

Executive refused this permission, but promised to intercede with the President of the Board of Trade, who was also President of the Railway Executive, established by the Government when the railways were controlled. The dismissed man was induced by the Union Executive to make both a verbal and written apology and expression of contrition, and a pledge that "nothing of the kind" should occur again. After thus abjectly denying his convictions, the man was still refused reinstatement. When J. H. Thomas disclosed these incidents, the Government representative told him that if the man would join the Army and purge his offence by honourable service, his employers might consider taking him back to work for them at the close of the War. It was admitted that the fellow had been a good and efficient servant.

Just then we called a conference of East London Labour organisations to discuss the industrial and political position of women. Delegates came of such varied type as W. C. Anderson, the old pioneer Herbert Burrows, and the young disciple of the Webbs, G. D. H. Cole, then active in the National Guilds movement. Members of the Shop Stewards' and Workers' Committee movement came also, attacking Cole as the exponent of a half-way-house proposal, who had stolen the ideology of De Leon and his S.L.P., and had attempted to wed it to the Fabian State Socialism of the Webbs.

The Trade Union Congress met that year in Birmingham. War opinion still dominated. An invitation was read from old Samuel Gompers, of the American Federation of Labour, to co-operate in holding an International Trade Union Congress at the same time and place as that of the plenipotentiaries who would be arranging the terms of peace. This very innocuous invitation was suspected of a pacifist innuendo and rejected amid a flood of jingo oratory. America was condemned, for, outwardly at least, she stood for peace still, and Gompers and the A.F. of L. with her. They were to show us an example of jingoism we had never reached when Wilson presently carried them into the world conflict, willy-nilly.

CHAPTER XLIX

SIDNEY WEBB—THE SERVILE STATE—A FINER BRITAIN?

WHEN Parliament had risen for the autumn recess, the Home Office announced that in compliance with an instrument termed the Convention of Allied States, Russian subjects resident in this country would be conscribed, and given the choice of service in the British or Russian Armies.¹ There was no conscience clause for them, though in the main they were political refugees, and the majority of them Jews, amongst whom objection to war had for long been general, as Herbert Samuel, the Jew-in-Office, who was enforcing this provision, well knew. Already before the issue of the new regulations, he had begun the practice of deporting friendly aliens who were unwilling to enlist in the British Army.

Meanwhile terrible news was coming from Russia of anti-Jewish pogroms incited by police circulars. Tchenkeli had complained in the Duma that half a million Jews had been expelled from their homes by the military authorities, and driven from place to place, men, women, and children, the sick and the aged, trudging along the roads, or carried in the arms of their relatives. The Committee of Delegates of the Russian Socialist groups in London, and Abraham Bezael of the Russian Jews Protection Society, were active in their protests. Many poor people came to me from Whitechapel and Bethnal Green asking for aid in their trouble.

In September I was in smoky Sheffield to speak at a meeting there. I stayed with Mrs. M—, our branch secretary, a Yorkshire woman married to a Rumanian. She had emigrated to America with a former husband, and been left a widow there, with a baby, in a rough up-country station, among "foreigners," immigrants mainly from Central Europe. M—, who came forward to support her, had been welcomed as a necessity. Her little son of the first marriage was now a man, fending for himself. Another little fellow of three or four years was dependent on her now. It was she who maintained the large house by taking in boarders. M— had fallen from his position of protector, to a feeble old man, cut off from the hustling Yorkshire folk about them by his deficient English, and the prevailing contempt for foreigners, which in war turned to a smouldering suspicion, ready, without cause, to flame forth in violent hatred. The police harassed him continually, undecided

¹ A similar conscription of Italian and French subjects here took place later. The French Government decided not to interfere with the "friendly aliens" resident in France.