of his hearers.

The audience felt what was coming and leaned forward from their seats, ready to get to their feet when Maxton was introduced. Again George Hicks did a good job: "I don't have to say anything about Jimmy Maxton, not in Glasgow. You all know him and know what to expect: Jimmy Maxton, Bridgeton's own!"

Jimmy got slowly to his feet—much slower than the audience. He stood listening to the shouts and cheers, looking serious as befitted the occasion. I could hear Wheatley's heart beating—or was it my own? As the audience subsided into the seats, Maxton, with a characteristic gesture, lifted the always-straying lock of hair and slowly put it behind his ear. And then . . .

Jesus! what a calamity! All the old worn-out clichés, the tired old phrases they had heard so many times before. MacDonald could not have been worse. The audience, which had been leaning forward, began to sink back in their seats, heads shrunk into their shoulders. It was cruel, pathetic, an utter let-down.

"He's ruined it," growled Wheatley. We slunk into the platform-room. Wheatley was muttering to himself. Then suddenly he turned to Wille Regan: "Go and book the Shettleston Hall for tomorrow evening," he said. "I may be able to save something."

But it was no use. The great campaign on which we had built such hopes was finished. It was the finish for Wheatley too. He never recovered from this terrible fiasco. For MacDonald, Snowden and the others knew what was behind it: they knew that Wheatley had ambitions that bode no good for them; and the collapse of this great effort to seize the leadership left him without any worth-while support. So the man whom MacDonald had not dared ignore in 1924 was left outside in 1929 without a protest from any source. The campaign that should have made him, destroyed him.

In the summer of 1927 an invitation was received by our Party for a group of young people to visit the Soviet Union. A party of school-children was organised and put under the care of Jean, who accompanied them to Moscow and endeared herself to all of them. Later on I was sent over as a delegate to the 10th Anniversary of the October Revolution. When I arrived in Moscow it seemed to me that there was something serious brewing.

The fight with Trotsky and his group of concealed Mensheviks had

been going on since the death of Lenin. Time and time again he was overwhelmingly defeated in the Central Committee and at Communist Party conferences; always he promised to accept the Party's decisions, but before the sound of his promise died away he was shouting the odds again.

Trotsky's argument was that it was not possible to establish socialism in a backward, mainly peasant country like Russia. He claimed that they must wait until the workers in an advanced capitalist country had carried through a revolution and were in a position to give state aid to backward Russia. The Mensheviks' argument was: "You can't build socialism in a backward country like Russia; you must wait until capitalism has gone through all its stages of development before you can think of establishing a socialist society." The Trotskyites argued: "You can't build socialism in a backward country like Russia: you must wait until you can get state assistance from a highly developed country where the workers have carried through a revolution and hold state power." There's a slight difference between these two arguments, but the operative part is the same: "*You can't build socialism.*"

Well, you can't just stand still. You must be doing something to strengthen the economy, so if you can't build socialism you must build capitalism—on this point Trotsky was at one with his old friends the Mensheviks, with whom he had kept a certain measure of contact until he joined the Bolshevik Party in June 1917 when he found that he and his group were getting isolated.

Here in Moscow in 1927, rumours were going round in connection with the activities of this counter-revolutionary group. In the Red Square on the morning of the 10th Anniversary I was on the tribune above Lenin's mausoleum; I had been chosen to speak on behalf of the Communist International. As the hour struck, Voroshilov came riding out from the Kremlin to review the troops of the Red Army lined up in front of us. After he had inspected the ranks, I was called on to speak for the Communist International. I had prepared a short speech the day before so that it could be translated in readiness. I told the Red Army lads that in all capitalist countries the workers were on guard to defend the young Socialist Republic from the frenzied rage of the imperialists, but that they must all the time be on guard as well to protect the Party and country from corrupt traitors within. When the translation of my speech was read out all the comrades, including my good comrade Joseph Stalin, shook hands with me, congratulating me on what I had said. A few minutes later there was a hurried whispering, following

which I was asked to go across to the Mochovaya, to speak against Trotsky—who had appeared at the window of an hotel and was trying to disrupt the workers' demonstration waiting to march through the Red Square.

When I got there my services were not required. A group of Red Army men was at the hotel door, keeping back a crowd of angry workers who were trying to get at Trotsky. It would have been a bleak day for him if those workers had got at him. Others of his group appeared that day at hotel windows in Tverskaya (now Gorky Street) and other districts of Moscow, as well as in Leningrad. But all of them were well and truly hooted by the workers, and all had to be protected by the police or by the Red Army. The next day Trotsky was taken to the railway station and packed off to a faraway village where he could do no harm. He had tried to start people fighting on the streets—only to discover that he had not the slightest support either from the workers or from the Red Army. His attempt at counter-revolution had failed; his name became a bad smell in the nostrils of the Soviet people. All over the country, workers' organisations roundly condemned this criminal attempt to undermine their new life.

Trotsky subsequently made his home in Mexico, where he had armed guards to keep out imaginary enemies. His real danger was from within—from one of his worshippers who was as crazy as himself. And make no mistake about it, Trotsky really was crazy. He never spoke of the Party leaders in the Soviet Union except as "mediocrities"—all of them. And of course Trotsky himself was the standard by which he measured them. Sometimes he used another description of them: *epigones*. This was an even worse epithet; it meant that they were weak, feeble successors of the great ones who had gone before. (And if anyone who had asked him who those great ones were, I am certain he would have answered: "ME . . . and Lenin," with a very strong accent on the first.)

When the second world war got going the *Daily Express*, imagining that Trotsky knew what was going on in the Soviet Union, cabled him for an article on the potential of the Red Army, about the strength of which there was much speculation. Trotsky was only too happy to oblige. There was no Red Army—or rather the Red Army had no weapons—Stalin was afraid to give them weapons for fear the army would march on the Kremlin and destroy the gang of mediocrities who occupied it. This was set up with a great splash in the *Express* for the ensuing Monday. Alas for their great informant! On the Sunday the

Red Army, with tanks and artillery and abundant air cover, had marched into Poland and, for the time being, stopped Hitler in his tracks. When Trotsky's murderer was put on trial, he told the court how he worshipped his crazy master, but when the latter would not allow him to marry the young woman secretary he stuck an ice-pick in his neck. And that was the miserable end of a counter-revolutionary.

Unemployed struggles. The hunger marches. Start of the Daily Worker.

DURING the General Strike, the Communist Party and the Minority Movement (led by Harry Pollitt) carried on a vigorous campaign to strengthen the will of the workers for victory over the mineowners and the Baldwin government. The General Council of the T.U.C. came in for much bitter but well-deserved criticism for its cynical betrayal of the strike. Now the leaders, at the Swansea Congress in 1928, having made an equally cynical deal with the employers under the clever guidance of Sir Alfred Mond, turned their fire on to the Communist Party and the Minority Movement.

Some time previously, in 1923, they had entered into negotiations with Wal Hannington and his colleagues, who had done a great job in organising the unemployed, and at the Trades Union Congress which followed they had set up a joint committee which was to organise a series of meetings around the demand of "work or full maintenance". Now, at Swansea, they claimed that the National Unemployed Workers' Movement was dominated by Communists, and used this as a pretext for breaking the agreement they had made with it.

This was only one of the manifestations of Mondism. A circular was sent out to all the unions, advising them to ban Communists and members of the Minority Movement from holding official positions or serving as delegates to the Trades Union Congress. This became known as the Black Circular. Harry Pollitt was a boilermaker, who for several years had been regularly elected by his union as their delegate to the T.U.C., and always, as such, distinguished himself for the clarity of his views on the important questions that came up for discussion. He was being popularly encouraged to stand at the forthcoming union elections for the post of secretary to his union, and there is very little doubt that he would have been elected; but the thoroughly reactionary "old guard" hurriedly pushed through the Black Circular, and that blacked Harry from holding office or continuing to act as a delegate.

Up in Scotland, I was busier than ever I had been before. Not only was I addressing Party and unemployed meetings in all parts of the country—I was in continual demand from the comrades in Lanarkshire and Fifeshire. In these two counties there was a terrific ferment in

the Miners' Union. A young lad, William Allen, had been elected secretary of the Lanarkshire Miners' Union. This was a heavy blow to the previous secretary and some of the old officials; but more was to follow. In Fife the Party and the Left held a very strong position on the executive and now followed an election for two agents, in which two Communists were elected—John McArthur and Dave Proudfoot. On top of that, the five delegates elected to the Scottish Miners Congress were either Communists or members of the Minority Movement. In Lanarkshire the same result was secured, which meant that when the Conference took place the old gang would be voted out and a new leadership would take its place.

The Congress was an annual affair, and power to convene it was vested in the reigning executive; so the old executive, rather than risk being voted out, sat tight and refused to call it. Our lads tried every conceivable means to get the recognised union procedure adhered to, but it was no use. In Fife, the union's executive instructed Adamson to demand the calling of the conference. He refused to accept the decision of his executive. He was nominally elected for life, but there was a rule that permitted a vote to be taken for his removal if he failed to serve the best interests of the members. The executive, under this rule, suspended him pending a ballot of the members for or against his removal. As the various branches voted, it became obvious that he would be out. But he didn't wait for the official declaration of the ballot. With the aid of several of his right-wing supporters, he started a breakaway union. The original union was called the Fife, Kinross and Clackmannan Miners' Union: he called his breakaway the Fife, Clackmannan and Kinross Miners' Union. And he got away with it! The Scottish Executive (which would have been out of office if the statutory conference had been held) met and expelled the original union! On what grounds? For non-payment of dues. If there was a failure to pay dues, then it was the secretary who was responsible and that secretary was Adamson. Was there ever anything in this wide world to equal the temerity of those old limpets?

The county unions, through their delegates, elected the Scottish executive. The Scottish executive represented Scotland in the Miners' Federation of Great Britain. This meant that the Fife union, once it was expelled, was cut off from the M.F.G.B. Appeals were made to the M.G.F.B. not to recognise the breakaway; but that body's executive, under the reactionary leadership of Herbert Smith (Honest 'Erb) gave its official blessing (a) to the refusal to call a conference, and (b) to

the expulsion of the Fife union for debts—which if incurred must have been incurred by Adamson. Demos, oh Demos! what crimes have been committed in thy name!

The Fife union having been deliberately excluded from the M.F.G.B. and Willie Allen's position in Lanarkshire becoming intolerable due to the attitude of the "limpets", long and serious discussions took place. Out of these came the decision to unite the Fife union with the dissidents of the Lanarkshire one, and form a new union. This was known as the United Mineworkers of Scotland; for several years it carried on active work throughout the Scottish coalfields and though it had members in other districts the bulk of its membership was in Fife. After Willie Allen, Dave Proudfoot became secretary; he held the post for several years and served the miners well before retiring for reasons of health. His successor was Abe Moffat, who proved himself an able administrator and outstanding leader. Abe and his wife Helen kept an open door for me at their house in Lumphinnans. They were, and are, dear friends to me as they always were to Jean. Not only Abe and Helen, but Jim Moffat and his wife Netta too; their never-failing kindness I can never repay. And of course, Alex Moffat, who was my trusty companion and comrade from the earliest days of the Communist Party in Fife.

I had better tell how the split was healed, though it carries my story forward to 1934, by which time a change had taken place in the M.F.G.B. Ebby Edwards, who was to prove himself a very progressive leader of the miners and one of the principal architects of the National Union of Mineworkers, was now secretary of the Federation, with Lawther (at that time on the left in the Labour movement) was Vice-President. Talks were started with Abe Moffat and his executive; Ebby and Lawther urged them to liquidate the United Mineworkers of Scotland, which was quite a solvent body, and let the members rejoin the old county unions where they were now assured of a square deal. The executive of the U.M.S. put this before the branches, with a recommendation in favour. It went through with a large majority and the leaders of the M.F.G.B. expressed great pleasure when they heard the result, and the hope that the past would be forgotten and all would work together for the good of the Scottish miners. But they didn't know old Adamson and the jaundiced gang he still had around him. They accepted several thousand Fife miners but refused membership to the three leading officials of the U.M.S.—Abe Moffat, his brother Alex and John McArthur. This was done on the specious plea that the

three were not working in the pits—and the mineowners saw that they were kept out too. It was not until the death of Adamson that his successor, James Cook, helped them to get jobs in a small pit in Clackmannan and got them qualified for union membership. Before very long Abe was elected to the executive and then became President of the Scottish Executive, the finest leader the Scottish miners have known.

Busy! I was on the move all the time. I was adviser-in-chief to my miner comrades. I had a constant stream of Party meetings, and wherever I went to speak for the Party I would get an unemployed demonstration thrown in. The Unemployed Workers' Movement, under the able leadership of Wal Hannington, was going from strength to strength. The General Council of the T.U.C. had broken off relations with Wal, as has been noted. The joint committee had been replaced by an unprincipled combination of General Council and employers. No more quarrels, no more strikes, happy days of peace and fraternity, with the flowing bowl providing a mellowing influence at their cheerful meetings. But no "flowing bowl" in the Depressed Areas—and South Wales was surely one of these.

Not only had Baldwin stated in 1925 that all wages must come down; he had set up a committee to consider a measure of economy at the expense of the poverty-stricken unemployed. This body, known as the Blanesburgh Committee (after its chairman) reported in 1927, recommending a cut in unemployment benefit. The notorious and utterly heartless Margaret Bondfield and two other Labour representatives on the committee approved of this callous recommendation. There was consternation throughout the Labour movement when this report was published with the signatures of the three representatives of the Labour Party.

So strong was the feeling that a special conference was called to consider what action should be taken in connection with it. The Miners' Federation put forward a resolution repudiating the report and censuring the Labour representatives, but the Standing Orders Committee refused to accept this. The platform skilfully and unscrupulously evaded the real issue by giving the shop-worn promise to put down a "reasoned amendment" when the report came before the House of Commons. The conference was a waste of time and money.

I was, I should mention, a member of the National Council of the Unemployed Workers' Movement, as a representative of the Communist Party, and welcomed as such by the non-Party people on that

body. I was often in South Wales and saw at first hand the appalling conditions that obtained in the valleys. Thousands of Rachels weeping for their children—for the young people were streaming out of the valleys making for London or other cities in the hope of finding any kind of livelihood. Idle pits and idle men, month after month and year after year! The tragedy of it was searing the souls of the Welsh miners. Not only were they suffering undeserved poverty and want: they were subjected to the most brutal treatment by the police. It appeared that the Chief Constable had let it be known that crowds, whether they had assembled for unemployed meetings or not, should be discouraged. This was as good as an order to break them up.

One afternoon I was speaking in Mardy. The platform had been set up in a side street that ran sloping up from the main street. Facing me as I spoke was the Miners' Institute, where the unemployed miners were congregated. Right in the middle of the street was a police sergeant. As the village was absolutely quiet I had no difficulty in making myself heard by the audience on the other side of the sergeant. I had been speaking for about fifteen minutes when a tough-looking subject, coming down the brae, stopped alongside me.

"Finish up!" he said. Just like that! I stared at him. He had on a light raincoat (but I could spot the uniform beneath it), a slouch hat canted over his right eye, and a cigar sticking out of his mouth. Straight from Hollywood.

"What?" I exclaimed.

"Finish up!" he repeated. "I allowed Jesse (the chairman) twenty minutes for this meeting."

Can you imagine that! He had graciously allowed Jesse twenty minutes.

"Who do you think you are?" I shouted at him. "The bench of magistrates? Get away from here. I'll speak as long as the miners care to listen." By this time the sergeant had made his way up to the platform, and vicious he looked.

"Sergeant," I addressed him, "this man is disturbing a peaceful public meeting."

The sergeant looked at his superior, and I'm sure he would have liked nothing better than the order to attack. But he had left his position in the middle of the street, and now realised that they were both surrounded by miners. I ignored them and went on speaking. There was nothing they could do about it and they had to stand by and listen to me for almost an hour longer. This incident created quite a

sensation around the valleys, which in itself indicated the repressive attitude of the police from the Chief Constable down.

For South Wales the Blanesburgh Report was the last straw. A march to London was suggested, and this meant calling in Wal Hannington. I have often read of hard-working trade union leaders, but none of them ever worked so hard or so faithfully as Wal worked for the unemployed. Organising branches, mass demonstrations, Hunger Marches, always he was in demand and always he was ready to respond.

So Wally was invited to lead the Hunger March from the stricken valleys of South Wales, and as always he responded. The well-fed pals of the employers on the General Council of the T.U.C., cowardly lackeys of Mond, issued a statement condemning the March as a "communist stunt" and sought to persuade the trade unions on the route to give the marchers no assistance. Half-starved men, marching day after day in protest against the threat of a cut in their already meagre allowance—this was branded as a communist conspiracy by those who just a couple of years before had been members of a joint committee formed to protect the unemployed from just such an attack as they faced now.

But their despicable attempt to sabotage the Hunger March led to utter failure. All along the route, the marchers were welcomed and vigorously supported by the workers. And when they arrived in London their welcome was expressed in a mighty mass demonstration, that shook the bureaucrats in Whitehall and had an inspiring effect throughout the country.

The following year, in 1928, a march was organised in Scotland. Everyone has heard of Princess Street, Edinburgh, the aristocratic shopping centre of Scotland, the shops on one side, gardens on the other, with the Castle looking down from its rugged rock. Edinburgh is proud of Princes Street; regiments of all sorts, Highlanders and others, have marched along the famous thoroughfare to the sound of martial music. But now there came a march which the high authorities viewed with very evident disfavour. The march went through the city, turned round at Abbey Station and made its way towards the Canongate and the Royal Mile. When it reached Holyrood Palace the marchers didn't doff their bonnets and make a humble bow: as the front ranks reached the gates an order rang out: "Right turn!" and the marchers, taking the guards and attendants by surprise, swung into the Palace and settled down for a well-earned breather.

"Scandalous!" shrieked the high and mighty. "For God's sake get them out of Edinburgh! Refuse them any sort of accommodation! Close all halls to them! Force them to leave the city!"

Accommodation was refused, but the marchers did not leave the city. Edinburgh, in its long and colourful history, has witnessed many striking scenes, forays of all kinds by robber earls and their hirelings, while the luckless Mary was having her morals continually questioned by the embittered John Knox. But never in all the squabbles over land, cash and precedent, was there anything to compare with what Edinburgh saw on that night when accommodation was refused.

At bed-time, the marchers, all in good order, spread out their blankets on the footpath on the garden side of Princes Street. There they passed the night, and next morning the early shop and office workers saw them washing and shaving with water drawn from nearby wells, while the cooks were busy at the camp-kitchen preparing breakfast. The high and mighty could scarcely believe their eyes. Shock was no name for it. Their famous city with its world-famous Princes Street had become a subject for ribald laughter, and those who laughed the heartiest were the Edinburgh workers. These gave the marchers their full support. The following night the marchers were given their pick. The high and mighty were now only concerned to save their famous street from becoming a doss-house.

Throughout the country conditions were bad, particularly for the unemployed. Mass demonstrations frequently clashed with the police. The Baldwin government, ruthless as it was, did not dare impose the full weight of the Blanesburgh Report; nevertheless it imposed a cut of a shilling a week on the unemployed benefit, and sought to save further money by oblique attack. In the Unemployment Act of 1924 (brought in by a Labour government!) there was a clause which stated that an unemployed man whose statutory benefit of 26 weeks had run out would be entitled to receive extended benefit provided he was "genuinely seeking work". This clause was used in the most ruthless manner by the Baldwin government. Over a quarter of a million men and women were struck off benefit on the grounds that they were not "genuinely seeking work" though many of them had tramped around to every factory in their district. No attempt was made by the officials to tell them where work was to be found: it was just a bare-faced statement that the particular official was not satisfied that they tramped far or long enough—and they were out.

We had tremendous demonstrations all over the country. So strong

was the feeling that the National Council of the Unemployed Workers' Movement decided to call for a nation-wide Hunger March on London. When this was announced, a shockingly unprincipled combined attack was made on it. The Baldwin government instructed local authorities on the route of the March to treat the marchers as paupers and give them pauper treatment in the workhouses—which of course meant task work, while the T.U.C. banned the March and advised all Trades Councils on the route to boycott it. This may seem incredible, but I have already said that the right-wing trade union and Labour Party leaders would stop at nothing to defend their allies, the capitalists, from any threat offered by the working class.

Nevertheless, the marchers got through. The strong support of the employed workers on every part of the route soon put a stop to any attempt to sabotage it.

Great masses of people gathered in Trafalgar Square to greet the marchers as they arrived from different parts of the country. Then, when most of them had arrived, the sound of pipes was heard in the distance. Yes, there they came, the Scottish contingent! After seven weeks on the road they had completed their 400-mile march, and came proudly into Trafalgar Square with banners high, to a storm of cheers that could almost have been heard at their starting point. For the Scottish lads it will always be a cherished memory.

The Baldwin gang refused to meet the representatives of the marchers. But the march aroused a hatred of Baldwin throughout the length and breadth of the country. That year, 1929, which saw the second Hunger March (the first had been in 1922) also saw the second Labour Government.

But we'll leave that for the moment and mention another important event of that year. At our Party congress, Harry Pollitt was elected General Secretary. It was a vital and important change, for Harry was in close contact with the organised working-class movement and had become the outstanding political spokesman of the Party whether at mass meetings or in personal contact with trade union and Labour leaders. Albert Inkpin took over the leadership of the Anglo-Soviet friendship society, the Friends of the Soviet Union, a job in which he showed a very fine aptitude. The election of Harry Pollitt coincided with another important development which was just beginning. We had taken a decision to launch a daily paper on January 1, 1930. Donations and collections! Mass meetings and small meetings, personal approaches! Day and night, all of us were engaged in the preparation

for the great day—and on that day, just as we had pledged, the *Daily Worker* came out.

Surely there never was a daily paper set going in such conditions, under such almost frightening handicaps. We had rented an old warehouse in *Tabernacle Street*, which had to be completely reconstructed internally. All this work was done by volunteers organised by that grand comrade Frank Jackson, a woodworker by profession. Evenings and Sundays they gave to this labour of love. On December 31, 1929 we entered the premises to work on the first issue and a nearby printing press was all set for the big event. The lads were actually still working at the reconstruction, which meant that we had to be mobile journalists to allow them to get on with their job. The lights had not been fixed; we made do with an abundance of candles. If any of the big fellows from Fleet Street had looked in while we were in the midst of our hammering and sawing, with only candles for illumination, they would have told us we'd never get the paper out. But we did get it out. And while the young William Rust, with his two co-editors, Robin Page Arnot and myself, and the rest of the staff, did their humble best, the greatest credit for the production (apart from the debt we owed to the joiners and electricians) must go to a lad from Fleet Street—Walter Holmes. As I have said, Walter gave up a job on the *Daily Herald* to edit the *Sunday Worker* at half the salary. He had done a fine job on the Sunday paper, but he was absolutely invaluable on the new venture. We would never have got through without his knowledge, so freely given, of how to set up and present the news, particularly in view of the paper's limited size.

I remained on the staff of the paper for some months, but presently the demand for my services in the country was such that I had to give up my journalistic efforts and get back to my first love, political agitation.

But, having helped to get the *Daily Worker* on the streets, I'd better turn back to one or two other events of 1929 that may be worth recording.

At the 1929 General Election which returned the second Labour government, I stood as a Communist candidate for West Fife at the request of the comrades in that area. Adamson was once again returned (as had been expected) but I got over 6,000 votes which was considered pretty good for a start.

The Labour government was hopeless from the word go. The strong man of the Cabinet was Philip Snowden, resolute and ruthless in the

wrong direction. His dominating concern was to keep the old order intact, no matter who had to suffer—and of course that was right up MacDonald's street. Protect the dear people at the top, but see that no money is wasted on the loafers who are not "genuinely seeking work".

The Lancashire cotton workers were in trouble because they were having a wage cut forced on them by an Arbitration Committee appointed by a Labour Minister. A deputation came to London to interview Snowden, who was Chancellor of the Exchequer; they thought he was their friend and would put things right for them. What a report they had to make when they got back to Lancashire! He was no friend—he was a bitter, vicious enemy; they would have had a better reception from a Tory. This financial tyrant imposed his will on the rest of the Cabinet to such an extent that Arthur Greenwood, Minister of Health, insisted that Parish Councils should continue to apply the hated regulation of "task work" to the destitute men—caught in the trap of "not genuinely seeking work"—who went to them for assistance. He further refused to allow local authorities to wipe out the debts contracted during the seven long months of the miners' fight; sternly this friend of the poor and oppressed wrote to the Councils informing them that if they disobeyed his instructions and wrote any of those debts off, they would be surcharged. This meant that the councillors would have to pay out of their own pockets.

Harsh though Arthur Greenwood was, he could have been called progressive in comparison with the Minister of Labour, the Blanesburgh stooge, Margaret Bondfield. The conditions applied to the unemployed were becoming more and more unbearable. The Public Assistance Inspectors behaved with shocking insolence to many decent but unfortunate families. Wal Hannington and I, with many others, were exposing the scandalous behaviour of these Inspectors in their search for "pawnable assets" in the houses they visited. We had actually an authenticated example of one of these men lifting the skirt of a woman to see what kind of petticoat she had underneath. That's the God's truth.

We had a consultation at the headquarters of the National Unemployed Workers' Movement and decided to send a delegation, headed by Wal, to put the case of the unemployed and the persecution they were suffering before the Minister of Labour. A few years previously a similar sort of delegation had been received by a Tory Minister of Labour, and though he told them he could only give them half an hour they kept him going for two hours, during which he got a full briefing

about the unemployed, had he wished to make use of it. Of course, he didn't; but then he was a Tory. It would be different, we said, with a Socialist Minister, one who had got votes by bewailing the sufferings of the poor folk.

"We'll stir them up," said Wal, "and they'll stir up the government." So along went the delegation to the Ministry of Labour, to see big-hearted Maggie and her stocky, bovine number two, Jack Lawson. There was no red carpet out for them, though they had sent word to say they were coming. No sir, their reception was quite otherwise. They were told that the Minister (who, like Ramsay Mac, was now moving in the best circles) was not prepared to receive them. They forced their way in and occupied a room.

"What is it you want?" queried an official.

"We want to see the Minister of Labour," was the answer.

"But the Minister refuses to meet you."

"All right," they said. "Ask Jack Lawson to meet the delegation. He's a miner and we want to speak for the unemployed miners."

"But Mr. Lawson refuses to see you. There is no sense in waiting."

"We'll wait till someone sees us, then."

And they waited until someone *did* see them—a police superintendent accompanied by thirty constables. He had been informed that there were *fifteen members of the deputation; would they be good enough to* leave the premises? Not until they saw the Minister. Two to one, the police dragged them out and threw them on the footpath. The Tories were jubilant: these Labour leaders were behaving more roughly to the workers than they had done.

And while all this was going on, MacDonald was beaming from the side-lines and the sycophantic Herbert Morrison was telling the Labour movement that Ramsay was a great leader whose name would go down in history. Aye, it went down, as far as it could go. He will be remembered as a traitor to all those who laboured "without money and without price" to build the Labour movement he was prepared to destroy.

Two adopted sons. 1931 election, contests West Fife. More unemployed struggles. The Reichstag Fire. Georgi Dimitrov. Victory at West Fife in 1935. Early days in the House of Commons. Visit to Canada.

My elder brother, who had gone to America, had been left a widower with four children, two boys and two girls. In 1927 he died, and a sister in Chicago took on the burden of caring for the four children. It was too much for her and so, early in the thirties, the two boys came to Paisley. The older one, John, who was 11 years old, went to a younger brother in Paisley, while Donald, aged 9, came to me and Jean. We had lost two boys when they were infants, and Jean immediately took this bright little fellow to her heart; he felt her affection right away and how he cuddled up to her! The older boy began to fret for his brother, so after a while he also came to us. We were happy, very happy to have them.

The second Labour Government fell in 1931 and there was another election—the dirtiest, from the point of view of deception of the people, within my memory. When the National Government was formed in August of that year MacDonald and Snowden, with two others, joined the Tories in the Cabinet. A Clydebank woman, a member of the Labour Party, came to have a word with me after a meeting shortly after they had gone over. She reminded me that some years previously I had referred to MacDonald and Snowden as the Pecksniff and Uriah Heep of the Labour movement; she had gone away from that meeting very angry, she said; she had thought then that they were the tops. And now she wanted to say that she had been wrong.

Snowden, a trusted Labour leader and one of the men responsible for keeping the Communists out of the Labour Party, put over a broadcast calculated to frighten the people out of their judgment. They could see the banks closing down and their hard-earned savings disappearing for ever. This fear did the trick, and the Tories got a very large majority, while Labour lost over 100 seats.

Two of the lost seats were West Fife and Dunfermline Burghs. The latter had been held by a colourless character, Willie Watson, the former by the hard-faced William Adamson. Once again I contested West Fife. Adamson's vote slumped; a National Liberal won the seat.

My vote, despite the heavy swing away from Labour, went up—not a great deal but up all the same. We took this as a good augury, and the Party comrades were inspired to work harder than ever before.

The results of both contests were announced from the steps of the Sheriff's office in Dunfermline. I was standing in the hallway, next to the Chief Constable, while the victor of Dunfermline Burghs, a Tory named Wallace, was being presented to the waiting crowd, who were mostly Labour supporters. Wallace, a bull-headed fellow I had never seen before, tried to express his pleasure at the victory he had scored. His first words were: "I always knew the heart of Fife was sound . . ." and they were the last to be heard, for the storm broke and the new member almost burst a blood vessel trying to shout above jeers and groans. He retired from the doorway muttering curses on the ignorant mob. I remarked quietly and pleasantly: "You said you knew the heart of Fife was sound, but you don't seem to like the *sound* much!" He glared at me, but took note of the Chief Constable and let it go at that.

Well, the National Government was triumphant—and ruthless. Economy cuts were imposed on the unemployed, civil servants and naval ratings. The unemployed had been fighting hard against the proposed cuts before the second Labour government fell, and now large forces of police were used to attack and break up their demonstrations.

When the Trades Union Congress met in Cardiff in 1931, Ben Turner extended the greetings of the Congress to the Lord Lieutenant of the County and Cardiff's Lord Mayor. But there were no fraternal greetings to the unemployed; batons for them. When Wal Hannington, leading a deputation, tried to enter the hall, they were attacked by the police; Wal and several others got one on the head which necessitated first-aid treatment and bandages.

A couple of days later he arrived at Downing Street with a deputation which MacDonald had agreed to receive, at the instance of Maxton and Kirkwood who were accompanying it. When MacDonald got the list of delegates' names he refused to go on with the interview if Wal was to be present; Wal had quite a job persuading the delegation to go in without him, saying that it was important to put the claims of the unemployed before the Prime Minister and his presence was not needed for that. But MacDonald, typically insulting towards those who could not serve his personal ambitions in any way, ignored the delegation, and throughout the interview directed the few remarks he had to make to the two M.P.'s.

In 1932, with the National Government in power, there was trouble

all over the country. Not only were the unemployed demonstrating, the civil servants came on the streets too—I believe for the first time. This, however, caused nothing like the sensation that had arisen when the threatening word *mutiny* was splashed across the pages of the Press. That was a real shock for the Establishment! Hurriedly a concession was made to the seamen, and the leaders of the strike were quietly eased off the ships.

In Birkenhead and Belfast the police went berserk. In the former place, houses were entered in the middle of the night by police, pretending they were searching for “loot”, and outrageous indignities were inflicted on unemployed men’s families. In Belfast it was worse: there the police used their guns, and several demonstrators were shot. My old friend Tom Mann went over to Belfast for the funeral of these victims; he was invited to speak at a couple of meetings afterwards. But immediately the funeral service was over the police seized him, escorted him to the docks and put him aboard a ship for Liverpool. (The same sort of democrats are still in power in the Six Counties.)

I was the speaker at an unemployed meeting at Tower Bridge; it was disrupted by the police and a series of scrimmages started which provided the excuse for calling up the mounted police, who had been waiting nearby. I pulled a woman comrade almost from under the feet of a horse as she was belabouring another policeman with what was left of a banner-pole: she had not seen the danger she was in and was furious with me for protecting, as she thought, her victim. What a life!

The following morning we heard that a demonstration had been attacked in Glasgow, and Harry McShane, the Scottish leader of the unemployed, had been arrested. I travelled up to Glasgow by the night train, met the other leaders of the National Unemployed Workers’ Movement shortly after my arrival, and then went along to see my old friend Councillor Tom Kerr, (who later became Lord Provost and was one of the few, if not the only one, who refused a title when his term of office ended). I told him I was going to see the Fiscal about getting Harry McShane out on bail. He had been before the magistrate that morning and bail had been refused. The Fiscal in Scotland is the public prosecutor in the lower courts. I told Tom we had decided to have a march and demonstration two days later and that we wanted Harry to lead it.

Tom had a laugh at that. “You’ll never get the Fiscal to agree,” he said.

“I’ll try,” I replied, “and I want you to stand by and put up the bail if I succeed.”

To this he was quite agreeable, and off we went to the Sheriff's Court building where I sought an interview with the Fiscal. This was readily granted. It appeared he wanted to see me on the subject of street marches and the disturbances that occasionally arose in connection with them.

Tom waited in the anti-room while I went in to see the worthy prosecutor. He shook hands with me and offered a chair.

"I suppose you came about the trouble yesterday?" was his opening.

"That's right," I replied. "I want Harry out on bail."

"But you know bail was refused this morning. Why do you have to start such trouble when you are holding a demonstration?"

"We never make trouble," I protested. "I've been in hundreds of demonstrations, all of the most peaceful character. Whenever there has been trouble it's been started by the police. Keep the police off the streets and I'll promise you there won't be the slightest trouble for anyone. And now," I went on, "we've called another demonstration for the day after tomorrow and we want Harry to lead it. You let Harry out and warn the police off, and the demonstration will be a credit to the unemployed and to Glasgow."

I must say that gave him a bit of a shock. We argued all round it for a bit, and at last he capitulated. I called in Tom Kerr and told him he had the honour of planking down the money for Harry McShane, and Tom, with a broad grin on his face, forked out the necessary cash.

Word was immediately sent to Duke Street Prison; to Harry's surprise a warder opened his cell door and told him he had been bailed out. But he got an even greater surprise when he learned that he had been allowed out on bail to lead another demonstration. He and I led the demonstration, the police were on their best behaviour, and it went through in fine style, to the cheers of crowds of shoppers and others who were lined up on the sidewalks. A couple of days later Harry was up for trial and was acquitted.

The national leader of the unemployed was not so lucky. Wal Hannington came up before one of the London magistrates in the course of an unemployed demonstration; the magistrate proposed to bind him over to keep the peace for six months on a surety of £500. Wal refused to be bound over; if he had accepted, it would have been tantamount to admitting that he had not been keeping the peace. He was sentenced to a month's imprisonment. To avoid demonstrations at the prison gate they packed him off to Maidstone, just from spite.

This was hard on Wal, but nothing to what was served out to Arthur Horner; he, with others, was convicted of conspiring to stop the

eviction of a family from their home! What a crime! In Scotland, Abe Moffat and other prominent people in the working-class movement were involved in similar cases. The term of imprisonment for this "offence" was ten days—ten days, for an action they should have been commended for; as we always contended the right to live implied the right to work (or full maintenance if work was not available) and of first importance to the right to live is the right to a home. On no account should we allow a family to be deprived of its home. That was how Abe felt, and Arthur Horner and his colleagues too considered that it was their duty to prevent a family from being thrown on to the streets. When Arthur came up for trial, everything in the book was thrown at him. Arthur was accused of "plotting violent revolution", he was "the agent of a foreign power" and all the rest of the well-known jargon. He was sentenced to fifteen months' imprisonment—an indication of the terror that was being carried on against the workers in South Wales.

The shameless effrontery of the defenders of the capitalist system is almost beyond belief. If Communists from different countries meet, the cry goes up that they are "conspiring". Communists recognise that the great majority of the people of the world are workers by hand or brain, co-operatively engaged in the production of goods; but once the goods are produced, the people whose labour made them have no control over them or of their distribution. The Communists maintain that co-operative production should be accompanied by common ownership and distribution.

But the monopoly capitalists are determined to hold on to the robber system that provides them with astronomical profits for which they give no service whatsoever. When they meet, they truly conspire—they will lie, cheat and massacre to preserve their ill-gotten gains and their steadily-decaying system of society. Yes, it is the robber capitalists who are the conspirators, the "subversives", and not the Communists; the Communists want to see a just form of society, harmonising ownership and distribution with production.

It was a Communist, a member of the Reichstag, who had been seen leaving the Reichstag with his portfolio—along with many other deputies—on the evening of the fire. When the police called at his house to arrest him, he was not at home. When he arrived and heard that the police were looking for him he didn't go into hiding. He went to the police station to see what they wanted—and was kept there

under arrest for participation in setting fire to the Reichstag. The last man on earth against whom such a charge should be made. Along with him were charged three Bulgarians; "ignorant barbarians", the Nazis called them. For seven months they were kept in chains, at the mercy of the all-powerful Goebbels and Goering. They were brought into the dock like sheep (the Nazis thought) ready for the shearing.

What a shock they got! The lion-hearted Dimitrov held up his hands to let the reporters and the world see the marks of the chains, and then took command of the court. Never before in history was there such a trial, such a transformation. From being the accused, Dimitrov became the accuser. Time and again the president of the court ordered his removal, but when he returned the next day he continued to thunder his accusations. The whole world looked on in wonder and admiration. Goering and Goebbels shrivelled under his piercing and damning cross-examination. Mad, crazy Goering could only shout at his tormentor: "You Communist swine, wait till I get you outside this court!"—a tacit admission that the much-vaunted trial had blown up in his face, that it would be impossible to get a verdict of guilty, but that he, Goering, was determined to see that Dimitrov did not remain alive when he was set free. In this he was also baulked. All over the world, strong sentiment had been aroused for Dimitrov, and they were forced to let him leave Germany for the Soviet Union.

I had known Georgi Dimitrov from the earliest days of the Communist movement. I would like to commend to all my readers a short excerpt from his concluding speech from the dock:

I admit that the language I speak is hard and severe, but my struggle and my life have been hard and severe too. Nevertheless, my language is open and sincere language. I am accustomed to call things by their proper names. I am not a lawyer defending his client because he is obliged to. I am defending myself as an accused Communist.

I am defending my own Communist revolutionary honour. I am defending my ideas, my Communist convictions. I am defending the meaning and content of my life

Therefore every word pronounced by me before the Court is, so to speak, *flesh of my flesh and blood of my blood*. Every word is an expression of my profound indignation against an unfair charge, against the fact that an anti-communist crime is ascribed to the Communists.

The fact that Dimitrov had to be released intensified the fury of the Nazi monsters. Relief for the anti-Fascist refugees became an exceptionally important activity. Foremost in this work were Isobel Brown and her husband Ernie, grand comrades, both of them. I worked with them quite a lot. The whole question of national and European policy was brought right to the forefront with the advent and advance of the Nazis. It should have been obvious to all that the butcheries in Germany would be followed by butcheries outside. But the Tories and the right-wing Labour leaders were only too anxious to delude themselves.

At the November municipal elections in 1934 the Labour Party made great gains. This should have spurred them to a massive campaign to get rid of the Baldwin government. But the behaviour of the leaders created the impression that they were more concerned to keep Baldwin in than to get him out. They made no attempt to take advantage of the tremendous upsurge against the cuts in unemployment pay; on the contrary, they were most anxious to assure the government that they were a "loyal opposition" who sternly condemned the action of the masses. All they could see in the tremendous protest was a "communist plot". So, without anything in the nature of a working-class policy they entered the 1935 General Election—and provided the Tories with an election victory that was to be disastrous for the peace of the world.

In West Fife I was again a candidate, with Adamson standing for Labour and another lad as National Liberal. What a campaign our lads conducted! Down the pits, in the villages, in the small rural areas—no section of the widely-scattered constituency was neglected. Day and night my helpers were on the job. By polling day we were all well and truly worn out.

But the result repaid all our efforts. When the votes were counted, I was at the top. Adamson could not believe it. He did not accompany the Sheriff to hear him read out the result. It was a devastating blow for him. The Sheriff took it almost as badly. He read out the Dunfermline result, shook hands with the victor and listened to his speech and that of the defeated candidate. Then he read out the result for West Fife, and hurriedly retired.

Alex Moffat, who had been my Election Agent, was so confident of my victory that he had made all arrangements for a victory parade through the villages. Several cars had been lent for polling day. Off

we went, to hold short meetings in each village on our way, right up to midnight. We finished up at Abe's house, where there was an ever-open door, in the early hours of the morning. Next morning I took the train to Glasgow, where there was a huge crowd waiting for me at Queen Street Station. In a side street we had a short meeting, followed by a march to the Clydeside, from where I got the bus to Paisley.

During the election campaign my opponents had made great play with the specious argument that a vote for me was a vote wasted, as one man on his own could do nothing in the House of Commons. Of course I was not alone: I had my Party behind me and that, with the support of the workers, was a source of strength to me and a guarantee that I would be kept "free" to represent at all times the interests of the working class. As a Party representative, I was not "free" to take a job with the capitalist Press. I wasn't "free" to go banqueting with the Tories—or disport myself at Royal Garden Parties. (I had only been a couple of months in my new job when I was approached by the Labour Party's Chief Whip, the late Will Whitely, who wanted to know if I would accept an invitation to a garden party at Buckingham Palace. Such was the answer that I gave him that in all my fifteen years in the House of Commons I never received another invitation.) I was not "free" to make concessions to the establishment or to the capitalist class. But I was absolutely free at all times to speak for and defend my own class.

Very early in my parliamentary days I got introduced to a discussion circle in the Map Room. If things were dull and quiet in the House, particularly on winter evenings, a group of members would gather there round a huge fireplace and tell stories or discuss abstractions of one kind and another. But when I entered they were all eager and ready to pounce on me, as a disciple of Marx and a firm friend and supporter of the Soviet Union. I used to stand with my back to the fire while they formed a semi-circle in front of me. One would put a question, and while I was answering another would butt in—I was kept going from side to side with every conceivable sort of irrelevancy. One of the stalwarts of the Map Room was Jimmy Walker, an official of the steel workers who from being a Glasgow Bailie had become Member of Parliament for Motherwell. He contributed a series of ballads to the official BISAKTA journal *Man and Steel*. One of them dealt with this one-sided discussion circle. It describes the somnolent scene in the Map Room and goes on:

One night in the early thirties,
When the House was languid and thin,
The door of the Map Room flew open
And a strange guy stumbled in.
His eyes, deep sunk in their sockets
Gleamed like two burning sparks
And he clenched in his hand a volume—
'Twas the first nine chapters of Marx.

He spoke, and the words that he uttered
Fell on their ears with a shock,
Arousing the sleeping members,
By God! but that man could talk!
His voice had the wail of the bagpipe,
Singing a funeral knell
And seemed to the startled members
Like the voice of a spirit from Hell.

There were some more verses, and then the final lines:

He raged like the mountain torrent,
He called them the vilest of names
Till they rose in their wrath and destroyed him
And his body they threw in the Thames.
They still tell strange tales in the Map Room
But none have quite the same thrill
As that night in the early thirties
When they strangled old Communist Bill.

He also wrote a ballad about Herbert Morrison, whom he detested. That did not appear in *Man and Metal*; I often wish I had got him to give me a copy. Not that I could have published it, it was strictly libellous. Jimmie Walker was anti-communist, but he had a proletarian background and that caused him on many occasions to line up with me against the pseudo-intellectuals of the Map Room.

But I'd better get back to my arrival in Parliament, and the preparation of my maiden speech. First, with a new Parliament, all members have to line up and take the oath or make an affirmation. I did the latter. Then there's the Chair: every member on entering or leaving the Chamber is expected to bow to the Chair. Some make quite an occasion of it. I often admired the elegant demonstration of Sir Alexander Sinclair; coming in or going out, he was the best of the lot.

Somehow I could never quite get myself to bow, not once in all the time I was there. An old member remarked on this one day and asked me why. "I've a very stiff back," I replied. "It won't bend."

Once in and seated I had to arrange, like the other new members, with the Speaker for a day and a time to make my maiden speech. The day having been settled, I let Harry Pollitt know. The evening before I was to make my speech, he came down to see me, accompanied by John Strachey. This latter gentleman had considerably come down to advise me on how I should prepare and deliver my maiden speech.

For this I thanked him, but said that it was already written out. I went over it with Harry, and at one point I said: "They will interrupt me here."

"They won't," said Strachey, "they never interrupt a maiden speech."

"They'll interrupt this one," I said.

The following day, at the appointed time, I "caught the Speaker's eye" and made my first contribution in the House of Commons. When I got to the part to which I had drawn Harry's attention I got the response I expected, maiden speech or no maiden speech. With emphasis I declared:

"On this side of the House we represent and speak for the workers of the country, the men who toil and sweat . . ." (Hon. Members: "So do we!") "Oh, you speak for the working class, do you?" (Hon. Members: "Yes!") "All right. We'll see. The leaders of the miners say that mining is the hardest, most dangerous and poorest paid job in the country. Is there anyone who will deny that? The miners are demanding two shillings a day increase on their present miserable wage, and we who speak for the workers support that demand—two shillings a day increase for the miners. We demand it from these benches. Now it is your turn. Speak, you who claim to speak for the workers."

Not a murmur from them. Dead silence on the other side, while the Labour members laughed and jeered.

In 1931 Japan had invaded Manchuria and Sir John Simon at the League of Nations put the case so well for the aggressors that the Japanese representative was saved the trouble of saying anything. Now, in 1935 Mussolini had invaded Ethiopia, where his Fascist hordes, with heavy guns, tanks, aeroplanes and poison gas were butchering an ill-prepared and ill-armed people. The League of Nations had been forced the condemn this blatant aggression and to declare in favour of sanctions against Italy. But the Tories were anxious to save Mussolini, and

they saw to it that the sanctions were harmless. The big question was *oil*. Stop the oil and you stop Mussolini. But the British government resolutely opposed such a step. The Foreign Secretary, Sir Samuel Hoare, drew up a document in connivance with the French Foreign Minister, the arch-traitor Laval, which proposed to settle the "Abyssinian affair" by giving the Italians the best part of that country. Once again the British people were aroused. The Party plunged into the campaign. "Down with Hoare and the Tory government!" resounded all over the country. Hoare went down, but the Tory government wriggled out of responsibility for the infamous "Hoare-Laval Pact". The Pact was discarded along with Hoare, but he, as is the rule with resigning Ministers, made a parting speech in which he endeavoured to justify his treacherous action.

I have heard some silly speeches in my time—and some critics may say I've made some. But Sir Samuel's apology takes a lot of beating.

"It seemed clear that, supposing an oil embargo were to be imposed and that the non-member States (of the League of Nations) took an effective part in it, the oil embargo might have such an effect on the hostilities as to enforce their termination."

Fair enough, you will say. But what follows from that?

"From all sides we received reports that no responsible government could disregard, that Italy would regard the oil embargo as a military sanction or an act involving war against her."

So we get the suggestion that if it was made impossible through an oil embargo for Mussolini to continue the war in Abyssinia, he would start a war against Britain. Thus the bluster of Mussolini was used by his friends in this country; Abyssinia was vanquished and little Victor Emmanuel became—for a very short period—Emperor of the new Italian empire.

This was the green light for the Fascists to go ahead. In 1936 Hitler and Mussolini felt free to join with Fascist Franco in launching an attack on the People's Front government of Spain. Again the Tories adopted a policy designed to aid and encourage the aggressors. They declared for what they called "Non-Intervention" and in this treacherous policy they got the support of the Labour Party. "Non-Intervention" was deliberately used as a pretext for refusing to sell arms to the legitimate government of Spain while Hitler and Mussolini were pouring in men, money, arms and planes to effect its overthrow. The Tories and the right-wing Labour leaders hugged the illusion that this cowardly behaviour would keep the eyes of the Nazi and

Fascist gangsters away from Britain and turn them towards the Soviet Union. What a bitter price the people of Britain had to pay for the gang of traitors who constituted the Baldwin-Chamberlain government!

The Spanish war had barely begun when, during the parliamentary recess of 1936, I was invited by the Canadian Communist Party to make a tour of Canada. I travelled by Canadian Pacific to Montreal, where I got a hearty welcome from the longshoremen (dockers) and from a large gathering of Communist Party members and friends. I was approached, after the first greetings were over, by a policeman who directed my attention to a gent standing over against the back of the Customs shed, who wanted to speak to me. A slight tremor went through the welcoming crowd as they watched me walk over. Little wonder! It was the Chief Constable . . . and what did he want with me? He was a Scotsman and he wanted to shake hands with me and give me a welcome to Montreal.

The following evening, the arena was packed with a cheering crowd. It was a fine start to the tour. The Massey Hall in Toronto, the finest in the city, held an equally large audience. This hall was let on the strictest condition: that the Union Jack must be displayed on the front of the platform and that the National Anthem must be played either at the start or the finish of the meeting. As I travelled from city to city I found that the Union Jack had to be displayed everywhere, though it was only at Massey Hall that God had to be asked to save the King (we fulfilled that duty with an old gramophone record).

I spoke in Hamilton, St. Catherines (where I had the pleasure of meeting some old Paisley friends) and Windsor. From Windsor in the south of Ontario I travelled to Timmins in the north. There a streamer across the main street read: "Welcome to Willie Gallacher!" and the Mayor and the editor of the local paper were right in front of the crowd to give me a welcome to their town. It was here that I was asked as a special favour to speak for two hours because they had very few speakers and some members of the audience had travelled fifty miles, in trucks, to hear me.

From Timmins I went to North Bay and Sudbury, and then to the far west. Sometimes when I had finished a meeting I would get the train right away to my next "port of call". Such was the cause of my arrival at Edmonton at six o'clock in the morning. The local Communist Party members were there, so also were a couple of old friends from Fife, Geordie Stott of Lochgelly and Willie Kirker of Bowhill.

The local lads told me they had booked me in at an hotel and breakfast would be waiting for me, after which I could have a bath and a rest, but Geordie wasn't having that.

"My wife is getting his breakfast ready," he told them.

"But all the arrangements are made," a comrade protested, "and we have fixed for him to receive visitors from three o'clock."

"He'll be there in time to receive visitors," said Geordie, "but now he's coming with me."

And it was so. Later, when I got to my hotel, a lady and her husband came in to see me. When I was involved in the George Square trouble in 1919 I had the advice of a solicitor—my old and very good friend the late Walter Lecchman. In his office there was a very attractive girl who left her job in 1920 to go out to Singapore where her fiancé was employed. I saw her off and wished her well. Imagine my surprise at finding her now in Edmonton.

By the time I got through the Rockies and found myself in Vancouver I was pretty well worn out. My meeting there was in a theatre, crowded to the doors. When I got on to the platform it sounded as though I was in St. Andrews Hall in Glasgow. The shouts of "Good old Wullie!" in braid Scots were a delight to hear and I decided to give them all I had. I spoke for nearly an hour and then collapsed on to a nearby chair. "Good old Wullie" was about ready for a stretcher! And then—what was that the chairman was saying? Was I hearing aright? "Please will you get out as speedily as possible, because there is another audience coming in." I had to pull my scattered limbs and thoughts together, and somehow or another I got through it. Fortunately that was on a Friday evening, and I had the Saturday to rest in before going on to Vancouver Island on the Sunday. There I spoke at Cumberland, a mining town, in the morning and in the evening at Nanaimo where I was recognised by a lad from Cowdenbeath. Scotsmen all over Canada—which reminds me that a member of my audience in Winnipeg was none other than Roy Thomson, now the tycoon who is using TV as a machine for printing money on. On the Monday evening I spoke in Victoria, and that finished my engagements in the Far West.

On the first day of my long journey back by train I went into the restaurant car and got my lunch. I didn't go back there again, the price I had to pay for the meal made my hand shake as I paid it. After that I got out at different stations and bought a sandwich, or a piece of apple pie, and some coffee.

When I got to Vancouver there was a social evening held to give me a good send-off. There was loads of food that was not being consumed, so I asked them to let have the remains for the rest of my journey. They came to the station next day with a huge box loaded with food of every description: I didn't have to spend a half-penny on food in all the five-day journey to Toronto. From Toronto I went to Ottawa, and from there to Nova Scotia, where I met many descendants of Scottish families and spoke, among other places, at New Glasgow and Halifax.

From Nova Scotia I went back to Windsor. I had tried without avail to obtain a visa to visit the United States while I was on this trip, for I had two sisters in Chicago and wanted to attend the wedding of one of my nephews. However, my eldest sister and her husband had been waiting to receive me in Toronto and when I returned from my tour across Canada they and all my other relatives came over to Windsor where we spent several happy days together.

To Windsor also came a group of auto-workers, headed by Brother Bill McKie, to have a chat about their struggle to establish a trade union in their feudally-controlled industry. Henry Ford I, with his gangster boss Harry Bennet, was determined that no union would have the opportunity of challenging his strongly-entrenched dictatorship. *We talked far into the night as they explained the danger that threatened them from Bennet's thugs if it was discovered that they had the makings of a "Local" (their name for a branch) in the factory.* All meetings had to be held under cover; but they kept on building the union despite all intimidation until the "New Deal" forced Ford and others to accept the unions against their will.

My Canadian comrades were pleased with the tour and swore that there had never been a speaker in Canada who had addressed so many meetings in such a comparatively short campaign. I was glad to lie back on the ship and rest myself up, for I knew there was plenty waiting for me to do when I got back to Bonnie Scotland (as well as the less attractive areas of England and Wales).

The Labour Party and "Non-intervention". A visit to Spain, Easter, 1937. The Budget Debate, 1937. Austria, 1938. Second world war approaches. Chamberlain flies to Munich. Gallacher, the lone voice.

ON my return from Canada I attended the Labour Party conference, which opened in Edinburgh on October 1. An appalling conference. With Hitler and Mussolini ferociously attacking the Popular Front forces in Spain, the rank and file delegates were eager to assist the embattled Republican Government and put an end to support for the treacherous Baldwin policy of "Non-Intervention". Arthur Greenwood, for the Executive, took the same kind of line over Spain as Sir Samuel Hoare had done over Abyssinia: "the danger of war" if we sold arms to the legitimate government of Spain.

If the decision had been left to a vote of the delegates there is no doubt that there would have been an overwhelming majority for a change of policy, for full support to the Spanish government. But the block vote of several of the big unions gave the platform the majority. While the conference was still sitting, a delegation arrived from Spain; it received a thunderous reception from the assembled delegates. When the Spanish spokesman explained his country's situation, with all its heroism, sacrifice and suffering, there was tremendous excitement in the conference and a persistent demand for a new vote. This the executive did not dare face. To escape it, the Executive put forward a resolution demanding an investigation into the "alleged" breaches of the "Non-Intervention" Agreement and, if they were found to be true, its abrogation. Everyone knew already that they were true; it was shocking indication of the cowardly character of the right-wing leadership. They even added that they would "sit on the government's doorstep" until they got satisfaction. It was not until two years later that the conference threw out its support for "Non-Intervention" and by then it was too late to be of any help.

From Edinburgh I went over to Lochgelly, where I was approached by John Gray and his friend Robert Penman who asked me to assist them in a campaign to get an Old Age Pensioners' organisation established in Fife. There was, they told me, a committee in Edinburgh set up for this purpose, but it seemed inactive and they had no evidence

of any organisation anywhere else in Scotland. I never knew the politics of these two friends, Labour or Liberal, but I soon recognised that they were heart and soul for the bettering of the conditions of the old folks and I gave them full support. Before long we had branches established in the principal centres of Fife, following which the two partners went over to Edinburgh, got the committee there reorganised and soon had the organisation spreading throughout Scotland. Did the Labour Party help in this worth-while activity? On the contrary, the Fife Labourites tried to disrupt the movement by endeavouring to set up separate Old Age Pensioners' organisations from which Communists were to be banned. Their efforts met with failure, but the bad intent was there.

Later on I was invited by a number of Manchester old folks to start a similar campaign in Lancashire, and this led to the formation of the widespread movement in England. Following this, I was invited to assist in getting the movement going in Wales. I had pledged myself to fight for justice for the Old Age Pensioners in my election campaign, and I was only too willing to go wherever they called for me.

During the Easter Recess in 1937 I made my way to Spain for the purpose of visiting the British Battalion of the International Brigades. When I got to Barcelona I was surprised to find it looking like a holiday resort. There had always been something of a separatist movement in Catalonia and the Anarcho-Syndicalist unions had never been prepared to give allegiance to the government in Madrid. This attitude continued to prevail towards the Popular Front government; as a consequence the Anarchist forces in Catalonia were more concerned about making trouble for the government than about fighting the fascists. In this they had the backing of a Trotskyite group known as the P.O.U.M. (*Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista* which means "Workers' Party of Marxist Unification"). These fake Marxists had the support of what was left of the I.L.P. in Britain. Fenner Brockway, John McNair and John McGovern, with the passive assistance of Jimmie Maxton, took the P.O.U.M. to their hearts and made the incredible statement in their weekly journal that it was a Marxist party. A real comic-opera production—a Marxist party without a Marxist!

But there was nothing comic-opera about the situation in Barcelona. At the most critical stage of the battles to save Madrid the Trotskyites succeeded in deluding some workers into rising against the hard-pressed Popular Front government.

They had not got to that stage when I was there, though they swaggered about the principal thoroughfares as though they were the lords of creation.

From Barcelona I was taken by car over the mountains to Albacete; the driver had a rifle beside him on the seat and a security guard sat behind us leaning forward and watching either side of the road. But we got to our destination without mishap. In Albacete I met our grand comrade Dolores Ibárruri; she and I, with Walter Ullbricht, who is now Prime Minister of the German Democratic Republic, sat late into the night discussing the serious situation that confronted the Spanish government. Britain had got the League of Nations to accept the "Non-Intervention" policy; the Soviet Union had agreed to this—but when Germany and Italy continued, in defiance of the "Non-Intervention" agreement to send men, arms and bombing planes to Spain, the Soviet Union denounced the agreement as utterly fraudulent and announced its intention of helping the Republican government. Unfortunately the Soviet Union was unable to transport material across Europe or through the Mediterranean, where British ships carrying food for Spanish children were attacked by Fascist warships. Vincent Sheehan in his book *Between the Thunder and the Sun* tells of a discussion in a Casino in Cannes at this time, in the course of which, in answer to some remarks made about these attacks, Sir Henry Page Croft, declared that "We were not going to give support to the feeding of Red children".

In France, as in Spain, there was a Popular Front government and it had been expected that this would prove a good friend and ally of the Spanish people. But the French Prime Minister, Léon Blum, was pitifully weak and timid and was easily persuaded by the British Tories and right-wing Labour leaders to support the policy of "Non-Intervention" and, arising from this, to close the frontiers of France against volunteers going to join the International Brigades. This desertion by their neighbour from whom they expected comradeship and help was felt very deeply by the Spanish leaders and it had a depressing effect on one or two of the less resolute among them.

From Albacete I went to Madrid and, without loss of time, on to Jarama where I went through the trenches. I found the lads there in good spirits. The trenches were at the top of a rising piece of ground, and when things were quiet a few at a time would come out and I would have a talk with them in a hollow. While I was doing this I heard an occasional "sweesh" and each time this happened I hunched

my shoulders. One of the officers of the Battalion, noting this, asked me: "What's the matter, Willie?"

"I don't like that sweeshing sound passing overhead," I told him.

"Don't worry about them," he advised me, "as long as you hear them you're all right. It's the ones you don't hear that do the damage." I stopped hunching my shoulders.

On the left of the British Battalion was the Abraham Lincoln Battalion, and I paid them a visit too. Their commander told me that a radio talk to the United States was going to be made in Madrid by three of their number—the commander himself, a young Jewish lad and a Negro. This was being fixed up through a man named Kline and it was suggested that when I got back to Madrid I should go and see him. Next morning I went to look for Kline in his hotel: I was told I would find him in the breakfast room. An attendant took me along and pointed him out, but as I crossed the room towards his table I heard someone shout my name, and there were Ellen Wilkinson and the Duchess of Atholl, jumping up from their table and running towards me. I think the Duchess, brave as she was, welcomed the sight of a fellow-Scot in this sadly-stricken land.

After a short talk with them and a promise to see them when my business with Kline was finished, I went over to introduce myself to him: I didn't have to tell him my name, as he had heard Ellen's shout. Kline introduced me to the big husky chap sitting at his table: it was Ernest Hemingway. After delivering the message which I had brought from the Abraham Lincoln Battalion, I had an idea: I suggested that Hemingway, as a well-known American writer, should introduce the three young lads when they gave their radio talk. Kline looked at Hemingway, who stirred uneasily.

"Oh, no," he said, and it was obvious that he had got a shock.

"Why not?" I asked him. "Surely you're proud of these lads?"

"I have my public to think of," he protested.

"Your public!" I repeated. "Your public is being threatened by Hitler and Mussolini; this is just a try-out on their part. If they get away with this they'll go all the way. Surely you understand that?"

He kept muttering about his public not understanding, and when I told him that it was his chance to make them understand he just sat and stared at me. For Jesus' sake, I said to myself, this is a big sap. Maybe you don't agree with this estimate, but that's how I felt and that is what I reported when I got back to Jarama. When I got home I wrote the story of this incident, but our paper wouldn't publish it as

it was too personal and probably libellous. The libel laws have spoiled many a good article; when the lawyer says libel or the danger of libel—slash! goes the blue pencil and there's nothing more to be done.¹

After my talk with Kline I met Ellen and the Duchess in the hotel lounge. They wanted to accompany me back to the trenches. I told them they would have to get permission from the military authorities and that I did not think it would be granted.

"Why not?" Ellen wanted to know. "It can't be any more dangerous up there than it is in Madrid, with bombs being dropped every night."

"I suppose they believe they can give you some measure of protection here," I replied, "or get you speedily out if the danger becomes particularly grave. But up there if a mass attack were made, they would be condemned everywhere for having put you in such a menacing situation. That's how I think they will consider your request."

And that was how they did consider it. Ellen and the Duchess were advised to stay in Madrid. After spending a couple more days with our lads at Jarama I paid a visit to a hospital, where I got a warm welcome from our wounded men, coupled with a request for all the latest news from home. They, and the comrades at the base in Albacete, would have liked me to stay longer in Spain, but Walter Tapsell insisted that I had got to be back home in time for the Budget. Wally was one of our finest comrades; he represented, by his courage, his daring and his care for the men, the highest form of service as a leader of the International Brigade. When last seen he was surrounded by Fascists, but fighting to the end. We can never forget Wally and all of his brave companions—those who died and those who still live, carrying on the battle against Franco and all other forms of fascism.

I got to the French border by car and there boarded a train. And lo! Ellen and the Duchess were on the same train, also hurrying back for Budget Day. We arrived a day late. Chamberlain was Chancellor of the Exchequer, and in his Budget speech had introduced what he called a "National Defence Contribution"—a tax on profits, not an excess-profits tax, but a straightforward graded tax on profits, for the purpose of providing the military with the accoutrements of war.

Baldwin, as Prime Minister, was being persistently goaded by Churchill on the subject of defence; he had obviously told Chamberlain to do his stuff, and by the Lord Harry he didn't half do it! When he finished his Budget speech he received the usual formal congratula-

¹ Publishers' Note: True, we have had to cut several pungent observations out of this present book.

tions from the leaders of the Labour and Liberal Parties. That much I saw in the *Press* next morning. When I had a look at *Hansard*, my eyes almost jumped out of my head. But the big boys of the City also blinked that morning, and what a roar went up! Should anyone make an offensive personal remark inside the House, you will always hear a chorus of shouts from one side or the other: "Withdraw! Withdraw!" Chamberlain had not made an offensive personal remark but he had introduced a very offensive tax, and from outside the House the roaring chorus of "Withdraw!" rattled the very windows of the Chamber. Surely the like was never known before! A Tory Chancellor; and here were his old pals in the City yelling for his blood.

When the debate opened, up got A. V. Alexander, a Labour-Cooperative Member of Parliament. Here was a tax right up the main street of the Labour Party, but did he welcome it, this tax that did not touch the working class, didn't take a penny from the Co-operative Societies? No, by God, he was the first man in the House to demand its withdrawal! You don't believe it? Then read *Hansard* on the Budget debate of 1937. The tax, he said, was causing grave concern in the City; this valiant co-operator, this alleged leader of the working class, was ready to break down and weep for the woes of the City.

When I got my chance to speak in the debate I gave the tax my whole-hearted support. I pointed out that once the principle had been established by a Tory Chancellor there was nothing to prevent a socialist Chancellor from introducing a similar tax for the purpose of providing people with homes and for increasing their standards of living. I demanded of the Labour leaders that they should repudiate Alexander and give their Party's support to the Chancellor.

Boothby got the floor immediately I had spoken and opened with these words: "The brilliant speech in support of the tax and its implications made by the Member for West Fife, has confirmed my opinion that this tax must be withdrawn." And so it went on, all that day and all the next day. Out of the 600 members, I was the one solitary one who supported the wretched victim of the City's malice. Towards the end it reached the stage where it was crystal clear that the miserable victim must capitulate. At the final stage Churchill took the floor, and cleverly set about constructing a bridge that would allow Chamberlain to cross back over to orthodox finance. When Churchill finished his bridge, Chamberlain carefully tested it, one short step at a time. The members watched with indrawn breath: would he make it

or would his nerve fail him half way across? Step by slow step he went, muttering about the necessity for special measures to meet the costs of defence. No one was the least bit interested in his ramblings: they were tense, watchful with every eye, right, left and centre remorselessly fixed on him as though they would *will* him to stop faltering and take the vital step—and he took it. He had listened to, and accepted, the advice offered from all sides of the House and proposed to withdraw the tax.

"So you're throwing me overboard," I remarked, and that gave the members the opportunity of expressing their feelings in laughter and cheers.

Chamberlain went on to say that he would introduce another form of National Contribution which he hoped would be more acceptable.

There ensued a lot of discussion about defence and the form of the new contribution; the City was all in favour of a contribution so long as it didn't disturb that august centre of high finance. But the Summer Recess was upon us before it could be decided upon.

When Parliament re-assembled we had a new Prime Minister. Baldwin had resigned and Chamberlain had moved round to No. 10 Downing Street.

What a tragedy that our people should have had its destinies in the hands of such a man! Sir John Simon moved into the Chancellorship and thereby became the spokesman for the new form of National Defence Contribution. When he introduced it, he received the plaudits of the City. But—what is this we hear? A combination of roars and groans from Alexander, Barnes and the rest of the Co-operative members. What a shocking business! A great whack of the Contribution was to be taken from the Co-operative Societies.

How pathetically Alexander and Barnes reminded Simon that a few years previously he had been retained by the Co-operative Societies to argue and to prove that the Co-op "divi" was not profits (nothing was said about the big fee he got on that occasion). And now, here he was treating the Co-op dividends as profits and imposing what they declared was a "penal" tax on them. But Sir John the lawyer, paid by the Co-operatives, was a different man from Sir John the Chancellor, now representing Toryism and (tell it not in Gath) the great God Mammon, known as the City. All their woeful pleadings were in vain. The man they had paid to prove that dividends weren't profits just sat there urbanely smiling at them. They wailed about it at Co-op

meetings, but not one of them ever mentioned that it was Alexander who had been the first to demand the withdrawal of the original tax; he could defend and save the City but he hadn't the courage to do anything for the movement that made him. The Co-operatives had to fork out because of the servility of their representative in parliament. As a life-long member of the Co-operative movement I fought all the way against this "penal" tax. I knew there was no use whining to the Chancellor. The only way it could have been defeated would have been by a combination of parliamentary and industrial action. The City had forced the withdrawal of the first edition; the workers could have forced the withdrawal of the second. But the right-wing leaders are every bit as scared of a militant working class as are the bourgeoisie, and the job that is demanded of these gentry is to keep the working class quiet and passive.

The autumn passed with the situation in Europe becoming ever more ominous, while at home there was discontent in the industries. Rent struggles in London brought hundreds of housewives into political activity for the first time, and throughout the country the unemployed continued their mass demonstrations, petitions and protests. The Christmas Recess came and we prepared to ring out the old year and ring in the new. And 1938 was to be a fateful year! It set the course for a world catastrophe.

In March 1938 Austria ceased to exist as a state; it became a province of Nazi Germany. The road towards this had been prepared by a Church ascetic who occupied the Chancellery—Chancellor Seipel, a thin-lipped fanatic who hated progress and Liberalism and whose thoughts were centred on the restoration of the Monarchy and its attendant parasites. With Prince Starhemberg and his storm-troopers, and with his religious influence over the peasantry, Seipel was able to disrupt and destroy the unity of the Austrian people and to establish the beginnings of a Catholic Corporate State (such as was presented as Vatican policy in the Encyclical "*Quadragesime Anno*" published in 1931 after the deal with the atheist Mussolini which re-established the temporal Vatican State). From Seipel, Dollfuss, the midget Chancellor, took over in 1934 and boasted that he had completed the work of his great predecessor, with the fascist state firmly established and the socialists and communists in prison or forced underground. Yes, he completed the work of Seipel and thereby prepared the way for his own assassination and the rape of Austria. He was succeeded as Chancellor by Schuschnigg who also declared his devotion to the Catholic

Corporate State. Nazi groups started knocking things—and people—about, swaggering and shouting for Hitler and the Nazi Reich. Schuschnigg tried to keep them in order. Immediately Hitler in Berlin started raving that their German brothers in Austria were being subjected to persecution and torture; this was to become a well-known technique on the part of the Nazis. The Nazis in Austria continued their dirty work and any attempt to stop them brought new hysterical howls from Berlin. This went on until in 1938 Hitler felt that the time had arrived for the taking over of Austria. Chamberlain and his Foreign Secretary, Halifax, were sounded, and Hitler was satisfied that there would be no opposition from them; indeed he realised that they would give him every encouragement as long as his eyes were turned eastward.

In February 1938, while the Italians were still sending troops and guns to Spain to keep Franco's rebellion from collapsing, Count Grandi, Mussolini's Foreign Minister, approached Eden (who had succeeded Halifax as Foreign Secretary) with proposals for an Anglo-Italian Agreement. Chamberlain wanted this. Eden was against it, and he and his Under-Secretary resigned from the government. In their statements to the House they used very strong language about the Italian government. Viscount Cranborne (now Lord Salisbury) described it as an attempt at blackmail.

With Eden's resignation, the charge of foreign affairs passed into the hands of Chamberlain, who could indulge in appeasement of the anti-communist aggressors with the full backing of packed benches of "yes-men" behind him. Some of us tried our best to stop him on the dangerous path he was travelling, but he treated us all with lofty disdain. Even Churchill shared in that treatment: I shall never forget the evening when Churchill made a speech somewhat critical of Chamberlain. The Tories howled like a pack of madmen. When, a short while later, Churchill got up to leave the Chamber, they yelled and jeered at him in the most insulting manner, literally howling him out of the Chamber with his sole supporter, Brendan Bracken. Then, when the House rose, they formed up in two rows as Chamberlain passed between them, hysterically cheering him as he went his arrogant way. And what a poor feeble creature he proved himself to be when the crisis which he had done so much to bring about came upon the country!

In March, a month after Chamberlain had become responsible for foreign policy, Hitler sent for Schuschnigg to appear before him at

Berchtesgaden; it was reported that when Schuschnigg left his presence he was weeping bitter tears—not for the workers who had been done to death in Austria, you may be sure, but in realisation that his days as the Chancellor of a Catholic Corporate State were drawing to a close. Seipel and Dolfuss, in order to get power vested in their hands, had circulated lying stories about socialist and communist workers stirring up strife and committing all sorts of crimes. Now, here is Schuschnigg taking farewell of Austria as the Germany Army came marching in:

"I declare before the world that the reports put into circulation concerning disorders by the workers, the shedding of streams of blood and the allegations that the situation had got out of control of the government, are lies from A to Z."

He meant that the lies were Hitler's, but he did not think it necessary to mention that they were exactly the same lies as had been circulated by his predecessors.

Chamberlain was not in any way upset by this new act of aggression. In fact, he appeared to be rather pleased. Hitler was not looking in our direction, so why should we worry? Hitler stated that having settled with Austria he was now content, and would turn his attention to home affairs and the further persecution of Jews and Communists. The Tories were not very much concerned about the Jews, and were only too anxious that the German Army should march against the Soviet Union. They were quite happy about Hitler's latest promise. They could in their sleeping or waking dreams, see the German army coming into conflict with the army of the Soviet Union, and both countries, in consequence, ending up exhausted and bankrupt, leaving Britain the most powerful nation in Europe with its Empire still intact. A dream that became a terrifying nightmare.

For a month or so Hitler gave an imitation of a "good neighbour", pampered and played up to by Chamberlain and his yes-men. Then a woeful cry came from Hitler's headquarters about the sufferings of "our unfortunate brothers" in Czechoslovakia—in what was called Sudetenland, the western part of Bohemia. The same technique was used as had been used in Austria. Nazi gangs plundered and murdered, and when the government that had been referred to as "the most democratic in Europe" sought to put a stop to this terrorism, a fury of abuse was let loose in Berlin, with Hitler screaming his hatred of the "scoundrel Benes". The German army got ready to march; in fact it moved towards the frontier. But the Czechs had built well-constructed

fortifications on the mountains that divided the two countries. They had a massive artillery of the latest weapons from the great Skoda works, and a thousand aeroplanes ready to take off at a moment's notice. The Czechoslovak army was mobilised and proceeded towards the frontier. The French had an alliance with the Czechs and declared their intention of standing by them if they were forced into war. The Soviet Union had an alliance with France and pledged its support if France was drawn in. This was too much for Hitler, who immediately drew back his army.

Yet a little over six months later he was able to invade Czechoslovakia without having to fire a shot. How was this made possible? In May 1938 Chamberlain spent a weekend at Cliveden, during which he gave an interview to Canadian and American journalists; reports appeared in the Press on the other side of the Atlantic that Chamberlain was in favour of Hitler taking over the Sudetenland. Questions were put down in the House about this, but he adopted his most arrogant manner and "refused to confirm or deny" the Press reports. Lady Astor, his hostess at Cliveden, came to his assistance with the breathtaking information that it had not been an interview, merely a conversation.

Hitler read the papers from Canada and America just as we did. So did the Czechs. Then a junior Minister, Lennox-Boyd, knowing his leaders' mind, made a speech in which he said we were not interested in defending Czechoslovakia. This aroused a storm of protest and was followed by his resignation from the government. He had spoken before the stage was properly set. Chamberlain wanted a Four Power Pact (between Britain, Germany, France and Italy) and to achieve this he had to break France away from her alliance with Czechoslovakia. The German minority in Western Bohemia organised storm-troopers and embarked on bestial brutalities against unarmed citizens; any attempt to curb this was met with roars of rage from Berlin about the "oppression of our German brothers". Hitler raged that his "patience was exhausted". Chamberlain sent Lord Runciman to Prague to find out what concessions the Czech government was prepared to make in order to secure peace while pressure was being put on France to accept the Four Power Pact as "the means of securing peace in the West". When we asked Chamberlain why he did not make approaches to the Soviet Union, he replied by saying that once we had the situation settled in the west we could make a settlement in the east. That got a big cheer from the Tories; they knew the evil intention behind this remark.

Runciman, whose family made millions out of shipping, had been at the Board of Trade in 1936 when he introduced a Bill to provide a subsidy for tramp shipping. No "means test" for this! In fact, the bigger and more prosperous the shipping company, the more it was likely to get. Shinwell opened the attack for the Labour Party in the House: I had also been asked to join in the debate (it was the only occasion when I was even as it were semi-officially asked to speak for the Opposition). In the course of my speech I drew attention to a deal—or double-deal—made by the Runciman crowd in 1919: the Moore Line, one of their undertakings, sold a fleet of ships to the Western Counties Line at £22 per ton. They drew in a couple of million from that; then a short time later the Western Counties Line went bankrupt and they bought the same ships back at £4 per ton. Shinwell made one of his most vigorous, cynical and sharp-cutting speeches; through it, as through mine, Runciman sat in a sort of trance, eyes staring straight ahead, face absolutely expressionless. In the middle of my speech I stopped for a couple of seconds and looked straight at him: there was not a sign that he noticed me.

"Look at him!" I exclaimed, "sitting there with his hands across his belly like a deflated Buddha, his eyes fixed on futurity, utterly unconscious of what's going on around him!" There was loud laughter at this, but Runciman?—not a flicker in that dead pan.

And this was the man who posed as "a friend of both sides" and got a rapturous welcome from Henlein, the leader of the Sudeten German Party, and the Nazis. He persuaded the Czech government to make a concession to Henlein; but Henlein rejected it saying that it had come too late and now he wanted much more. Again Runciman saw the Czechoslovak government: again they agreed to the new demands: again this was rejected. So the dirty game went on, while Hitler and his Nazis thundered threats from Berlin.

When the situation was sufficiently advanced, Chamberlain flew to Berchtesgaden. There Hitler met him with both hands outstretched. At that session they did not decide anything except that they were good friends and both anxious for peace. Chamberlain's next flight was to Godesberg, where Hitler presented his pal with his final word: he must get free entry into the Sudetenland, and all the fortifications on the frontier must be left intact—tanks, guns, planes, munitions, not a scrap of any kind must be taken away; all was to become the possession of the Nazis.

I am certain that never in the history of the world was such a

demand made in time of peace. Did Chamberlain offer any kind of protest? Did he tell Hitler that he could never be a party, direct or indirect, to such a rape of a small, democratic country? He did not. He told Hitler that he could not recommend acceptance but, like a good message-boy, would hand the document to the Czechoslovak government "without comment", which means no support from "democratic" Britain.

Back he came to Britain. The army was mobilised, reserves were called up, gas masks were issued, civil defence put at the ready. The gentle atmosphere of peace was suddenly dissipated and the black clouds of war hung heavy overhead. Something like panic spread across the country, and expressed itself in the large attendance in the House of Commons to hear what the Prime Minister had to say. It was all a fake, but a necessary part of the preparation for the murder of a nation. There stood Chamberlain at the despatch box. He told us how he had worked for peace, for an understanding, and how he had made one last effort to prevent the outbreak of a terrible war. He had sent a letter to Hitler proposing another meeting. Think of it:

"After reading your letter I feel certain that you can get all essentials without war and without delay. I am ready to come to Berlin myself at once to discuss arrangements for *transfer* with you and representatives of the Czech government, together with representatives of France and Italy if you desire . . . However much you distrust the Prague government's intentions, *you cannot doubt the power of the British and French governments to see that the promises are carried out fairly and fully and forthwith. As you know, I have stated publicly that we are prepared to undertake that they shall be so carried out*" (my italics).

Before the House had time to think about or analyse this appalling missive, he said in a low voice: "I await an answer."

A commotion along the benches! What is it? All eyes are fixed on the "First Gravedigger" as he receives a cable, peruses it and holds it up before his eyes. In dead silence he looks up. Hitler has agreed to a further meeting. "I must fly immediately to Munich," he says.

Tories on their feet, papers waving, cheering enough to raise the roof. One impious imbecile shouted: "Thank God for the Prime Minister!" What a crime to plant on an inoffensive deity—G. W. Foote, the founder of *The Freethinker* got twelve months for a much milder blasphemy. But though the deity remained silent, Attlee

didn't. As a professing democrat, he ought to have turned the atmosphere blue with his denunciation of such inexcusable treachery, but he didn't. He too invoked the deity with his "God speed!" to the volunteer stooge of Hitler. In this he was followed by the leader of the Liberal Party, and then old George Lansbury added his blessing.

I got up to make my protest. The Tories roared, but I roared louder. I drew attention to the fact that Chamberlain was going to betray a small democratic country to the Nazis and said that I would have no part in such a treacherous mission. Churchill, who had been sitting with his shoulders hunched and his face all puckered up, taking no part in the God-speeds, looked up while I was speaking; I felt that he had a momentary impulse to express his condemnation of Chamberlain's role as a tool of Hitler. But the moment passed. When I finished the House finished; as members cheered Chamberlain on his way to Munich, Manny Shinwell came over and shook me by the hand with the remark that I quoted in Chapter Three. I've had a soft spot for him in my heart ever since.

Chamberlain returned from Munich, as everyone knows, flourishing a paper agreement signed by Hitler, Mussolini, Daladier and himself. He was a happy man; the Four Power Pact was apparently in the bag. The God-speeders realised, too late, the tragic consequences of his evil mission, and curses on him have now become the order of the day. He deserved every curse that could be called down on his head. As I write this Chapter, we have a thin-lipped Foreign Secretary who went with Chamberlain on his servile mission to Hitler. Home has tried to justify that act of perfidy without parallel in modern history on the plea that Chamberlain was striving for peace and did not realise that Hitler was mad. What a pitiful attempt at a get-out! Chamberlain didn't want peace: he wanted war against the Soviet Union and all his dirty treachery was the outcome of the belief that Hitler could be persuaded into throwing all his forces into a war for the destruction of the first workers' republic.

When Hitler entered Czechoslovakia, Britain was holding six million in gold belonging to the Czechoslovak government; Sir John Simon informed the House that the government had decided to return this to the Czech government. I protested against this decision: I told him he was sending it to Hitler.

"Before it gets there," I said, "Hitler will have openly entered Prague and will have taken over the whole of Czechoslovakia."

On this occasion Churchill intervened, and he made a truly prophetic

remark: "It is going out in the form of gold," he said, "and will come back in the form of bombs."

A short time later Hitler, tearing up the "piece of paper" Chamberlain had so proudly flourished, marched into Prague and declared Czechoslovakia a part of the German Reich. When this final humiliation of Chamberlain and Home was announced, Wedgwood Benn said to me: "How is it that you can see the implication of events quicker than the rest of us?"

I told him that as a Marxist I was continually discussing developments with my Party comrades and that it was our political understanding that helped us to keep alive to what was going on.

"I certainly admire your political understanding, Willie," commented Wedgy, who was always, towards me, a real friendly soul.

This take-over by the Nazis made it clear that some special effort must be made to check the insatiable appetite of Hitler's hordes. The Communist Party came out strong for a peace front against the Tories and for an alliance with the Soviet Union. We drew up proposals for such a front, and approached the Executive of the Labour Party; we also took measures to ensure that it was raised at the Labour Party conference. Churchill and Eden were taking a firm stand for an alliance with the Soviet Union as a means of halting the drive towards war. In the House one evening I said, in the course of a speech on this subject, that we should seek to make a "peace-encirclement" of Germany. Churchill, who spoke later, commended this idea. On the following Monday, Clem Attlee told me that he had been speaking in Keighley on the previous evening. "Willie," he said, "you should have heard the cheer that went up when I mentioned what you had said about a peace-encirclement of Germany. The audience raised the roof."

"There would have been a greater cheer," I said, "if you had taken me along as well as my words."

But that was too much for Clem and his right-wing cronies. These blind leaders would have no part in a Peace Front. I was asked by one of them if I would accept Churchill and Eden into it: to this I replied that only those prepared to agree to the proposals we had presented to the Executive of the Labour Party would be accepted.

"But if Churchill and Eden accepted, you would accept them?"

"I don't see how we could leave them out," I answered.

That did it! Gallacher wants us, the purest of the pure, to associate with the enemies of the working class. At the Labour Party Conference

Bevin let himself go on this: never, never, *never* would he associate with such a man as Churchill. (It was, of course, only two years later that he became Minister of Labour in Churchill's Coalition government.)

In the country the feeling against Chamberlain was growing stronger every day, and the demand for an alliance with the Soviet Union was coming from factories and mass demonstrations all over the country. I spoke at many of these: what a *change* it was from the artificiality of the House of Commons! This campaign forced Chamberlain to make a show of consulting the Soviet Union, but it was largely a fake. The man who on three occasions went rushing to Germany to bow low before Hitler had no thought of going to Moscow to consult with Stalin. He didn't even send a Cabinet Minister or a member of the government: he sent a Civil Servant named Strang. Then there started something in the nature of a pantomime, with tragedy stalking close behind it. Every Thursday, at Question Time, Hugh Dalton would ask the Prime Minister how the negotiations in Moscow were proceeding, and the Prime Minister would answer: "I have received a report from our representative and I have sent him fresh instructions." This went on for several weeks. One afternoon I jumped to my feet and asked: "Are these fresh instructions any fresher than the fresh instructions you sent last week?" After that he had to change the formula, but the sabotage of any useful negotiations went on. A military mission was suggested, and Chamberlain had to agree to it. But instead of flying to Moscow it went by boat all the way round by Murmansk. All this procrastination, while Mussolini was playing him along with the belief that the Four Power Pact was just around the corner!

War criminals! Chamberlain and his gang should have been among them. Churchill, in the house, drew attention to the proposals being made by the Soviet Union and insisted that they should be accepted without delay. He received no more respect from Chamberlain and the Tories than was shown to me. Their arrogance was there for everyone to see. Then, when the next crisis came, what a poor feeble weakling Chamberlain proved to be. When the Germans proposed a non-aggression pact with the Soviet Union, the leaders of that country, conscious as all of us in the House of Commons were conscious, of the dirty game being played by Chamberlain, Halifax and Home, accepted the proposal, and Chamberlain's dream of a Four Power Pact vanished and left him with a nightmare instead. In October 1938 I made a

speech in which I told him that his policy had led to a situation where Germany dominated Europe, and instead of isolating the Soviet Union as he had hoped, he had isolated Britain and left the country without a reliable friend or ally.

Less than a year later Britain "stood alone". For during 1939 the clouds overhead grew darker until, on September 3, we were plunged, almost defenceless, into the second world war.

Second world war begins. Finland. The "phoney war". Labour members in the War Cabinet. The Blitz, and the campaign for shelters. The Daily Worker banned. Lifting of the ban on the Daily Worker. Death of the two boys.

THE Germans marched into Poland and the Polish bourgeoisie marched out. *The Times* the following day published a remarkable report of this evacuation. A stream of cars and other vehicles was used to carry the members of the government, the aristocracy and the wealthy financiers, with as much loot as they could carry, into Hungary, leaving the Polish people to their fate.

Half way across Poland the Germans were halted—by the Red Army. The Soviet leaders realised the danger of allowing the Germans to get too close to their frontiers. Empty-headed anti-communists wrung their hands about an "agreement to divide Poland" but Churchill realised the importance of what the Russians had done and said so in the House the following day.

A short period of war, and then came what was to be known as "the phoney war"—seven months of it, during which time Chamberlain, Halifax and the rest of the Tory dogs returned to their vomit. Whispers went around: Mussolini is in favour of a switch in the war—let's play up to him, he has very strong influence with Hitler. Lord Lloyd wrote a pamphlet, with a Foreword by the Foreign Secretary Lord Halifax: Italian fascism was doing a great job for the Italian people. We weren't fighting against fascism, we wanted to remain on terms of friendship with the fascist states. It was Hitler and the Nazis who had made the trouble, not the fascists. Our Party came out against this new, treacherous double-talk, this attempt to switch the war against the Soviet Union. In the House I stated that it was necessary to get rid of the Chamberlain government, to get a government that would make the welfare of the people its first consideration; this would ensure a government that would build an unbreakable alliance with the Soviet Union through which the war could be brought to a speedy end. Such an alliance, I said, could force Hitler to evacuate Poland and Czechoslovakia and bring back peace to Europe before it was too late to prevent a full-scale war.

The Tories were for switching the war against the Soviet Union; we stood for an alliance with the Soviet Union. Switch or alliance, that was the issue between us. When later, in 1941, Churchill declared for an alliance with the Soviet Union we gave this alliance our full support and were accused of *changing our line*.

But before we got to that stage, I had what I now think was the worst part of my life in the House of Commons. Butcher Mannerheim in Finland and his semi-fascist government were carrying on a policy of provocations against the Soviet Union and making it clear that Hitler could have a free passage through Finland for an attack on his Bolshevik enemies. The Finns felt that they were quite safe: they had the formidable "Mannerheim Line", a series of fortifications built by British and German engineers that was alleged to be able to withstand any possible assault. Finnish troops began to be concentrated in the neighbourhood of Leningrad; the Soviet Union broke off diplomatic relations and, after warning the Finnish government, marched in to protect their frontier.

When this started I became a sort of pariah in the House of Commons. Each time I got up to speak in defence of the Soviet Union, as I was always prepared to do, there was pandemonium. But no matter how hard they could yell, I could yell harder. Sometimes it looked as if I would be the subject of physical attack. Certain members of the Labour Party were even more threatening, if possible, than the Tories, but several members refused to join the clamour. Davy Kirkwood shouted: "One man against the whole House!" but this was not correct, for Alex Sloan, the best representative of the Scottish miners, gave me loyal support throughout it all. Joe Tinker, Gordon MacDonald, Ellis Smith and others made me an occasional gesture of friendship. But all of them considered that I should refrain from speaking until "things got easier". Travelling up to Scotland in the train one night, Alex Sloan offered me this advice: "Nobody can stand what you're going through," he said. "You'll have a breakdown."

"To hell with them," I told him. "Let them shout all they want. On Sunday I'll have a mass meeting and the workers will shout, not against me but for me, and they will give me all the strength I need to carry me through another week."

And that was true. Every Sunday I was with the workers. Maybe some of them were a bit confused with the lies and slanders of the millionaire press, but they had no illusions about the Tory government

and never once through all that period, when it was nearly impossible for me to be heard in the House of Commons, did I get a single interruption at a mass meeting in England, Wales or Scotland. On the contrary I always had an enthusiastic reception and a ready understanding of every point I made.

Britain and France mobilised the beginnings of an army and began to make preparations for sending them to Finland. But the Norwegian railwaymen issued a declaration that they would not allow them to travel through Norway, and before other arrangements could be made the Mannerheim line was smashed to rubble by Soviet artillery the power of which astounded British military experts.

With the collapse of the Mannerheim line, the way lay open for a march into Helsinki. But the Red Army did not march. Having secured their border, the Soviet leaders were satisfied, and no attempt was made to impose harsh terms on the defeated Finns. This quick victory and the generous attitude of the conquerors towards the Finnish people completely shut the mouths of the anti-Soviet ranters and gave me a splendid opportunity of hitting back at them—of which I took full use.

What a situation Britain would have been in had the fifty thousand British troops gone to Finland and got this country involved in a war against the Soviet Union! Right away, reinforcements would have been called for; all our scanty armaments, men and planes would have had to go, and the country would have been left wide open for the entry of the Nazis.

In Parliament the Prime Minister revealed himself more and more as an utter bankrupt. All his hopes of a war against the Soviet Union by the combined forces of western Europe—for which he had been prepared to sell out those who should have been our allies, squander the moral and political resources of the country and leave us without a friend or ally in the world—were in vain. Shocked and helpless, he was utterly incapable of facing up to the crisis that he and his Tory abettors had created. He had to go, a broken, beaten old man. He wasn't even hissed off the stage; he wasn't worth hissing.

Churchill took over, welcomed with cheers by those who a short while before had hooted him out of the House. And now look at those who had publicly pledged themselves, as the guardians of the purity of the Labour movement, never to associate with such a villainous character as Churchill! See how they, who had refused to join with him in a fight for peace, now eagerly sought the opportunity

to join with him in the conduct of a war which they, by their own passivity (aye, and worse, for did they not speed Chamberlain to the betrayal of Czechoslovakia?) had done so much to bring about! See how they were prepared to bow before him now!

All except one, and that was Aneurin Bevan. I had heard him say on one occasion that he had been advised by a very clever politician never to waste his time with the small fry, always to go for the big fellows. Aneurin certainly went for Churchill, playing the part of a gadfly until he got headlines in the Press second only to those of Churchill himself, without at any time having to take responsibility for a consistent policy or attitude.

But Ernie Bevin, the man who at the Labour Party conference had stood out as the sworn enemy of Churchill—here he was, gladly accepting Churchill as his leader while he paraded himself as Minister of Labour. He was not popular with the workers; he was prepared to put the screws on them far more roughly than on the employers. At least, that's what they thought about him up on the Clyde. I recall that I was speaking one Sunday evening at a working-class demonstration in St. Andrews Hall. Bevin was supposed to speak the same evening to a meeting of shop stewards in the City Hall. "Supposed" is the operative word. They gave him a hell of a time. Police had to be brought in to try and get him a hearing. One or two lads who had been heaved out of the City Hall by the police came to St. Andrew's and told us there was hell to pay at that place.

When we got back to the House, Ernie gave me some black looks. I had known him long before he became a big union boss and we had always remained on fairly friendly terms personally. But for a day or two the atmosphere in his presence was anything but encouraging. Some time afterwards Beaverbrook, who was at the Air Ministry, went on a visit to Moscow, where he had a discussion with Stalin regarding the most valuable assistance Britain could render her great ally. He returned, and arranged to address a series of meetings in the industrial centres, where he hoped to urge the workers on to greater efforts to make more tanks and planes available. He proposed to start off with a meeting of shop stewards on the Clyde; he wanted this to be a success because anti-government feeling was still running high there. So he got one of his people to approach me and ask me to go up to Glasgow, meet the shop stewards and get them to agree to make the meeting a real demonstration of friendship and solidarity with the Soviet Union. I met about 400 of them on a Saturday afternoon.

They had many complaints and one or two of them were inclined to say "To hell with Beaverbrook!", but after a couple of hours' discussion we got unanimous agreement to make the meeting a demonstration of Anglo-Soviet unity. This decision was conveyed to the Scottish Press. The following week, Beaverbrook's meeting went off in great style: the newsreel cameras were there and I believe it was one of the biggest hits they ever put on. When I next met Ernie Bevin in a back corridor in the House, he glared at me and snarled: "You're a bloody fine fellow!"

"What have I been doing now?" I asked.

"You go up to Glasgow and get a reception for that renegade Beaverbrook after what you did to me!"

"Me?" I protested, "What did I do to you?"

"It's all right, Willie," he said. "I know who was responsible for that demonstration at my meeting there."

And nothing I could say would convince him that I had had no part whatever in the break-up of his meeting.

But then I thought, what a strange way to refer to one of his Cabinet colleagues! It stuck in my mind for a bit and then I forgot it. But many years later, long after the war was over, a *Life of Beaverbrook* was published which gave an exposure of the bitter enmity that had developed between Bevin and Beaverbrook in the Cabinet. According to the author, Bevin went berserk over the proposal Beaverbrook had made, to campaign for an extra spurt from the workers for tanks and planes for the Soviet Union. Bevin called it an insult to the British workers to ask them to work harder for the Russians than for their own country; he could not see that any help given to the Soviet Union—where the war was at its hottest—was in fact working for the safety of Britain. He could not be convinced, and in the course of the bitter quarrel he used language that reminded me of his expression "that renegade". I wrote a letter to the *Sunday Express* recalling this affair—but they didn't publish it.

Another Labour leader who became one of Churchill's take-overs was Sir Stafford Cripps. He was sent as Ambassador to the Soviet Union; in my opinion it would have been impossible to make a worse selection for this job. Cripps was an exceptionally difficult man for the ordinary mortal to approach or speak to. Somehow he always seemed to hold himself aloof. It was well known that the British Embassy in Moscow was a nest of anti-Soviet activity, directed towards collecting all the rubbish that dubious dissident characters were prepared to

peddle for a chunk of English sterling. This rubbish was in turn sent to the Foreign Office as up-to-date and reliable information on the situation in the Soviet Union. Of course it must be understood that the Embassy kept itself in a condition of isolation: anyone who had really tried to associate with ordinary Soviet people or their leaders would have become suspect. And it was into such an atmosphere that the already aloof Sir Stafford went. He associated with no one outside the Embassy, and when he returned to Britain (this was after Hitler's attack on the Soviet Union) he gave a very gloomy picture of the situation there. Soon word got round that the Red Army would be finished off in three months. None of the folk who repeated this stopped to consider that three months was a hoary ancient prophecy by the "authorities" on Soviet affairs. When the workers first took power these Jeremiahs all knew they would collapse within three months. When the First Five Year Plan was published, three months would expose the absurdity of such an ambitious proposition in a backward country. And so it has gone on, yet they have always been proved utterly wrong despite their inside knowledge.

The Home Secretary came to the House one afternoon looking very solemn. He was Sir John Anderson, who had gained notoriety in connection with the Black and Tans in Ireland. We knew a special announcement had been arranged through the Speaker, and we all sat tense, eager to hear what it was. Think of the gasp that went up when he told us that with regret he had given an order for the arrest of an Hon. Member of this Honourable House. Not a few eyes immediately focused on the Member for West Fife. But it was Captain Ramsay, the Tory Member for Peebles who was the security risk, and after that his name was known in the House no more.

When the blitz started on London I was living with some friends in Lloyd Square. There was a basement shelter across the street and when I was at home with them we went over each night about eight o'clock. It was a miserable business. At nine o'clock or thereabouts the guns would start; we would settle down to try and snatch a few hours of sleep, but the din usually kept us awake until well on into the morning.

The House was now meeting at 11 a.m. and quitting at 5 o'clock in the evening for three days a week, Tuesday to Thursday. On Thursdays after Questions the business of the next week was announced. On one occasion I was called out to the lobby by a visitor

from Fife and did not hear the announcements. I caught the train back to London from Glasgow as usual on the Monday evening; it did not particularly surprise me to find no other Members travelling, for quite a number of them did not travel back every weekend. I went back regularly, for my Party comrades expected me to be there as often as possible. I got to Whitehall and was just crossing Palace Yard when a bomb dropped over in Parliament Square and blew down a tree. I dived into Westminster Hall, and met Sir Herbert Williams coming out.

"What are you doing here?" he asked me. "Don't you know the House is not meeting this week? It was announced last Thursday. I've just come for a committee meeting."

I could have kicked myself all over the place. To think that I could have been out of it for a whole week and here I was back for another night of terror. The night train from Euston left at 9.15, but it was often eleven o'clock or even later before it crawled out of the station; with several other Scottish M.P.'s I got into the habit of taking the 5.30 train out to Kettering and waiting for the night train there: it was quiet in Kettering and we could have a cup of tea at the Kettering Labour Club while we waited.

My landlord in Lloyd Square, who was an air raid warden, was killed by a mine when he was out one night on duty. I had to seek another habitation, and took up my abode for a time with Ivor Montagu and his wife, who had a cottage just outside Watford. Later on I stayed with Robin and Olive Page Arnot in Fitzroy Road, adjacent to Primrose Hill; at the top of the hill was a heavy-calibre naval gun and every time it fired the building shook and we were almost shaken out of our respective beds. Once or twice we went up the hill and watched the fires burning in the centre of the city. It was a nerve-racking business and I was always glad when I was out of it.

I have got my "bomb stories" and narrow escapes like everyone else who stayed in London; but one of the longest nights I ever spent was the night of the big blitz on Clydeside. I had come from Liverpool, which for several nights had been getting more than its share of bombs, and was congratulating myself that I had a nice peaceful night before me, far away from the nerve-racking inferno. Make the most of it, Willie, for when we got to Carstairs all the lights went out, and at Motherwell there was the crash and bang I had been running away from. We crawled into Central Station, where we arrived just after midnight; I learned that there was a train on No. 12 platform which

was going to take stranded passengers to Gourrock, with a stop at Paisley. I got into an empty compartment and was joined after a minute or two by a sailor. After what seemed an interminable wait we steamed slowly from the station, drew on to the bridge and then stopped. It was a clear moonlight night and we could see the fire brigade crossing Jamaica Bridge to where a huge warehouse fire was raging on the other side. We were stuck on that bridge for over an hour, with guns going and bombs dropping all round. "This is worse than Dunkirk," said the sailor. "At Dunkirk you could do something but here you're helpless." I got home in the small hours. I was surprised that it was still dark. That same night in Liverpool had been all peace and quiet: not a whisper to disturb the rest of the lightest sleeper.

I often felt ashamed of the eagerness with which I left London when I heard the stories of the workers who were there all the time, night and day. It was truly amazing and heroic how they kept up production despite the damage done to buildings and machinery. Every morning the repair gangs were on the job, having had little or no sleep, and spent themselves getting things back to normal or as near normal as possible. The highest tribute was deserved by the working men and women of London—the real saviours of Britain when the testing time came.

The Communist Party, as is generally known, was carrying on a tremendous campaign to force the government to build deep shelters which would enable the workers to get a proper night's rest. I made advocacy of these on many occasions in the House. Deputations from factories and from various areas of London came to see me and to give me a picture of what they were enduring. They were very eager that I should visit their area when there was a raid on—which meant any night—and see the sort of makeshift shelters they had to use. Why did they have to pick on me? I didn't relish cavorting round London when the bombs were falling, but I could see that these lads and lasses were expecting me to accept their invitation, and I had to do my best to put on a smile and accept. So I went around visiting shelters, basements of houses or other buildings, most of them too crowded to allow of stretching out to sleep. The worst I saw was when I went round the East End with Phil Piratin; he took me to a railway arch where I saw a mass of people congregated; the arch was used as a store and there was all kinds of merchandise in it. Men, women and children lay there night after night, on top of boxes and bales, and no conveniences of

any kind. I prepared a report of these visits with recommendations directed towards the provision of opportunity for sleep, refreshments and conveniences. I sent it to Sir John Anderson who referred it to the House and said he was considering what could be done. It was some time after that that the underground stations were fitted up with double-tier bunks and somewhat limited lavatory accommodation.

More nerve-paralysing days were to come in July and August when the V-1s and then later the V-2s were landing in London. By this time the House was meeting in Church Hall, across the way from the Commons, which had been hit during one night without casualties. The V-1s announced their coming and you had a chance to run for shelter if you heard them. But the V-2s! There was no warning with those, they travelled faster than sound and you couldn't hear them until they smashed a building to rubble or tore a great hole in the ground. I was scared of those, and I'd like to meet anyone who wasn't when they were dropping. What a relief when the landings on the continent put an end to those weapons of silent death!

The opening of a Second Front had been woefully delayed and the man responsible for the delay was Churchill. From the beginning, the Tories cherished the desire to see the Germans and the Russians exhaust one another and leave all the advantage of the peace to Britain. The rottenness of the British bourgeoisie is beyond measure, and some of the right-wing Labour leaders were just as rotten. Eisenhower was pressing for a Second Front but Churchill kept stalling. He spoke about striking Germany from "the soft underbelly". In fact, he wanted to get British troops into Greece and the Balkans in order to protect his own class in that area. When, after the heroic defence of Stalingrad and the capture of the German Sixth Army, the Red Army started smashing its way to Germany, it was obvious that the Russians were far from exhausted. Churchill then hurriedly lined up for the Second Front, not to help the Soviet armies but to block them in their liberating advance. His own class, always his own parasitic class, determined his war policy as it did his peace policy.

Just before he vacated the Home Office, Sir John Anderson banned the *Daily Worker* on January 21, 1941. His successor in the Home Office was Herbert Morrison, who occupied the post when the subject was debated in the House of Commons. Herbert had been a conscientious objector in the first world war: when he was before the Tribunal he

declared that all modern wars were caused by capitalist greed for exploitation and profits and that his conscience would not permit him to participate in such a war. But he was a devotee of MacDonald and as such he specialised in "exposing" the wicked deeds of the Communists: they were "tools of Moscow" and were kept going by "Moscow gold". When we applied for affiliation to the Labour Party, it was Herbert who told the delegates to their conference that if they accepted us it would associate them with Moscow and lose them any chance of winning an election.

Well, here we were having a debate on the banning of the *Daily Worker*, with Attlee and Co. in Churchill's government, and a Fabian-type chap called Lees Smith acting as Leader of the "Opposition". Lees Smith went to the Home Office and presented a questionnaire there in order to be well provided with material for the debate. He got plenty of information about all the bad things the *Daily Worker* was alleged to have published, but the vital question to which he wanted the answer was the one about this subsidy from Moscow. Alas for Lees Smith: the answer he got was that the Home Office had no evidence to prove any subsidy—except from the readers in this country!

Now, as it happened, I got a copy of the questions he had put and the answers he had received, and when I got up to speak in the debate, holding up my copy, Herbert almost had a fit. I challenged him, the man who had at innumerable conferences and meetings peddled this slander about our paper in order to poison the minds of his hearers, to repeat the allegations now, now that he was at the Home Office where they had means of getting all the information they could desire—examining our post and tapping our telephones too if they wanted. Herbert sat sullen and silent. Then Manny Shinwell got up, and demanded that the Minister should say one way or the other: was the *Daily Worker* being subsidised from Moscow? Not even he could get Morrison on his feet. He never afterwards peddled that story.

In 1942, a month or two before the Labour Party Conference, when the Soviet Union was now our ally, there was a strong feeling that the conference would give a majority for the demand to raise the ban. I met Ernie Bevin in the back corridor of the House and asked him to do me a favour.

"If I can," he replied.

"Ernie," I said (I was doing the old pal stuff), "I want you to drop a word to the Transport and General Workers' Union delegation to

the Labour Party conference to vote for the lifting of the ban on the *Daily Worker*."

You'd have thought I had jumped on his favourite corn.

"What! after all the *Daily Worker* has said about me?" he asked.

"For God's sake, Ernie," I said, "that has nothing to do with the question of the ban. All sorts of papers say all sorts of things about you, but you would never vote for having them banned."

He calmed down. "You know I'm away from the Transport Workers. Why come to me? Why not tackle Herbert Morrison, he's the man responsible."

"I'll do that," I told him. And the first chance I got, I tackled Herbert. I pointed out to him that it would be much better if the ban were lifted before the conference, rather than have it the subject of an acrimonious discussion. I've an idea Herbert did not want the ban to be the subject of a discussion at the conference; attention might have been drawn to his refusal to answer the question about the alleged Moscow subsidy. At any rate, in a sort of conspiratorial manner, he suggested that I should go over to the Home Office and have a word with Sir Alexander Maxwell, who had been in charge of the whole matter from the beginning. "But," counselled Herbert, "don't tell him you have been talking to me!"

I am sure that what I am going to tell now will take a lot of swallowing, but it's true. I went over and had a very friendly chat with Sir Alexander. He had no objection to the lifting of the ban, he said. He advised me to have a talk with Herbert Morrison; he thought I would find him favourably disposed. "But don't let him know you have been to see me!" he ended up.

The ban was lifted on August 26, 1942, and the subject did not arise at that year's Labour Party conference.

Both our boys were clever scholars. Don went to Glasgow University and came through with first-class honours. We ought to have insisted on John, the older one, going there too, for he had the qualifications, but despite his affection for his younger brother he had made up his mind in 1939 to get with me to London. After much pressing I agreed to take him. In the house in Lloyd Square there was an ex-pilot who had been retired from the Air Force with arthritis. John listened to him night after night as he explained, at the lad's request, all the technicalities of aircraft and their control. This led him, shortly after the war broke out, to join the Air Force as a gunner. He broke this

news to me one evening when I got home from the House of Commons. I could only accept his decision, and offer what advice I could about how he should conduct himself towards his fellow-airmen. He was accepted, but when they examined him they realised that he was extremely well-up in mathematics and decided to train him as a pilot. He flew one of the big Sunderland flying boats.

Two years after the beginning of the war Don was conscripted. He served for about a year as a private and was then selected for training as an officer. He passed his examinations and was made a Second Lieutenant in the Tank Corps. He was with the first detachment that landed in Normandy, and was in charge of one of the tanks that had the task of breaking through "the Bulge". When they got through, he was lifted out of his tank wounded, and died as he was laid on the ground.

When I got the fatal telegram I had to break the news to Jean. What my poor lass suffered! She sat for days, and I had difficulty in getting her to take even a little food. I can hear her yet, and my throat tightens up, as she moaned: "Oh, ma puir clever wean!"

I wrote the painful news to his brother, who was in India. A few months later came the second fatal message. We had lost him too. I am certain that the shock was responsible for the heart trouble with which Jean was afflicted for twelve years and which took her from me on July 17, 1963. My bonnie Jean.

Before moving on to the events that followed the war I must mention something about the 1944 Education Act, introduced by Mr. Butler. The Catholic educationalists were agitating for an increase in the grant to denominational schools from 50 to 70 per cent. The calculation that was made at that time credited the Catholics with 2,000 schools and the Anglicans with 7,000. The Catholics, in fighting for a chunk for themselves, were fighting for a much bigger chunk for the Anglicans. But as long as they could get a bit extra for themselves they did not seem to care about mulcting the tax- and rate-payers for the benefit of their competitors. This I brought out in the course of the discussions on the Bill in the House, and I must say it had the Catholic members wriggling. So much so, that when Jimmie Maxton suggested that the Scottish system should be operated in England, Richard Stokes and other Catholic members clutched at it like drowning men.

In Scotland the Education Authority owns all the schools and

employs and pays all the teachers. It can employ Catholic teachers in non-Catholic schools and Protestant teachers for such things as mathematics and music in Catholic schools. But there is an understanding that the directors of the Catholic schools will have the right of appointment for teachers of other subjects. The system has worked quite well; certainly the Catholic authorities have not made any complaint. Quite the contrary, it has been a real boon to Catholic education. When Stokes followed Maxton with a plea for this system in England, I followed him in the debate and pointed out that there was an entirely different situation in England from that which applied in Scotland when the takeover took place. The great majority of schools in Scotland were local authority schools; Catholic schools were in a distinct minority and apart from one or two special schools there were no others. Very many of the Catholic schools had to be rebuilt, and new ones had to be established. The Education Authority took full responsibility for this and the cost was not excessive. But think what it would mean in England—thousands of Church schools would have to be rebuilt, and before that task could be taken in hand all the “single area” schools would have to be handed over to the Education Authority in England. (“Single-area” referred to country areas where there was only one school, most often Anglican, where non-Anglican families had to send their children willy-nilly.)

Stokes came back to the subject a week later, having consulted his clerical advisers I suppose, and solemnly assured the House that the Catholics were prepared to hand over their “single-area” schools. But I had been consulting some friends in the National Union of Teachers, and was able to tell him that his offer had no weight in view of the fact that the Anglicans had 2,000 single-area schools, most of them subject for condemnation and rebuilding, while the Catholics had exactly nine. It would be outrageous to suggest that the Education Authority should replace all of these single area schools and then leave them as Anglican denominational schools. That finished the attempt to transplant the Scottish system.

But they returned to the percentage increase. I opposed this, arguing that the celestial transport company should not be given any grant until they produced a balance sheet showing how many passengers they had safely landed up above, billions of miles away. The terrestrial transporters can and do provide full information on this, but the celestial crowd can issue all kinds of questionable prospectuses without having to prove their worth. I don't know how deep Mr. Butler's

Anglicanism may be, but he sat there beaming while I was on my feet twisting the knife in the fleshy parts of the holy men of God. When he closed the Debate on the Third Reading he offered his thanks to the Hon. Member for West Fife for the assistance he had given during the discussions.

The second Labour government. Post-war parliament. Bevin and Israel. Dalton as Chancellor. Cripps and devaluation. Coal nationalisation.

"LLOYD GEORGE won the war"—at least that is what was dinned into our ears after the first world war by the Press, our great "free" Press that serves out the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. Of course, if pressed, they might have admitted that he had the assistance of some soldiers, sailors and airmen and maybe a little from the working class too. But thoughts of that kind did not trouble the hero of the tale; he got the credit and decided to capitalise on it. He rushed through an election, in the course of which he flooded the country with the slogan: "Give the man who won the war the chance to win the peace!" and "Homes for Heroes" thrown in as a make-weight.

The bunch of hard-faced Tories that filled the House of Commons following that election was the worst in all its history—profiteers and money-grabbers who would have stolen the coppers from the eyes of a corpse. Lloyd George was never able to live down that swindle; a foolish man who in his early years had been a stormy petrel in the fight against privilege.

But not so foolish as the men who "won" the second world war. It has been said that history repeats itself, the first time as tragedy, the second as farce. And that certainly applied in the case of Churchill. If Lloyd George won an election on the strength of having won a war, what was to stop him from doing the same? Not the bunch of Labour toadies who had grovelled to him during the life of the War Cabinet; he had dealt with them as his inferiors all through their association and so he would deal with them now. Attlee received an ultimatum: remain in the coalition until the Japanese war is ended or I will immediately declare a General Election. Churchill firmly believed that he was giving Attlee a real fright and that if Clem did not accept his ultimatum that would be the end of him.

Attlee may have been frightened, but Churchill was deluded. He was living in Cloud-Cuckoo-Land. Despite the praises lavished on him by the Press, supplemented by Tory, aye and Labour members of parliament, his stock was low both in the country and among the soldiers abroad.

A few years later one of the most popular jokes in the Commons was that of the Colonel who warned a sentryman before he went on duty at a street crossing that separated the British and Soviet Zones in Berlin: "That big Russian will do all he can to provoke you. Don't pay any attention to him, no matter what he says. He will try and get you into a fight and you would not stand a chance with him. This is not just a warning, it's an order." "Very good, Sir," says the private. Half an hour later the Colonel heard that the sentry was in hospital. Raging mad, he went to see him. He was all bandaged.

"Why didn't you heed my warning?" asked the Colonel sharply.

"Excuse me, Sir," said the sentry, "but you've got it wrong. The first time I passed him he shouted: 'To hell with the British Empire!' and spat between his feet. I just kept walking. The second time he shouted: 'To hell with King George!' and again he spat. The next time, he shouted: 'To hell with Winston Churchill!' and we were so busy shaking hands we didn't see the bus coming."

The ultimatum was issued just prior to the Labour Party conference. On the Sunday before the opening day, the Executive of the Labour Party held a meeting to consider the situation. As is well known, the Executive meetings of the Labour Party are like meetings of a secret society; who is for or against any proposal is never known, except through a leak. And there was a leak. Attlee, it was whispered, was in favour of accepting the ultimatum and remaining in the coalition. Morrison opposed this, saying that the Labour party must get its freedom now that the war was ended. Ernie Bevin, who knew as all the others knew that Morrison was angling for the leadership, jumped in to support Attlee. Nevertheless, the decision was taken to go to the Conference and declare for an end to the coalition.

This met with tremendous acclaim from the delegates.

So when the election was held, the cohorts of Churchillian Toryism went to the country, expecting a great, glorious triumphal return to the House of Commons. Instead, the House of Commons was packed with what appeared to be vociferous socialists. If ever a man and his gang got the stuffing knocked out of them this was surely the occasion. There they sat, what was left of them, a spectacle of woebegone dejection as they listened to the opposite side singing the Red Flag for the first time (and the last until a new big change comes) in the House of Commons.

"Though cowards flinch and traitors sneer, we'll keep the Red Flag flying here." Maybe the misérables on the other side noticed that the Labour front bench did not join in the singing, or show any apprecia-

tion of it. But that was no comfort to them; those packed benches of socialists spelt doom for them. And there sat Churchill, who had opposed the Second Front and now had led his party to virtual rout.

Churchill had succeeded, before the end of the war, in getting British forces into Greece. They did not come into contact with the Germans there; the rapid advance of the Red Army, supplemented by the activities of the Greek guerrillas, forced the German withdrawal just as the British forces entered the other end of the country. But the British forces had not been sent there to fight the Germans; their task, if they had known it, was a despicable one. When the Germans had entered Greece the Greek King (a German himself) fled the country and took up residence in a safe area, leaving the Greek people to the mercy of the Nazis, his countrymen. Partisan bands were soon formed with headquarters in the mountains, and the invaders were harried at every opportunity. When the "All Clear" went the King and his followers were brought back, and shortly afterwards a peaceful demonstration which included women and children was fired on. Strong protests were made by the Communists and the partisan organisation. Then emerged the real reason for the presence of the British forces. They were set upon the people who had been looking forward to the end of the war for a new, really progressive country. With tanks, guns and bomber planes the working class and progressive movement was crushed and an utterly brutal dictatorship, backed by British arms, was imposed on the Greek people. Thus Churchill used British conscripts to wage the class war in Greece.

Bevin, who had once claimed to be a Marxist, took over Churchill's murderous policy and continued it, letting workers be butchered in order to establish the German King.

He had another venture in king-making. Both before and during the war, the Labour leaders had played up to the Zionists in a most demagogic manner; they would see to it, they said, that the Jews would see their age-old dream for the restoration of Palestine realised. I often spoke on this subject, but always in favour of a bi-national state in Palestine, a unity of Jew and Arab. The Zionists declared that a Jewish state in the Middle East would be valuable as an outpost of the West. This I declared to be a dangerous concept; history showed that the buffer position of Israel between its powerful neighbours Egypt and Syria, and its oscillation between them, had created the earliest forms of anti-Semitism. Now here were the Zionists proposing to establish the Jewish state as an ally of Western imperialism in the midst of the

Arab Middle East. One argument against the bi-national state that always came up was that they had too much experience of being a minority; they did not want to occupy a minority position in Palestine. I tried to get my hearers to understand the difference between being a minority in a capitalist country where they were shut out by history from the main stream of the industrial life, and a minority that was the recognised leadership of the economic, social and political life of the country. This was an entirely different minority from that in any other country. The Arabs were to be their neighbours, not the imperialists, who would use them while they could give any service and would have no hesitation in discarding them if they couldn't. But their influence with the Arab people was lost when they came out as opponents of Arab independence. No independence, was their cry, until there is a Jewish majority in Palestine. The Arab bourgeoisie were able to use this, and did use it, to arouse widespread hatred of the Israelites throughout the Arab lands. So the Zionists depend on the waning power of the imperialists while they have made enemies of the rising power around them.

The 1945 victory of Labour sent a thrill of hope throughout the Jewish world. Now at last, our long days of wandering are over; the Labour leaders have given us their word and they, unlike Balfour and the Tories, are honest men and will keep it! Time and time again I was told this by leading Jewish personalities.

"We don't want your support," one of them told me. "Your party has no influence. The Labour Party will see that we get justice."

What a shock they got! It soon became obvious that Bevin, chief Labour spokesman on the subject, had no sympathy whatever for the Zionist claim to Palestine. Transjordan, or Jordania, an area far greater than Palestine as we know it, was occupied by scattered tribesmen ruled by Emir Abdullah. It was recognised in the mandate as part of Palestine—the mandate, held by Britain, contained the note that the mandatory power, in handing over the mandate, should give special consideration to the situation in Transjordan. The Zionists did not give this question much attention, being occupied at the time with the task of acquiring more land in Palestine proper. But an extremist group, known as the Revisionists, had taken note of it and were staking a claim to a Great Palestine which included Jordan.

But Bevin had a different idea. To be a king-maker was surely his ambition. Now, in flagrant defiance of the mandate, he handed over Transjordan to the Emir and made that worthy King of Jordan. This

quite illegal action aroused bitter feeling in all circles and made the Revisionists bitter enemies of Britain; some of its members, known as the Stern Gang, blew up the David Hotel which was occupied by British officers and caused considerable damage and casualties.

The Stern Gang was savagely attacked by Bevin as well as others in the House. I made a speech in which I said that he and other members of the government were the last people who should accuse them; these young men and women were acting under great provocation and those who were now accusing them were the provokers. Promises had been made time and time again to the Zionists, and when a Labour government was formed they had truly believed that the road to a Zionist Palestine was open. Instead of this they found that those who had promised so much were the very ones who now blocked the road to their onward march. And who were they, in the government, to condemn those who now used violent methods in their desperate effort to remove the block?

I also accused Bevin of using language that was distinctly anti-Semitic. Several back-benchers also noticed this. But through all the cynical betrayal and deceit the Jewish members of the government remained silent. They were, I think, afraid of the egotistical Bevin, who had the backing of Attlee, Churchill and the Foreign Office. The Zionists didn't get Palestine from the mandate; they only got a bit of it. And there they are, surrounded by enemies who will grow stronger as the imperialists get weaker. The sooner the Israeli people realise that that they aren't Westerners any more but a living part of the Middle East, the more hope there will be for a peaceful and prosperous future.

One more story about Bevin. I went one evening to a reception at the Soviet Embassy in London to celebrate the anniversary of the October Revolution, and got landed in a room where all the celebrities were gathered. There was a well-laden table loaded with food and an unlimited supply of all kinds of liquor. The room was filled with an assortment of diplomats, military and naval men and other VIPs. I stood against the wall alongside the American Ambassador, a tall, solemn-faced chap with straight black hair that reminded me of pictures I had seen of 17th-century Puritans. We got chatting, and he told me I was well known and respected in the United States. I said that that seemed rather strange, as I had been refused permission to enter his country in 1936. He said that he would see I got permission to enter when the war was over.

There, right in front of us on our side of the table, were Ernie Bevin and Molotov, vying with each other in proposing toasts and knocking off a steady stream of the "cursed alcohol". My pal, John Winant, remained empty-handed like me as we watched. Then someone proposed a toast to the Red Army and one of the Soviet officials tried to shove a glass of whiskey in my hand.

"No thank you," I said quietly, "I don't drink."

"But you must!"

This little argument attracted attention to where John and I were having our quiet, peaceful time together. Molotov grinned.

"Forty-five years I've been a Communist," he said, "but I've never met another Communist like Gallacher."

He was not showing any effect from the drink he had been taking, but Ernie's eyes were beginning to get a bit out of focus and his voice was *beginning to slur*.

"He's a Presbyterian Communist," he told Molotov.

And, as sure as I'm sitting here typing, the United States Ambassador put his arm around my shoulder and said: "I'm very glad to hear that. I'm a Presbyterian too."

But Molotov wasn't finished. "We'll drink a toast to Gallacher," he said.

"I'll drink that with pleasure," said Bevin, too warmed up with the medicine he was sinking to remember that I was a Communist. If it had ended with that all would have been well; but Molotov had another word to say.

"Gallacher," he said, "has two advantages over Mr. Bevin. One, he is a Communist. Two, he is sober."

I told John Winant, "I'm getting out of this before there's any more trouble."

Jean and I got into the United States in 1946, but alas! John Winant had not been able to participate in the decision to allow us entry. After President Roosevelt's death, his enemies got busy in Press and platform to besmirch his memory; I don't know how that affected John Winant who was a devoted disciple of Roosevelt; but he was not long back in his own country before he took his own life. I read of his tragic death with regret.

Hugh Dalton was Chancellor of the Exchequer. Big, bluff, hearty and a perpetual back-slapper ("What can I do for you, Willie?") he is gone now, but left three books in the form of his autobiography. In the

first volume he tells how he decided to leave the London School of Economics and take up politics. He went to the secretary of the local Labour Party and told him he thought it was time the middle class gave a helping hand to the Labour Party. It wasn't very long before the Labour Party was helping the middle class in the person of the ebullient Hugh to get into parliament. After two or three failures, he decided to give up; but just as he had decided he wasn't going to make a career in politics, another and better constituency was offered to him and so his support of the Labour Party carried on to the end.

As Chancellor of the Exchequer, "a mighty man was he". Things were going so well that at the Labour Party conference in 1946 he could boastfully proclaim: "I speak here with a song in my heart", an expression that became meat and drink to the satirists of the Press.

But at Easter 1947 he appeared before us in the House, not with a song in his heart but with a pain in his head. We had got landed in a financial crisis. Who was responsible? Our dear allies across the Atlantic. They had provided us with a loan that was to keep us going; but no sooner had we received the loan than Truman abolished price controls in the United States and up jumped prices by 40 per cent, thus taking away with one hand almost half of what they had loaned with the other. As most of our imports came from the U.S. and all of them had to be paid for in dollars we were faced by the fact that the loan which was supposed to keep us going till 1949 would be exhausted by the end of 1947. Hugh had to pile on the taxes.

He had not wanted to be the Chancellor. We know this from the second volume of his autobiography. When old George Lansbury quit the leadership of the Labour Party, Herbert Morrison was desperately eager to get the job. But Greenwood had him stymied, as he had Greenwood stymied. One would not give way to the other, and Attlee was put in as the stop-gap. Then came the war, and Attlee was taken on by Churchill as deputy Prime Minister. Herbert did not give up hope, however. Greenwood had dropped out of the running by the time the war had ended and the field, so it seemed, was wide open. Here Hugh comes in. He got Herbert up for a weekend to his place in Yorkshire and, during a walk across the moors, assured his willing listener that he, Hugh, was not in the contest for the leadership; all he wanted was the Foreign Office, and he thought he ought to let his dear comrade know that he was supporting him for the leadership.

What happened after that is not too clear from Dalton's book. He returned to London, had a talk with Attlee, discovered that Attlee was

in favour of planting him at the Foreign Office, and transferred his affections from Herbert to Clem. When Attlee presented his proposed Cabinet at Buckingham Palace, Dalton was recommended as Foreign Secretary, Bevin as Chancellor. But Buckingham Palace wanted it the other way (it's a certainty that the King was acting on advice, probably from Churchill, when he insisted on that). Attlee submitted, and that's how Dalton became Chancellor.

Garrulous, was Hugh. It's there in his books. It was there when he met a reporter as he was going in to present his Budget and let fall a hint of what was in it. This slip had no effect on events. But the Tories wanted him out, for—let it be said to his credit—Dalton supported and operated a cheap money policy. He had admitted his mistake and the House had apparently accepted his apology, and there, it seemed, the matter ended. But the next day the Tories brought in a motion for a *Select Committee to consider it. Attlee and Morrison, the Leader of the House*, accepted the motion. I was the only member to oppose it, though I had the warm approval of Phil Piratin, D.N.Pritt, John Platts Mills and one or two others. I'll just quote a couple of sentences from what I said:

"It is not possible to allow this motion to pass without comment and without the proposal being made that it should be rejected. I consider it shameful how the matter has been treated, and the attitude that has been adopted in regard to the mistake made by the Chancellor. The Prime Minister said the other day that there was nothing to reveal and nothing to conceal. If that is the case, and I am certain it is the case, what is the necessity for this motion? . . . I want to put on record my very strong objection to this motion."

Before leaving Hugh and having a look at his sombre successor, I would like to say a word about the clever boys at the Treasury. They're as bright as the boys at the Foreign Office. When Hugh had to pile on the taxes, tobacco got a heavy load—too heavy for the Old Age Pensioners and others. I made an appeal for a concession for the old folks, and others joined in. Hugh said he would consider whether anything could be done. After a week we raised the question again. He said his experts were examining the possibility of a concession but there were very great difficulties. I went home that night and drew up a very simple scheme and gave it to him the next morning. It was so simple the experts wouldn't look at it. Then, after a month of trying to make up a difficult one they accepted my simple scheme—but with a

difference. In the short document I gave to Hugh I had proposed two ounces a week for Old Age Pensioners, disabled soldiers and long-term hospital cases. Only the Old Ages Pensioners received the concession and instead of two ounces a week at 1s. per ounce they got one ounce at 2s. Parsimonious as ever when it comes to anything for the working class.

Sir Stafford Cripps, cold and aloof, stepped into Dalton's shoes to the resounding cheers of the Tories. (Never the suggestion of a strike on behalf of a victimised workmate; jump in and grab his job.) Under Dalton, all kinds of cuts had been imposed on capital expenditure to try and overcome the financial crisis. As I said at the time, Dalton had scourged us with whips, but Cripps scourged us with scorpions. And all the cuts were at the expense of the working class, never against the raking-in of profits. Cuts in housing, cuts in education and cuts in the health service. In Scotland they had plans to build 60,000 houses in 1948; this was cut to 24,000. In the 1944 Education Act the age of sixteen for school leaving was incorporated, but we were told it would take some time before this could be applied. The age was raised to fifteen, but no preparation could now be made for the school extension this change would involve, so we have had a continual, permanent crisis in education. As for health, the boast was made that we had the finest health service in the world. Let us see what Bevan, as Minister of Health, had to say:

"The third instrument to which the Health Services are to be articulated is the Health Centre, to which we attach very great importance indeed . . . the general practitioner cannot afford the apparatus for a proper diagnosis in his own surgery. This will be available at the Health Centre. . . ." And he finished up: "I should have thought it ought to have been a pride to honourable members in all parts of the House that Great Britain is able to embark on such an ambitious scheme. *When it is carried out it will place this country in the forefront of all countries of the world in medical services*" (my italics).

The general practitioners are still as they were. The Health Centres are as far away as ever. Any amount of money for armaments, on the shabby, quite untrue plea that there was danger of aggression from the Soviet Union, while Cripps starved the essential services dealing with the health, education and welfare of the people.

The House was on the Committee Stage of the Coal Bill when Cripps spoke at a meeting in the Albert Hall with the Archbishop of Canterbury as his side-kick. In the course of his speech, Cripps said:

"Don't think of material things, let us think of spiritual things." The following night, the Tories kept us going to the wee sma' 'oors—they were not opposed to the Labour Government taking over a bankrupt coal industry, but they wanted their class pals to get the kind of compensation that would have been due if it had been a going concern. They introduced all kinds of amendments to this end. At about 1.30 a.m. I referred them to what Sir Stafford had said the night before. "For God's sake," I appealed to the hard-faced crowd opposite, "think of spiritual things and then we can all go home."

Loud laughter. That's what his fellow-churchmen thought of this holy man and his appeals for austerity. But having mentioned the Coal Bill, it will be in order to have a look at that high-water-mark of my pal Manny's career.

The coal crisis and Shinwell. Visit to U.S.A.

LONG and bitter had been the struggles, the poverty, suffering and neglect of the mining communities. I do not seek to offer even a sketch of this story, except to say that in no other industry had there developed such a hatred of the employers as in the mining industry. The miners' first representatives in parliament had been Liberal-Labour men (Lib-Labs). But from the time Keir Hardie stood as a Labour candidate in 1888, independent of and in opposition to the Liberals, they saw their hope of better times in the nationalisation of the mines. As the years passed, this demand became more and more the official policy of their organisation; thus the way had long been prepared for the Labour Government of 1945 to put this forward as one of its first tasks.

Before the second world war Harold Macmillan had declared that nationalisation was the only remedy for the sick industry; just before the end of that war Churchill had set up a committee to examine it and report. The seven members of that committee were all representatives of the owners—not a miner among them. Yet they published a report that was a devastating criticism of the mineowners and proposed a form of national organisation and control that just stopped short of nationalisation. This was known as the Reid Report, after the committee's chairman, Charles Carlow Reid (later Sir Charles). He was the managing director of the Fife Coal Company, but during the war he had been appointed to the Scottish Control Board of the mining industry with Lord Traprain and James Barbour as his colleagues. The Scottish Control Board was responsible for coal production in Scotland, at least in theory; but in practice it was the coalowners. They controlled the pit managers and these controlled the miners. If trouble broke out between these sections there was nothing the Board could do about it.

I attacked this "dual control" in the House and at meetings throughout the coalfields of Scotland. Soon I was invited to Edinburgh to have a discussion on the subject with the three officials I have mentioned. With Carlow Reid there were no preliminaries. He sat down at the table, gave it a bang with his fist and said: "Come on, Gallacher, cards on the table. What's all this nonsense about dual control?" The other

two smiled as I settled down to state my case—briefly, for the managers to be subject to the Board instead of to the companies. I could feel that he had his mind shut to all my arguments; when I finished, he remarked: "A lot of damned nonsense!"

I replied that his remarks made me think of the elderly Earl (quoted in the book of General Ponsonby) who was reading from the Bible one evening at Balmoral, and finished up: "'I tell thee it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven'. A lot of damned nonsense. Let us pray!" Traprain and Barbour laughed, but not Carlow. That he was not paying attention to anything I said was clearly demonstrated when he snapped: "Well, if it's in the Bible it's true!"

But now we are watching Manny Shinwell as he pilots his Bill for taking over the mines through its various stages until it became an act of parliament. He had had no easy time in his first days in the movement; no want of enemies when he was in Glasgow organising the seamen, nor even when he was Chairman of the Glasgow Trades Council. But here in January 1946, as he presented his Bill to the House, he knew that he was realising the long-awaited desire of the miners and he made the most of the occasion. Through all the stages he showed a good understanding of the industry and of the need to make a complete change in the working conditions and living standards of the miners. I was with him all the way, except on one point: compensation. Instead of the recognised manner of compensation, I wanted him to introduce a new socialist method: to give the mineowners an annuity which would die as they died and thus prevent a burden being laid on the industry which would hinder the modernisation it needed. But he was not prepared to tackle his own side on that, let alone the Tories.

The day for the "take-over" was fixed for January 1, 1947. From that day two years were allowed for the splitting of the loot—and meanwhile the coalowners would get interim payments from the industry. They were still clinging on the backs of the miners. On July 22, 1948, I put down and asked the following question: "Whether, having regard to the economic condition of the industry and of the country he (the Minister) will now consider introducing legislation to reduce the amount payable to the former owners and also the interim income payable while the division of the total compensation is under discussion?"

Mr. Gaitskell: "No, Sir."

Mr. Gallacher: "I wish to ask the Minister very seriously, would it not be better that the ex-coalowners should go on the National Assistance Board rather than that the industry should be handicapped in its efforts to get fully reconstructed? Why should money be paid out to these people in this manner? Will he not discuss with the leader of the House legislation to put a stop to it?"

No reply.

Two points arise here. Two years were needed to dispose of £164 million, then at the end of 1948 came the "Continuation of Interim Payments Bill" which informed us that it was necessary to make provision for interim payments in 1949 "and subsequent years". The barristers representing the coalowners, the Coal Board and the government were still haggling over the carve-up. And who paid? Did the coalowners pay their own barristers? No, sir, we taxpayers did. If the coalowners had had to pay their own watchdogs, the business would have been wound up long before.

The second point is, why was Gaitskell answering questions on mining? Manny Shinwell's adroit handling of the case for the miners had impressed the miners and other workers too. Throughout the country he was looked on as an outstanding "Left" in the Labour government. None of the Ministers in that Labour government (or in subsequent ones) had the support he had won; Attlee knew it, Herbert Morrison and the rest of them knew it, and they didn't like it. The start of 1947 had seen the flag going up to signal the nationalisation of the mines; it was the high point of Shinwell's career. The end of 1947 saw his sorrowful collapse.

There was a big freeze-up that winter. Railway lines were clogged with snow and ice. Wagons of coal were loaded but could not get through. Shinwell got the blame; he was not to blame, for the coal was there but the transport was not moving. It was a matter for the Minister of Transport, nevertheless Shinwell was put "on the mat". I went to see him in his room at the House of Commons and found him pacing the floor. He told me that Attlee had said he must go and had offered him the War Office instead.

"For Christ's sake, Manny," I told him, "don't fall for that. You don't need me to tell you that you have the great body of the working class behind you; come out and fight and you can beat this. Take that job and you're finished!"

We talked for quite a long time. He gave me the impression that he was going to refuse the War Office. I left him brooding.

When I heard that he had taken it I could scarcely believe it. All of his colleagues knew that he had been victimised, but none of them offered to stand by him. Gaitskell, when he was offered the job, seized it with both hands.

Around this period, my own fate was taking on a sort of sour look. Over in Hungary a Cardinal and a Prince had got arrested and charged with espionage and black marketeering. The Cardinal was Mindzenty and the Prince was Esterhazy; no one bothered very much about the prince, but what a howl there was about the cardinal! Catholic apologists have explained that on occasion there have been bad Popes and Cardinals, though they have claimed that their evil deeds have never besmirched the Holy Mother Church or its dogmas. But despite all the lessons of history, it was somehow not possible for the great body of Catholics to accept the fact that such a man could be a common criminal.

There was a meeting at Bowhill in Fife, at which I spoke about the current problems facing the workers. At question time a group of Catholics got all hot and bothered about the Cardinal. After answering one or two questions, I said that it was not possible to deal with such a question at the end of a meeting but that I would be glad to come back the following Sunday and have a meeting on the subject of Mindzenty alone. This was accepted. I knew I was in very deep, for I had found that many good people who had hitherto been friendly to me now began to happen to have their backs turned when I passed. Their cheery "Hullo! Willie," got fainter. But there was no use trying to shirk the issue and I had no intention of making any concession to the lying propaganda that was being circulated.

Many years later, two chaps who had been present at the Bowhill meeting recalled how I had, in their words, "battered hell out of them". They said they had been at some fine meetings in Fife but the Mindzenty one was the greatest of all. I recall that, after I had spoken for more than an hour and had answered several questions I stood on the platform and asked: "Any more questions?" without getting a taker. I then put a challenge to the audience: "I am prepared to come back again, if you can get one of your religious or political leaders to meet me in public debate on this question of Hungary and the Cardinal, in a hall or at a street corner. I challenge you to try and I am certain you won't succeed!" I made that challenge on a number of occasions, but never could get any leading figure to come out into the open. Religion! what cant can be spoken in thy name? No wonder Burns wrote:

God knows I'm no' the thing I should be
Nor am I ev'n the thing I could be
But twenty times I rather would be
An atheist clean
Than under gospel colours hid be
Just for a screen.

I can, and do, quote Scripture against my enemies at times, as I did when I rose to defend the dockers on the occasion of a strike. The strike arose out of the refusal of the dockers to unload a couple of Canadian ships in London, the crews of which were on strike. A couple of Labour M.P.'s, one a well-known Catholic and the other a Co-operative member, went down to the dock area, talked with one or two members of the crew who had remained at work and prepared, as a result of these investigations, a sensational story of a Communist "conspiracy". This report was placed in the hands of MI5 and the press fairly blew it up. But when the Home Secretary was asked what action was going to be taken, he sorrowfully informed the House that there was *nothing in it that could justify legal action*. The amateur political police were flattened out. Nevertheless, the Prime Minister moved a resolution for the operation of the Emergency Powers Act. I opposed this, castigating to the best of my ability the Labour leaders who put it forward and the back-benchers who supported them.

"I am certain," I said in the course of that speech, "that four years ago not one of those triumphant members of the Labour benches who were going to wipe out the Tories ever dreamed that they would be associated with the Tories in such a business as this. *The Red Flag*—which they sang with such gusto—is buried deeper than the forty crypto-communists to whom Eden referred on that occasion. Any one of these members could paraphrase the poet: 'My head's unbloody, safe, unscarred and whole; to keep it that way I have sold my soul.'"

A bit further on, I continued: "What the Americans call a 'smear campaign' has now become the last ignoble resort of Labour and Tory leaders alike. The latest and most grotesque manifestation of this was the Attorney General's utterly incoherent, irresponsible and dangerously neurotic speech. Either he is ready for jumping out of the window or he is qualifying for the mantle of Hitler and Goebbels. I shall make one or two quotations to show how such a campaign can be worked up and the evil it can do."

I then started to quote scripture; after several interruptions I got to:

“‘Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres which indeed appear beautiful outward, but within are full of dead men’s bones and all uncleanness. Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?’ That,” I said, “expresses better than I could ever hope to do it, my opinion of those who would betray their country or their class for a handful of lousy, dirty dollars.”

In the local Press and elsewhere I had had many discussions on Communism, but I was surprised when someone suggested that I should write a Penguin. Quintin Hogg had written one on Toryism, and this was followed by one on the Labour Party by a lad named Parker, a Fabian I think. After some correspondence with the Penguin people it was agreed that I should get ahead with the job and they proposed to publish 60,000 copies. By the time it was in print they had received so many orders that they actually ran off 100,000 and in a comparatively short time they were sold out. (I’m told that the greater part of the Tory and Labour ones were still on their hands.) Some time later a letter with a cheque enclosed came to my home in Paisley addressed to “The Executors of the late Wm. Gallacher”. I wrote to the Director recalling a remark made by Mark Twain and asking him if he would make out another cheque to the corpse. He was apologetic: the death of William Gallacher the Scottish Co-operative Director had been announced and it had been concluded at his office that the reference was to me.

(Some years later my decease was announced in the *Sheffield Telegraph*. The *Sunday Express* had a laugh at that, and wondered where the *Sheffield Telegraph* had got the story; but the laugh went a bit sour when the editor of the latter paper said he had received it from the Syndication Department of the *Sunday Express*.)

When Jean and I were in the United States in 1946 (we succeeded in getting visas just before the Dollar Curtain fell) we met Quentin Reynolds, whom I had known in London during the war. He told me that he remembered coming to look for me in the House one evening and asking me to find A. P. Herbert for him. I made enquiries and learned that A.P. was down in the bar. I took Quentin down, entered, and said: “There’s your man!” After I had left, A.P. had exclaimed: “Quentin, you’ve performed a miracle, getting Willie to come in here.” That was his story and he stuck to it a long while later, when he took a libel action against the reputation-destroyer of the Hearst Press,

Westbrook Pegler. Pegler had made all sorts of accusations against Quentin in his column, one of them being that he had been closely associated with the Communists during his stay in London. In the witness-box, when challenged about this, Quentin had stated that he was friendly with me. "But," he added, "Willie Gallacher is quite different from our conception of a Communist over here. Willie Gallacher is a prohibitionist and the leader of the prohibitionist movement in England. Willie Gallacher was educated for the ministry." He said something, too, about the patriotism of Gallacher and Harry Pollitt. But as the case developed the tables were turned, for apart from the chatter about communists, Pegler's other accusations concerning the part Quentin Reynolds played in the war (Pegler said he was dodging) turned out to be the very things Pegler had been doing in the first world war. Quentin was awarded 175,000 dollars against Pegler and the Hearst Press. Quentin is a Catholic, but he found congenial companionship with Harry Pollitt and others of the left during his stay in London. In the witness box, perhaps because he didn't want to show too much partiality, he added in his evidence: "I was thinking of writing a book about Willie but he babbled so much I gave up the idea."

When I read this I wondered if it was true. I certainly do plenty of talking in public halls and at factory gates, but I've never had the complaint of babbling.

On that occasion in 1946 when Jean and I were over across the Atlantic I met Bill McKie again—the man whom I had met in 1936, along with other Ford workers, at Windsor, Ontario. At that time they had been struggling to get the union going. Now they took me along to visit the headquarters of the Ford Union, Local 600—it was about 50,000 strong, with full-time officers, who presented me with a gold union badge and a black tie, still in my possession, with the number 600 in gold-thread lettering at its broad end.

It was a very happy and interesting visit. Before leaving New York for home, I spoke at a Rally organised by the Communist Party in the Manhattan Circle, a very large hall. My farewell meeting, it was a tremendous affair. One of the speakers there was John Williamson, who a few years later was arrested and deported as an "alien" though he had lived in the United States from his boyhood. He now lives in London and is a valuable asset to our Party.

I returned to London in April 1947, a week before the Easter recess, when the renewal of National Service was coming up. Emrys Hughes,

well known as a fighting pacifist, Tom Scollan, a Scottish member who in parliament proved himself an exceptionally active supporter of the Left, and a number of others were going to vote against the renewal of conscription. Phil Piratin, who in 1945 had joined me in the House as the second Communist M.P., arranged to go into the lobby along with them. On that Tuesday morning, April 1, I was down at the Communist Party headquarters bright and early. After a chat with Harry Pollitt I left, went along New Row and into St. Martin's Lane, had a look into a bookshop window and then—stepped off the pavement in front of a motor car. It caught me on the side and knocked me over on my head. Blood ran down my face and it looked as though I was badly hurt. The driver of the car took me round to Charing Cross Hospital. I was sitting down, and a nurse was cutting hair away from my head, when a policeman appeared. I hurriedly told him that the fault was all mine, that I had stepped off the pavement without looking to see what was coming. He asked my name, and I told him Gallacher and said I had just come down from Scotland. I didn't want my identity known as it might have gone on the radio and given Jean a fright.

The copper told me I should be more careful in London as I would find the traffic very difficult. I promised I would take greater care and he went away satisfied. By this time the nurse had got a bandage on my head. I found it an ordeal to get up and walk away without showing signs of the blow I had got on my side and leg. Fortunately, I was not far from the Communist Party headquarters. I managed to get there, and Harry took me upstairs to a bathroom, ran hot water and got me into the bath. I was black from my ribs down.

I was driven back to Fitzroy Road, where Olive Arnot and Robin got a doctor for me, who gave me some penicillin. I stayed in bed for the rest of the week and then went home to Paisley. Jean got a bit of a shock when she saw me limping as I got out of the car that brought me from the station, but it was all right as soon as she found there was nothing seriously wrong.

I had the following ten days of the recess to rest in, and was able to return to Westminster without anyone, except Phil Piratin, knowing that I had been in an accident, though I had to explain to my colleagues why I had not been there to vote with them on the renewal of National Service.

Talking about my job at Westminster reminds me that when I was present at the Michael Colliery in Fife for the opening of the new pit-head baths, I met Lady Weymss. Mention was made of some sort of

function to take place the following Wednesday. "Will you be there, Mr. Gallacher?" she asked me.

"No," I replied, "I'll be at my work."

"Oh!" She seemed surprised. "Do you work?"

"Yes," I told her. "I'm your member of parliament."

"Oh, *that*!" she said. She didn't have a high opinion of the blokes at Westminster.

The Cold War. Some speeches in Parliament. Help for prisoners. More speeches, especially on colonial matters. The 1950 election. "I will continue as a working-class agitator."

By 1948 the Cold War was getting the full backing of the Labour Party. Bevin, in Paris, made a violent onslaught on the Soviet Union and got splashed across the front pages of the western Press. The first half of his speech was a long complaint about everything being hidden behind the "Iron Curtain" (a phrase first used by Goebbels to describe the east European countries freed from fascism by the Soviet armies.) We knew nothing of what was going on there, was his cry. Then the second part of his speech gave a full description of the Soviet forces in men and material.

It's amazing the contradictory stuff they think they can put across. The "democracies" publish everything, the Soviets publish nothing. Yet every reader of the yellow press had the most minute information about the Soviet forces, while try as we might in the House of Commons, when discussing Army estimates, we could get no information on the number of divisions in the British Army. But anything was good enough for anti-Soviet propaganda and its reverse side, crawling servility to the Big Dollar. On these two aspects of affairs that determined foreign and domestic policy there was unity between the two parties.

Listen to old Churchill: "All parties in the House are in complete agreement . . ."

Interruption from me: "Eh, eh! Correction!"

A snarl: "We don't want the Communists!"

No, and he knew damned well that he couldn't get them either. Over in Washington, Attlee and Morrison showed where they'd got to. Don Iddon of the *Daily Mail*, writing from the United States, had this to say: "Messrs. Attlee and Morrison, who usually trail at the foot of the Third Division in popularity contests here, are now being promoted. Socialist theories, of course, are still anathema in this citadel of capitalism, but even the Union League Club is conceding that Britain's cabinet ministers have finally got the right ideas about the Soviet."

I quoted this in a speech I made on foreign affairs, and followed it

with: "I would say in relation to that, shame, shame a thousand times, on those who have dragged the sacred name of socialism and the scarlet banner of socialism in the filthy mire of American capitalism." I went on to point out that the more they slandered the Soviet Union and bowed low before the Almighty Dollar the worse the economic crisis became. "Our generous friends" is how Morrison described the Yanks, who by shoving up prices while forcing us to pay in dollars for our imports from the United States, were determined to push us down into a third-rate nation, "a vassal" as Eden describes it in his book *Full Circle*.

And now, in 1948, they gave us an extra push by demanding that we devalue the £. This demand came as a shock to Tories and Labour alike. They could hear the dominant voices from across the Atlantic and they got the feeling that the time had come to make a stand and resist the pressure of "our generous friends". Cripps, who had taken over as Chancellor from Dalton, saw how the feeling was running in the House and in the month of August he made the categorical declaration, to cheers from both sides of the House: "This government has no intention of devaluing the pound." Cripps was the hero of the day. "Stafford'll stand up to them," could be heard from the relieved members.

Alas, fate was against Sir Stafford. His health, never good, forced him to seek rest and cure in Switzerland, and while he was away, devaluation became an accomplished fact. Cripps was disgusted. He was ready to resign, but they persuaded him that it would put the Labour Government in a very bad position if he did so, and after wavering for a couple of days he capitulated.

Off he went with Ernie Bevin to Washington. Nodding when they were told to nod, they agreed to a couple of propositions already worked out by the Americans. One, the amount of devaluation. Two, the right of U.S. capitalists to buy up industrial assets in Britain. The House of Commons was against it? The House of Commons doesn't count. The people? Don't make us laugh. What can the people know about important financial questions? We've got to hang on to America. If we broke with the U.S. we would be forced to turn for trade to the Soviet Union. Friendship and trade with the Soviet Union would mean, for us, an end to the Cold War. More and more workers from the two countries would get together, and the example of the Soviet workers, running their country without capitalists or landowners, would sooner or later inspire our workers to give those gentry the

heave. Too terrible to think about! No, we must cling to the skirts of the "citadel of capitalism".

The sovereign people are sovereign. That's a joke. There was another example of democracy around that time, when I was one of the few who protested. Herbert Morrison went on a visit to Northern Ireland, where he had a grand old time with the ultra-reactionary bosses there. On his return he introduced a Bill, the Ireland Bill, which took the right of veto out of the hands of the sovereign people of Britain to end the pernicious partition which severed the industrial head of Ireland from her agricultural body, and gave it to a group of Tory backwoodsmen in Northern Ireland. No change of the border without their consent.

And had he anything to say about the political prisoners or the police state? Not a word. Yes, there were, and still are, political prisoners in Northern Ireland. Tories and Labour Right-wingers, however, only seem to notice those who get put in gaol in socialist countries.

I gave attention too to the criminal prisoners in Britain, whose conditions have changed for the better through the years, though much still remains to be done if our prisons are to become corrective and rehabilitation centres instead of institutions that make hardened criminals harder. Because I spoke about this at various times I received many letters from prisoners, telling me their complaints or asking me to visit them. On one occasion I received twelve letters from men in Dartmoor. There had been a demonstration about the quality and service of the food, which had been featured in sections of the Press as a "mutiny". I never had any trouble about getting a permit from the Home Office when I wanted to visit any prison and Dartmoor was no exception; in fact, the official responsible told me they were pleased when I made a visit as my reports were always interesting. I had very interesting talks with the prisoners; one or two were old-timers, several were quite young. One very fine looking young chap, twenty-five years old, made a strong impression on me. I heard what he had to say and told him, as I told the others, that in my report to the Home Office I would put their case as strongly as possible. (I should mention that all these interviews were quite private, with no officials present.) I went on to say that I was going out and wished with all my heart that I could take him out with me.

"You know, lad," I said, "I would willingly change places with you if I could change ages with you, and I'd get through your five years with my head held high and the determination that once out,

I'd never be back again!" We shook hands and parted. I don't know if my advice had any effect on him, but I do know that my report helped them all.

Some time later I received several letters from men in Parkhurst on the Isle of Wight—a lovely island to harbour such an abomination as that prison. Here is part of one of them: "Dear Mr. Gallacher, I'm just another convict who resents the attempt to be subdued by brute force, starvation or any other of the inhuman attributes of the present prison officials or prison system. I know of you through other people, through the Press and through *Hansard*. I am very pleased to say that many of my principles coincide with yours. Your recent speeches in the House on the Army Estimates, etc. have remained unanswered by those you oppose and, unfortunately, by those who should be the first to support you. I am by trade a cat-burglar, good at my trade..."

I had a talk with several of these prisoners too. They all had the same complaints: inadequate and badly-cooked food, and harsh discipline; they claimed that in some cases the warders were deliberately provocative. The cat-burglar was a treat; bright and chirpy, strong-looking and wiry, he would certainly be tough to break. I put it to him that he should treat attempts at provocation with contempt, and that he should think of his health and his early release. Why does a warder provoke you? I asked. Isn't it obvious that he wants to get you into trouble? If you allow yourself to be provoked, you're doing what he wants. Pay no attention to what he says or does, and you'll get the better of him every time. But they were all "fascist bastards" he said, and he hated the sight of them.

"That may be how you feel," I urged, "but you're not hurting them, you're hurting yourself."

"I can see that," he eventually admitted. "I'll try and keep clear of trouble, but it won't be easy."

So I had to leave, hoping, as he and the others hoped, that my visit would ease things up a bit.

But now it is time to return to "The Wanderers"—Cripps and Bevin. The swindle of which they were the victims had to be ratified by the House of Commons. That august Chamber, which so short a time before, had demonstrated—with loud cheers for Cripps—its opposition to devaluation of the £, now gathered in full force to discuss a motion and its amendment: "That this House approves the

action taken by His Majesty's Government in relation to the exchange value of the pound sterling", followed by some twaddle about "equilibrium in the sterling-dollar balance of trade". The Tory amendment read: "That this House welcomes the measures agreed on in Washington", and went on to regret that we had such a rotten government. Fancy a three-day debate on such a motion and such an amendment!

A Labour member exclaimed, in the course of it, "I don't know what all the fuss is about!"

"The fuss," I said, "is about nothing. But if they didn't make a fuss about nothing the workers would get wise and they would have to make a fuss about *something*."

This pertinent remark didn't get any cheers from the Labour or Tory benches. Phil Piratin and I had put down an amendment: "That this House condemns the action taken by His Majesty's Government in devaluing the pound sterling", and then given the outline of a new foreign and domestic policy. Try as we might, we could not get the Speaker to call that amendment. On the second day of the debate, Churchill battered the government with: "We're going down and we're going down," deeper and faster than any other country in western Europe. Next morning Aneurin Bevan battered Churchill. Churchill had made assertions, he (Bevan) would give him "facts". He rattled off his "facts" with the rapidity of a machine-gun, and what did he prove? He proved that all the other countries in Europe that, like Britain, were receiving Marshall Aid, were going down deeper and faster than Britain. I succeeded in getting into the debate:

"We are told," I said, "that devaluation in itself is not a solution. I should say not. The Chancellor said that if we all pull together and no one takes advantage of his neighbour things will work out all right. I have an idea that we've heard that on many an occasion before. On the morning after the Chancellor's broadcast speech we had what the Prime Minister, in a model of understatement, referred to as 'unpleasant scenes in Throgmorton Street'. The street was blocked in a panic for profit. Had Throgmorton Street been blocked by railwaymen in a demonstration for a living wage, an army of police would have been turned out against them. £150 million was made, or looted, in one day. . . .

"It is interesting to compare the gentle tone of the Prime Minister in dealing with the gamblers in Throgmorton Street with the vicious hatred expressed towards the Communist Party and the workers. At

the weekend he warned all and sundry that Communist mischief-makers would press for an increase of wages.

"... If representing the interest of the workers is mischief-making, then I plead guilty. I have been a mischief-maker for forty-five years and in the course of those forty-five years I have had many associates, some of them sitting in more or less comfort on the Government front bench. They have now become recognised by the big shots of America as useful cogs in the capitalist machine here in western Europe. I can only say that their impudence in attacking the Communists for what they themselves claim to believe is equalled only by the hypocrisy of their attitude towards the workers."

I finished up as follows: "This country will never be economically free and independent until we say to America: 'We will trade with you and buy your goods, but just to the extent that you take ours.' We can only say this if we have an alternative source of supply, and the alternative source is at hand. We can get supplies without dollars from the Soviet Union, the countries of Eastern Europe and from liberated China, as well as from the Dominions. Friendship and trade with the Soviet Union and the other countries marching towards socialism is the way to our salvation."

I have given here some rather long excerpts from my speech, which *made some impression on several Labour members, who told me afterwards that they agreed with everything I had said, though not one of them had dared say so openly.* The threat of expulsion had all of them thoroughly intimidated. And that was the real danger. Pritt, Platts Mills, Leslie Solley, Lester Hutchinson and Zilliacus had all been expelled from the Labour Party for speaking and voting according to their consciences. When Leslie Solley was up before the inquisitors he was told that he had accused the Tories of being "warmongers".

"What's wrong with that?" he asked.

"It's Communist language," he was told.

I made speeches, I made interruptions, I put down questions, all directed towards the aim of breaking the invisible web of lies that were told about the Soviet Union, accompanied by the most unedifying servility towards the United States. This came out with special force when we had another "great" debate on which both sides started with agreement.

The House was crowded for the opening of the debate on the Atom Bomb.

"What is it the Russians want?" queried Jack Lawson, who was later "elevated" to the Peerage.

I told him to go to the East End of London, where the bombing had been at its worst, and ask the people there what they wanted. They would tell him, peace and no more bombing. And that, I said, is what the Russians want. They had had enough in the second world war to last them for all time.

There was, as usual, a lot of silly chatter about the "undemocratic" system of one-party government in the Soviet Union. I told them that the logic of history was one-party government. Objections from Labour Party members. I asked, did they believe that sooner or later they would achieve socialism? Yes. All right, what would happen? No capitalists. You maintain, and rightly, that the Tories represent and are financed by the capitalists. No capitalist finance, no Tory party. When Morrison, the Leader of the House, was faced with this dilemma, he proposed political partition. He did not want a 100 per cent victory. "The ideal," he said, "is two-thirds Labour and one-third Tory."

"Joshua," I said, "ordered the sun to stand still. The Leader of the House wants to qualify for a plinth next to Joshua, he wants historical development to stand still and it won't oblige him."

America had the atom bomb, there was no doubt about that, and Tory and Labour members had become good Americans. Thus Churchill could get up in the House of Commons and give utterance to the typical gangster threat: "While *we* have the monopoly of the atom bomb we should have a show-down with Russia." *We*, he says, having sold our country to the Americans. Bevin, meanwhile, was chattering away about "international inspection" which he said was being blocked by the Russians. He was referring to the Baruch Plan, a plan that would allow inspection in the United States and the Soviet Union. That would have suited the Americans fine: they knew they themselves had the bomb, what they were anxious to know was how far the Russians had got towards producing it.

"While we have the monopoly" said Churchill, but did we have the monopoly? They knew that the scientists in the Soviet Union were working hard at it; had they actually produced it? This was what prompted the Baruch Plan, and the Soviet Union was not foolish enough to fall for it. Not that the Soviet Union was opposed to inspection. At the Paris meeting of the United Nations, Vyshinsky proposed international control and inspection simultaneously with the decision to destroy all atomic weapons. The Americans opposed this.

The Labour members were ignorant of this: they gobbled up all the distortions in the Press. So we got such a situation in the House of Commons.

I was speaking: "Here I will deal with a reference to the atom bomb by the Leader of the Opposition. He spoke of the need for increasing our defence expenditure. This is madness. The only sure defence against the atom bomb is the destruction of atomic weapons with international control." (Mr. Bevan indicated assent.) "I notice that the Minister of Health agrees with that proposition!" (Again Mr. Bevan indicated assent.)

Mr. John Lewis (Bolton): "Does not the Hon. Member mean 'inspection'?"

Mr. Gallacher: "Yes. That is very important. I am going to send a cable to Lake Success tomorrow morning showing that the Government Front Bench supports the proposal of Mr. Vyshinsky for the destruction of atomic weapons with international control and inspection" (Interruption: "The Foreign Secretary is not supporting that".)

What a situation! Aneurin Bevan and other Front Bench leaders were indicating their support, and the Foreign Secretary did not lodge an objection until I pointed out that it was a Soviet proposal and thus a proposal that the Americans were opposed to. What hope was there in such people?

On colonial questions, the cant and servility of the Labour Front Bench were almost beyond credence. When the poverty-stricken ex-service men of the Gold Coast, demonstrating for jobs, were fired on by police and military, Rees Williams—a Welshman who had seen, and protested against, the batoning of Welsh miners in earlier years—accepted without question the report that came from those responsible for the shooting. The following questions were asked:

- Mr. Reid: "May I ask my hon. friend if there were any political implications in all this?"

Mr. Rees Williams: "Yes. There certainly were political implications, but I have not yet had a full report of them from the colony."

Mr. Gallacher: "Would the Minister consider sending a deputation of responsible trade union officials from this country to investigate this shameful affair on the Gold Coast? Is he aware that there was shooting on one occasion in South Wales and every member of the Labour Party protested against it and the same answer was given by the official responsible, that it was the miners who were responsible.

And so I ask him, will he send a deputation of responsible trade union officials to make an investigation?"

Mr. Rees Williams: "We will not send such a deputation. A full investigation will be carried out, and then the facts will come to light and I guarantee when they come to light the Hon. Member for West Fife will not like them."

Earl Winterton: "Are we to understand that when a full investigation has been made into the political causes, the Minister will place a statement in the Library so that we may know whether or not it is due to the Communist dupes of the Third International, including the Communist Party in this country?"

Mr. Rees Williams: "There was almost certainly communist influence in this case, I will place a full statement in the Library when it arrives."

At this point Mr. Speaker arose. That was the finish to questions on that subject. But consider the reply of a Labour member of Parliament to an aristocratic Tory!

Here is the account I received from a friend in Nigeria of another shooting.

"You no doubt have heard of the incidents at Enugu. A few weeks before the 12th (November 12, 1949, W.G.) the miners had demanded better conditions of service and more pay. On the 14th, after their demands were turned down, they decided on a sit-down strike. The wives, acting in sympathy, went to the authorities to let them see the poor type of food they had to buy. On the 16th police reinforcements were brought from Lagos by air and marched to the pit, where not one of them obeyed the order to shoot. On the 17th others were brought from Northern Nigeria. . . . The first shot was fired by the Superintendent in charge. Eighteen people were killed immediately and over forty wounded, some of whom have since died . . ."

And here is how Rees Williams reported to the House of Commons:

"A go-slow movement recently began at the colliery and on November 16, a 'stay-in' strike developed and one act of sabotage was reported. Two days later the mine authorities decided, in the interest of public safety, to bring away the explosives from the mine. While a detachment of police were evacuating explosives from the Iva Valley Mine they were surrounded by a large number of miners armed with crowbars, picks, machetes and spears, who rushed the police and attempted to disarm them and obtain possession of the explosive store.

"The officer in charge of the police endeavoured to reason with the miners without success. Despite repeated warnings, the situation became so dangerous that the police were compelled to fire in self-defence. I regret to say that the casualties are eighteen persons killed and thirty-one injured, and I am sure the House will share this feeling."

Was this Rees Williams unable to put two and two together? Miners armed with all kinds of weapons, except firearms, "rushed the police". But they must have stopped the rush if the officer in charge "endeavoured to reason with them" and it must have been an exceptionally slow rush if they were "repeatedly warned". Mr. Warbey asked: "How many police were killed or wounded?"

Mr. Rees Williams: "None."

And yet he could read out the statement without a word of apology.

"Why don't you leave the Communist Party and come in with the rest of us? You'll have a seat for life." If I had listened to Bevin, Attlee, Dalton and the others and deserted my comrades and betrayed my principles, I wonder how long I could have stuck with such craven creatures. I have always had a strong stomach, but not strong enough to swallow the stuff these fellows poured out from the government bench. The nearest I actually came to vomiting was when, annoyed at some other members' belittling of Parliament, Jenny Lee gave us this: "I would appeal to all Hon. Members to remember that one of our great exports is the knowledge in the rest of the world that Great Britain has always given of her *best blood* to the House of Commons from both sides. Really, this is not the moment for Hon. Members of this House to denigrate their own status. . . . If they do come to this House, they should come in the knowledge and belief that they are here to give of their very best, and very often to lose fortunes instead of making them. That goes for all parts of the House." I was sitting near her, and muttering "For Christ's sake!" I got up and left the Chamber. I don't know what sort of blood Rees Williams had, but his spirit was that of a timid valet. He told us that the government was going to institute an enquiry into the murders in Nigeria.

Mr. Gallacher: "To ask the Secretary of State for the Colonies for the composition of the Commission appointed by Sir John McPherson to inquire into the shooting of the strikers at the Iva Valley Mine, Nigeria; and how many miners' representatives are on the Commission?"

Mr. Rees Williams: "The composition of the commission is not yet

decided, but the governor will appoint it at the earliest possible date in consultation with my right hon. friend, the Secretary of State."

Mr. Gallacher: "In view of this shocking affair of the shooting down of forty miners, will the Under-Secretary insist that a British working miner and a Nigerian miner be taken on to the commission? Will he consider that?"

Mr. Rees Williams: "I cannot add anything to the answer I have given. The whole matter is now being considered."

Mr. Gallacher: "But is it not of the greatest importance in a situation of this kind, where there has been such a shocking business, that the utmost confidence should rest in the commission; and would it not create such confidence if a British working miner and a Nigerian miner sat on the commission? Why should they not be on it?"

The Minister sat silent. Phil Piratin shouted: "Answer!" But the Under-Secretary, like his superior, Creech Jones, was a humble servant of the Establishment and was content to leave it all to the colonial governor.

But even with a hand-picked commission the truth could not be covered up. The Commission slammed this on them: "*We feel bound to state that the report made by the police to the Chief Commissioner and later published, that the police were attacked by a lot of armed miners, was not substantiated by the evidence.*"

The Communist Party Congress, which met a few days later, passed and published a resolution of which I will give only a couple of sentences: "Congress expresses the horror and indignation felt by British workers at the brutal murder of coal miners striking for a living wage in Enugu, Nigeria. Such acts of terrorism are a denial of all the principles for which the British labour movement was established. . . . Congress further affirms that the future peace and prosperity of both Britain and Nigeria demand that the Nigerian people should control their own economy through their own independent democratically-elected government."

As old Galileo remarked: "Nevertheless, it does move." Eleven years after the dastardly crime at Enugu, and after much hardship, suffering and sacrifice, the political independence of Nigeria was declared in October, 1950.

I had a couple of lads from Glasgow visiting me at the Commons one evening. I put them in the Gallery. After a couple of hours I took them down for a cup of tea. Said one of them, with a commiserating look:

"Christ, Wullie! It's a wonder you don't go crazy in there."

In a stage whisper I answered him: "Don't tell anyone! I *am* going crazy."

The General Election of 1950 probably saved my sanity. It was, however, a heavy blow to the Communist Party and to the Left in Parliament. Not only did Phil Piratin and I go down, but the expelled members of the Labour Party—D. N. Pritt, John Platts Mills, Lester Hutchinson and Leslie Solley—all shared the same fate.

A large number of those members who had sung *The Red Flag* at the opening of the 1945 parliament, and who subsequently participated in dragging that flag in the mud, also went down in this, the first stage of the Tory come-back.

In Phil Piratin's case, he would still have been returned for Stepney had it not been for the redistribution of seats: part of his vote was cut away and attached to another area. In West Fife I had against me: the Cardinal Mindzenty affair and the never-ceasing slanders associated with the Cold War—one of the lousiest being that the Labour Government was unable to increase Old Age Pensions because of the aggressive intentions of the Soviet Union and the consequent need to spend so much on armaments. But the strongest factor in my defeat was, I believe, the feeling in the mining areas that they, the miners, owed a debt of gratitude to the Labour Government for having nationalised the mines. All the past bitter struggles were forgotten. The miners were getting a better deal than they had ever known before, and all the credit went to the Labour leaders; those who had been with the miners in their battles against the coalowners and in their campaign for nationalisation were now forgotten.

It was clear to me during the campaign that we had lost out. I tried to warn my helpers, who did a great job of work, that they must not be surprised if things did not turn out as they expected. But I must admit that even I did not expect to be so far down as the count proved me to be. When the Sheriff had declared the result and the other candidates had expressed their thanks. I also took the opportunity of thanking those who had worked and voted for me, ending up with the words:

"I was a working-class agitator before I entered parliament, I was a working-class agitator in parliament, and I will still continue as a working-class agitator!"

And that was that.

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