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Studies in British Bolshevism



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Alan Sargeant
Garden of the Dead
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Lenin's Host in London: Philip Whitwell Wilson MP

By Alan Sargeant

Lenin arrived in London, via Berlin, at the back-end of April 1905 for the 3rd Congress of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party. Little is known about the congress, shrouded as it was in the utmost secrecy. The first revolution in Russia had got underway in January of 1905 and the two-week summit in London between April 22nd and May 10th would just about coincide with a violent, month-long mutiny breaking out on the Imperial Russian battleship, Potemkin (June 1905). The general feeling at the congress was that conditions were now at fever-pitch. In her 1930 memoirs, Lenin's wife Nadezhda Krupskaya described how the third congress 'bore quite a different physiognomy' to those held previously. Definition had been brought to the revolutionary organisations in Russia and these were taking the form of 'illegal committees working under drastically difficult conditions of secrecy' (Memories Of Lenin, 1930). Krupskaya also recalls that plans to arm the Petrograd workers were based around a massive haul of weapons to be purchased and smuggled into Russia from England on the London steamship, SS John Grafton, and to be crewed by East End and Whitechapel sailors. And although the plans proved fruitless (the ship was mysteriously wrecked just off the Finnish coast carrying 5,000 rifles and 3,000,000 rounds of ammunition), the confidence of trusted parties was more aggressively sought than before. A raid on the party's Central Committee had just taken place at the home of Leonid Andreyev in Moscow, and those members who were still at liberty to travel were instructed to reconvene in London. The identity of the venues was cloaked in secrecy for a reason.

But that doesn't mean to say there aren't some clues.

The address that Lenin used during his stay in London for the 3rd Congress was 16 Percy Circus in the Clerkenwell district. The property was located minutes around the corner from Holford Square where Lenin had stayed during his first visit in 1902. Today you'll find it sporting a respectable blue heritage plaque, just across the road from the Travelodge Royal Scot. The area at the time of Lenin's visit was set out on a south-facing embankment in a classical layout; a handsome arrangement of Squares and gardens offset by various rectangles. The roads here were wide and generous, quite different from others in the city. The houses were tall and impressive and the air was good.

When Vladimir Lenin lodged here in 1905, the property was the family home of parliamentary journalist and Liberal MP, Philip Whitwell Wilson. Wilson was to run successfully for St Pancras South in 1906 as a Radical and Liberal candidate and had the same knightly earnestness (if not the looks and the charm) as the young Victor Grayson. Wilson had been unanimously adopted as candidate in January 1905 and came from a well known family in Kendal in the Lake District. Interestingly, the former editor of Granta was one of four staff writers at the Daily News standing as candidates in London that year.

In May 1905, just one year before being elected MP for St Pancras South, Philip Whitwell Wilson let Lenin use his home at 16 Percy Circus

Why historians have neglected to mention the part played by Philip Whitwell Wilson in Lenin's early revolutionary activities remains a mystery. That a soon-to-be-serving Member of Parliament played host to a suspected terrorist at the height of an ongoing revolution just has to be worthy of mention, but to

date, it's escaped the attention of most. And this is a shame, as Wilson's generous input might yet offer a clue to a mystery that has long since baffled academics: which venues did Lenin and the Revolutionaries use for the 3rd Congress? And the reason why it might offer a clue is fairly straightforward: Philip Whitwell Wilson was a senior council member of Whitefield's Central Mission — something of a dynamo among the close-knit circle of churches in Central London offering refuge to the Russian exiles.

The mission, Nonconformist/Congregationalist in outlook and practice, had been set-up on Tottenham Court Road by Liberal MP and Minister, Charles Silvester Horne, after a donation of £8,000 from Mrs Elizabeth Rylands, wife of Manchester textile millionaire and philanthropist, Sir John Rylands in 1903. The mission, also known as Tottenham Court Road Chapel served under the auspices of the London Society Missions. The missions' chief representative in Russia had been Stepney Minister, Edward Stallybrass, whose missions in Irkutsk and Selenginsk served to 'correct' the ungodly ways of the Mongol-descended Buryats.

2561 Hemmin, Henry James	13 Percy circus	dwelling house	13 Percy circus
2562 Young, Robert	14 Percy circus	dwelling house	14 Percy circus
2563 McCann, Michael	15 Percy circus	dwelling house	15 Percy circus
2564 Wilson, Philip Whitwell	16 Percy circus	dwelling house	16 Percy circus
2565 Kemp, Jonathan	20 Percy circus	dwelling house	20 Percy circus
2566 Selby, Walter Thomas	22 Percy circus	dwelling house	22 Percy circus
2567 Harris, John	25 Percy circus	dwelling house	25 Percy circus
2568 Worsley, James	26 Percy circus	dwelling house	26 Percy circus
2569 Roker, Alfred	27 Percy circus	dwelling house	27 Percy circus

Electoral Register 1905-06 (England & Wales, Electoral Registers 1832-1932,
Archive reference: SPR.Mic.P.316/BL.F.1/4)

In Herbert T. Fitch's *Traitors Within* (1933), the former Special Branch detective describes a passionate flurry of smaller meetings taking place at

three public houses in the Islington area. A steady roll call of biographers, academics and unscrupulous pub managers have put forward a handful of likely candidates over the years: The Crown and Woolpack on Clerkenwell Green, Walter Brett's The Duke of Sussex at 106 Islington High Street; William J. Reed's The Cock Tavern, 27 Great Portland Street and The White Lion, 25 Islington High Street. Wetherspoons. But as it was various East End Missions that had provided venues for the 2nd and 5th RSDLP Congress, it seems plausible that Wilson and Horne's chapel on Tottenham Court Road could also have been among the handful venues used in addition to the Islington pubs in April and May that year. And if it wasn't the Whitefield Central Mission, then we could well be looking at other Wilson-related venues like the Liberal and Radical Club at Grafton Lodge on Prince of Wales Road, or Cleveland Hall in Fitzroy Square. Cleveland Hall fits the bill just nicely as it's where Kropotkin had attended a meeting of international revolutionists in February 1887. By 1905 the hall had been taken over by Carmarthen's Hugh Price Hughes of West London Methodist Mission, so the Police may have been looking elsewhere.

WHY WAS LENIN BOARDING WITH WILSON AT PERCY CIRCUS?

Compared with the 2nd and 5th Congresses, the 3rd Congress came together in a fairly improvised but no less blistering fashion. The series of meetings had been initiated by Father Georgy Gapon, the Russian Orthodox priest who'd led January's Bloody Sunday demonstration in St Petersburg. The massacre that ensued set in motion a remarkable chain of events that would later be aggregated and repackaged as Russia's '1905 Revolution'. Some six weeks later in March, Father Gapon escaped to London and in April, the 33 year-old leader of the Russian Worker's Club organized a series of emergency meetings that would bring together all the principal Russian revolutionary groups. The

meetings had been galvanised in part by the arrest of Leonid Andreyev, Evgeny Chirikov, Ivan Bunin, Stepan Skitalets and other members of the Sreda literary circle in the last week of February that year. The circle, which included several members of the RSDLP's Central Committee — including Gorky — was questioned over the assassination of Grand Duke Sergei Alexandrovich outside the Kremlin Palace, just days before (Manchester Guardian, 25 Feb 1905, p.9). The assassin was Ivan Kalyayev, aspiring poet and fringe member of the group. As a response the plans for the Congress were switched from Russia to London, whose Police, in contrast to those in France and Germany, had no formal relationship with Russia's 'secret' police, the Okhrana.

During this period Gapon's mood is known to have changed from one of peaceful action to 'change by any means necessary'. Gapon's meeting with Lenin in Geneva in the week immediately prior to the Bloody Sunday demonstration (January 22nd) was the clearest indication yet that 'the moment of open struggle for Russia's masses' was fast approaching (Memories of Lenin, Nadezhda Krupskaya, 1933, p.89)

The eighteen organisations invited to Comrade Gapon's conference included The Socialist-Revolutionary Party, the Vpered R.S.D.L.P, the Iskra R.S.D.L.P, the Polish Socialist Party, the Lettish Social-Democratic Labour Party and the Bund (see: Lenin's "A Militant Agreement for the Uprising and V. I. Lenin The Third Congress of the R.S.D.L.P). Gapon met Lenin on the 3rd day of the Congress (April 14th) which saw the so-called 'Council of Reform' draw up a series of uncompromising demands: the immediate release of all political and religious prisoners, the creation of a republic with freedom of speech and free press, an autonomous government for Finland and the ultimate establishment of a democratic federation for the Caucasus (London Daily News 02 May 1905).

For the duration of the congress, Anarcho-Socialist Rudolf Rocker provided Gapon with full run of his home in Mile End, Stepney Green. The address was 33 Dunstan House. Just two months later Dunstan House would also provide refuge to the fugitive leader of the Potemkin Mutiny, Afanasi Matushenko.* There were additional claims in the Manchester Courier and Dundee Courier on May 1st that Gapon had also stayed in Harrow and Ravenscourt Park — a favoured meeting place for William Morris, Dora Montefiore (who lived at nearby Upper Mall), Sergey Stepniak (Society of Friends of Russian Freedom) and the early Socialists. Wilson's colleague at the Daily News, David Soskice also claims to have sheltered Gapon at his home at 90 Brook Green, Hammersmith — a home that Soskice shared with his mother-in-law, Catherine Hueffer, wife and model of Pre-Raphaelite artist, Ford Madox Brown and mother of Parade's End novelist, Ford Madox Ford.

A LITTLE HELP FROM HENRY NOEL BRAILSFORD

The man widely regarded as Gapon's 'campaign manager' in London was Henry Noel Brailsford and like Lenin's host, Philip Whitwell Wilson, Brailsford was a senior journalist at the Daily News. Wilson and Brailsford also served on Parliament's Balkan Committee, formed in 1903 as a result of escalating tensions (and complete ignorance) over Macedonia. The Committee was chaired by Scottish firebrand, James Bryce MP, who, like Grayson, had honed his oratory at Owens College, Manchester. Man Who Was Thursday novelist, G.K Chesterton also sat on the committee. Two years later Brailsford would seek funding for Lenin and attendees of the 5th Congress of the RSDLP. The generous donor on that occasion was American Soap Magnate, Joseph Fels, whose market-leading Fels-Naptha Soap was based around a hydrocarbon mix of Russian Crude Oil and Coal Tar (The Golden Echo, Chatto & Windus, 1953, David Garnett). The compound also formed the basis of many early explosive devices. Just 12-months prior to the Congress, Joseph

Fels had been sued by the Mercantile Marine Company when their steamer, the SS Haverford, exploded on entering the docks at Liverpool carrying 90,000 pounds of Fels-Naphtha Soap. A total of fourteen men were killed (Liverpool Daily Post, 14 July 1906, p10). Interestingly, Lenin's 5th Congress associate, Rosa Luxemburg identified Russian naphtha as the "most important and vital economic resources of the revolution" (see: Spartacus, No.11, 1918 & The Industrial Development of Poland, 1898, Rosa Luxemburg). Luxemburg was one of the many delegates that accepted the £1700 loan from Fels (about £150,000 in today's money). Josef Stalin, the young bandit who pretty much held the Naphtha refineries to ransom during his time in Baku as strike leader and extortionist, was another (Stalin's protection racket played a key role in launching and resolving the strikes at Caucasus Naphtha Company and the Baku Naphtha Company in February that same year, briefly driving up the price of Naphtha).

That the Daily News provided an exhaustive review of Gapon's 'Story of My Life', suggests there were strong lines of communication between the paper, its editor Alfred George Gardiner, and revolutionary poster-boy, Father Gapon (see: Daily News, 27 Nov 1905). Gapon's book, purported to have been written by Gapon but most likely to have been ghost-written by the DN's Brailsford, G.H Perris or David Soskice, was published in November 1905 by Chapman and Hall. Again, it's an interesting link as it was Chapman and Hall who'd been the first to publish Charles Dickens, the founding editor of the Daily News (the company had also just published Bennett Burleigh's Empire of the East: Japan and Russia at War 1904-1905). The fact that the newspaper's Theodore Rothstein, served as Soviet Ambassador in the 1920s may also indicate deeper level of collusion as Lenin is known to have made frequent visits to Rothstein's home in Clapton Square that same year. The house was owned by Rothstein's father-in-law, Isaak Kahan, a Russian-born

shipping and banking broker whose student daughter Zelda would become a founding member of both the British Socialist Party and the CPGB.

Lenin lodging with Rothstein's colleague, Philip Whitwell Wilson at 16 Percy Circus might well be viewed in this context.

Sadly the relationship between Gapon and The Daily News didn't end as positively as it had begun.

Just as he was securing funds for Gapon's return to Russia, Brailsford was charged by Police with passport fraud. The Metropolitan Police had found Brailsford and Manchester-based actor, Arthur Muir McCulloch (formerly of 29 Percy Street) having fraudulently obtained three English passports for use by Russian exiles, including one for Maximilian Schweitzer who had died in an explosion at the Hotel Bristol in St Petersburg in February that year (see: Boston Daily Globe 22 May 1905, p.18). The plot dated back to Bloody Sunday itself when Boris Markov, a member of the Socialist Revolutionary Party's Battle Operation was arrested in St Petersburg. It's believed Markov was in town to coordinate an attack on several targets including Grand Duke Vladimir Aleksandrovich and Governor-General Trepov. The plot was uncovered when the bomb-maker, Schveitser blew himself up prematurely at the Hotel Bristol. The Police claimed that the dead man possessed a passport in the name of McCulloch and the pair were subsequently arrested. Brailsford's involvement was a serious blow to the Balkan Committee and the Liberals' ongoing relief efforts in Macedonia. Brailsford admitted full responsibility for his actions, confessing that he had been asked by 'someone he knew connected with the Russian Revolutionary Movement' to obtain passports on his behalf. The man, a leading member of Russia's Constitutional Movement and currently living in exile on the continent, had assured

Brailsford that the passports were to be used as part of a peaceful demonstration. Brailsford and the Foreign Office refused repeatedly to name the man (Manchester Courier 07 June 1905). The passport had been signed by Lord Lansdowne, the man who had also just signed the landmark Anglo-Japanese Alliance Trade Agreement at his home in 1903.

Did Lansdowne and the Foreign Office play a clandestine role in Lenin and Gapon's 1905 bid to supply rifles and ammunition to the Revolutionaries in Russia? It's certainly possible. At the time the plot was hatched, Russia was not only at war with Britain's new trading partner Japan, it was also ramping-up plans to set-up naval bases in the Persian Gulf. On learning of these plans, Lansdowne made vociferous objections in Parliament, declaring 'without hesitation that his Majesty's Government would regard the establishment of a naval base or any other fortified port in the Persian Gulf ... a very grave menace to British interests' (Manchester Evening News 06 May 1903). The Dogger Bank Incident the previous October, when the Russian Imperial Navy had fired on a British fishing trawler, killing three British workers, had breathed fresh life into those concerns, and it's curious to note that that Schweitzer's fraudulent passport had been issued to McCulloch and signed by Lansdowne at the Foreign Office that same month (October 28th, 1904).

The fact that the SS John Grafton had been purchased for the purpose by Japanese army officer and intelligence agent Akashi Motojiro, makes the whole thing quite plausible. And as far as diplomacy with Japan was concerned, the move would certainly have been a positive one.

Father Gapon survived until March 28th 1906 (O.S) when he is alleged to have been murdered at a villa in Oserki, just outside St. Petersburg, by Socialist Revolutionary and alleged spy, Pinchas Rutenberg — believed to have been in hiding in London's West End (Daily Express, 13 August 1906). Gapon's death coincided with the mysterious suicide of Helene de Krebel, aka

Marie Derval, at the Liffen's Hotel in Pimlico and just a short walk from the Russian Embassy at Chesham Place. By a strange coincidence, the hotel and its owner, insurance agent George Liffen, featured in another mysterious 'closed room' suicide in 1911 when 46-year-old Jahanna Smerecka was discovered with gunshot wounds to her head in her guest room. Baptismal and marriage certificates, written in Russian, were found in her possession. The woman had married in Chernivtsi in the Austro-Hungarian Empire (present day Ukraine) and her death came shortly after the arrest of Fraulein Trombooke who had been spying for Russia's Imperial Forces in Austria, most likely under the supervision of Alfred Redl.

Like Krebel, Smerecka had spent the previous weeks in America, and also like Krebel Police found a handful of mysterious keys wrapped in brown paper in a 'secret pocket' of her coat (Leeds Mercury 16 October 1911, p.3). The following year George Liffen, now proud owner of the 'comfortable and convenient' Alexandra Hotel in Hyde Park Corner, was unfortunate enough to suffer another foreign casualty in his charge, when newly arrived Italian, Gino Masini was found gassed in his room (Nottingham Journal 21 August 1912, p.5). At the Westminster inquest no parallel was drawn with the previous suicides on his premises, but the danger of 'loose taps' was raised. Liffen was able to reassure the jury that the 'faulty gas taps' had 'been seen to already' and no further questions were asked. *

In his 1933 memoirs Special Branch detective Herbert Fitch describes Krebel as the mistress of Georgian anarchist, Warlaam Tcherkesoff (Varlam Cherkezishvili), a close friend of Sergey Stepniak and an associate of Prince Kropotkin and Rudolf Rocker. The middle-aged woman was found dead in her room on March 14th 1906. It is alleged she had been hounded to her death by revolutionaries who'd suspected her of spying and had been pursuing her actively across America and Europe for some two years or more. A sentence

of death was hanging over her. The waiter at the hotel claimed that on the morning of the 14th Krebel had received a letter ‘which upset her terribly’ and had locked herself in her room. She had ‘wept, shrieked aloud and walked the room as one demented’.

Three weeks later, revolutionary poster-boy, Georgy Gapon was also dead.

But the twists didn’t end there.

Just a month before his death, Georgy’s brother, Sergey Gapon, a captain in the Russian army at Port Arthur in China, was arrested for being drunk and disorderly by Police in Eastbourne. The date was March 3rd 1906 (London Daily News, March 1906 p.12). After a short hearing it was decided that Sergey would be expelled under the Aliens Act and was removed to Lewes Prison to await deportation. Shortly after his release from Lewes Prison, Sergey Gapon was also dead. His body had been pulled from the sea at Hastings on the very day that Helene de Krebel had checked into the Liffen’s Hotel in Pimlico (Derby Daily Telegraph 13 March 1906, p.3)

ONE OTHER CURIOSITY

In the final week of April 1909, Lenin’s Clerkenwell and Iskra associate, Harry Quelch gave a talk at the Gaiety Theatre in Fife entitled, ‘War and the Social Revolution’. John Maclean, who became Bolshevik Consul in Glasgow in the post-revolution period, joined Quelch as speaker, as did George Gunn and Baile Cormie. Quelch warned of the dangers of war and the impact that war would have on the progress of the Social Revolution that was already underway in British Society. In Quelch’s estimation, war was the one safeguard of the capitalist system, and that the great burden and risk of war fell primarily on the working classes. War and its possibilities would hold back the Socialist Movement and hinder Social Revolution. Whilst capitalists could be

heard deprecating war they were ‘all the time producing things that made war inevitable.’ (St Andrews Citizen, May 1st 1909)

In October 1915 Lenin’s 16 Percy Circus host, Philip Whitwell Wilson had used exactly the same incendiary phrase in an article published by *The Fortnightly Review* entitled — yes, you guessed it — *War and the Social Revolution*. And although he may not have arrived at the same bleak conclusion, the basic premise was just the same. In an extraordinary twist Wilson also divulged that much of what he was about to write was based on a ‘private conversation’ he had had with the recently deceased Lord Rothschild (April 1915). Wilson had been accused of abusing his parliamentary privilege in the past so this kind of candour wouldn’t be totally out of character, and it certainly might explain the polarity of views being offered in the finished article.

Was Wilson’s recycling of Quelch’s phrase a coincidence? I suspect not. Just as it probably wasn’t a coincidence that the phrase, and the broad complex payload it carried, was recalibrated and re-served some twenty-five years later by Joseph Goebbels and the Nazi Party as part of their ongoing propaganda programme: *Der Krieg Als Soziale Revolution* (War as Social Revolution).

** That Lenin had met with Gapon ahead of the Bloody Sunday demonstrations, and in view of the way that a dedicated support network was able to spring into action almost immediately after the massacre, one really has to question the spontaneity of the Potemkin and Sunday events. What was the exact nature of the relationship between Lenin, Gapon and Matushenko prior to 1905, and to what extent were the Worker’s and Naval uprisings genuinely grassroots phenomena? By the time the Potemkin mutiny took place, Matushenko, a non-commissioned officer and former oilman, was already an active member of the ‘minority’ (Bolshevik) section of the Social Democratic and Labour Party, although his exact activities are still a matter of debate among historians (see: *The Revolt of the Potemkin, 1908* Konstantin Feldman). Some have Matushenko beginning his revolutionary life as a docker during the violent demonstration of March 16th 1903 in Rostov-on-Don – a student*

and worker march led by Samuel Gurvich, Chairman of the Rostov-on-Don Soviet Worker's Deputies, but carried out under the auspices of Lenin associates Sergei Ivanovich Gusev (Yakov Drabkin) and Alexander Samoilovich Lokerman who visited Lenin in Secheron, Geneva in 1903 as part of the 2nd Congress (Memories of Lenin, Nadezhda Krupskaya, 1933, p.66). Incidentally, Lenin's library contains a copy of a book that Gapon presented to Lenin on the 3rd day of the congress in 1905. The book is signed, 'To the most honoured comrade, Lenin by way of good memory by the author, April 14th 1905" (April 24th on the London calendar).

** Can't help but notice that George Liffen gave his son the name Theophile, which is French-Swiss in origin and an unusual step for a man who appears to have been born in Great Yarmouth. George Theophile Tideswell Liffen served as Second Lieutenant in the Prince's Own Regiment during the war that followed. The most famous Theophile during the period in which his son was born was Theophile Gautier.*

PHILIP WHITWELL WILSON: A QUICK SUMMARY

Born in Kendal in the county of Westmorland in 1876 to Isaac Whitwell Wilson, wealthy woollen manufacturer (b. 1833) His grandfather John Jowitt Wilson had served as Justice of the Peace.

Maths graduate of Cambridge and former president of the Cambridge Union Society.

April 1899, marries Alice Selina Collins at Central Falls Congregational Church in Rhode Island, near Boston. She is the daughter of Henry Collins.

Makes an incendiary address to the Liberal & Radical Association on the abuse of Chinese Labour (Slavery) in mines in South Africa (p.7 Shoreditch Observer 28 October 1905)

As a Radical and Liberal MP for St Pancras South from 1906-1910 he enjoyed the support and confidence of many Labour organisations.

Introduces the first *Unemployed Workmen's Compensation Bill* into Parliament.

Related to Industrialist and Liberal MP Isaac Wilson (director of the Stockton and Darlington Railway)

Journalist for the left-wing *Daily News* (1907-1917) founded by Charles Dickens and owned at this time by George Cadbury. Its editor was Alfred George Gardiner. Serves on the paper from 1910 as Parliamentary Columnist.

Stands as Liberal candidate for Appleby in Westmorland in December 1910.

Council member for Whitefield's Central Mission, Tottenham Court Road.

1912 sees the publication of Wilson's *The Beginnings of Modern Ireland*. Published by Maunsell & Company, owned by Belfast publisher, actor and Celtic Revivalist/Gaelic League supporter George Roberts.

In April 1915 he publishes, 'The Unmaking of Europe', an uncompromising take on the first five months of the war and the motivations for the war.

October 1915, *War and the Social Revolution* is published.

In 1918 he becomes American correspondent for the *Daily News* before moving to the New York Times.

1920 sees the American publication of Wilson's *The Irish Case Before the Court of Public Opinion*. Published by Boston Unitarian, D.L Moody's Fleming H. Revell Company.

In 1927 he publishes the *Greville Memoirs* (based on the politically scandalous diaries of Charles Cavendish Fulke Greville)

Dies in New York in 1956.

War and Social Revolution (Philip Whitwell Wilson, The Fortnightly Review, October 1915)

Although clearly owing a great deal of debt to Harry Quelch's 1909 lecture of the same name, Wilson takes adopts a curiously Victor Grayson-esque take on the war's impact on the ongoing Social Revolution. In fact, it's difficult at times to know whether he is backing the war simply on the basis that it will eventually destroy the very capitalist system it props up, or whether he is experiencing the same fears as Quelch about the burden it will heap on the working class. So on balance, it's fairly balanced. It's an 'everybody's a winner, everybody's a loser' kind of thing.

Here is the basic gist:

Forecasts the social and industrial problems that are bound to arise as soon as war finishes. Addresses the war's ongoing effect on transport and the coal trade. Says the scale of upheaval are "all the more formidable because its causes are obscure and its range incalculable."

Wilson suggests that some of these "obscure causes" were defective education ('chronic evils, still un-remedied') and volatile conditions in South Wales coal mines which bred fault on both sides (meddling trade unions etc).

Repeats Lenin's belief that real change comes with the desire not to just revolt but the will to organise and govern.

Addresses the ‘mysterious disaffection’ experienced by working men and women despite the very real progress made in provision. Says that although progress has been made existing legislation was ‘inadequate’. Describes it as ‘ambulance work’ providing solutions and relief to only the most desperate cases. These changes ‘scarcely modified the status quo’. The ‘rewards when converted into coin, left little change at the end of the week.’

Wilson leaves some criticism for the hyperbole of the press, aggravating the situation by sensationalizing the greed and waste of a disconnected London ‘regime’.

Interestingly he talks of a very private conversation with Lord Nathaniel Rothschild. He says Rothschild was of the opinion that the war would give the working man bargaining power (through scarcity of labour as a result of enlistment). This would lead to an increase in wages.

Wilson talks of enlistment into the armed forces as a ‘leveller’. It gives rise to closer contact between the class extremes, and to the blurring of boundaries (and taken to its logical conclusion, the complete erosion of British class structures over time).

Wilson posits that it will be impossible to ‘renew the old fabrics of industry’ after the war. Men will not want to go back to their old ways. They will demand a voice (Grayson said much the same thing in his lectures in New Zealand prior to enlisting, repeating Lenin’s belief that it could train and prepare men for the revolution that would follow the war). As Wilson says, “To turn swords back into ploughshares will be a formidable task, but far more delicate will be the handling of immense bodies of men whose minds have been unsettled by the collapse of the old regime and by their one hour of glorious life.”

The article is a well-balanced, cautionary tale warning of an ‘artificial boom and bust’ for the working man and the unemployment and desperation that might well follow.

Unusually Wilson looks to the economic rebuilding opportunities the war will bring: “the reconstruction of devastated areas must be as boldly financed as the war itself” Indemnities “will take years to clear off … loans must be made in the form of houses and goods for Belgium, Poland, Serbia, and the French Provinces.” Warning or celebration? It’s really very difficult to tell.

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Lenin @ 6 Oakley Square — 1911

<https://pixelsurgery.wordpress.com/2015/11/11/lenins-london-oakley-square/>

Lenin @ 21 Tavistock Place — 1908

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