

***'We are all
afraid of him'***



***Leon Trotsky's application for
political asylum in Britain (1929-30)***

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Anyone wishing to quote from the text is free to do so. An acknowledgement is not necessary but would be appreciated.

Image on title page: 27 November 1932, Trotsky speaking in Copenhagen at the invitation of Social Democratic students. His last public speech in front of a live audience. The words of the title were uttered by Ramsay MacDonald, Labour Prime Minister at a cabinet meeting in 1929.

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Introduction

Various politicians have told us – *ad nauseum* – over the years that Britain has a proud record of granting political asylum to those escaping persecution abroad. It is, supposedly, part of our ‘democratic tradition’ and political culture. What this pamphlet aims to do is to examine the truth of this assertion focussing primarily on the Russian revolutionary leader Leon Trotsky’s rejected application for asylum in Britain in 1929-30. This analysis will be supplemented by a brief consideration of the case of German radical Rudi Dutschke in the late sixties/early seventies and, of necessity, a brief discussion of more recent developments. It will be argued that the ‘democratic right of asylum’ doesn’t exist, it has never existed (in any meaningful sense) and the trumpeting of this supposed ‘democratic tradition’ is a sham. Successive British governments, Conservative *and* Labour, have increasingly pursued policies detrimental to those seeking shelter in Britain and have ignored most international procedure and standards recommended by organisations such as the United Nations and the European Union.

In doing so they have frequently acted with indifference and a blatant disregard for even the most basic, elementary human rights of the individuals concerned. A brief glance at Appendix 3, which lists some of the immigration legislation passed by governments over the years, clearly demonstrates this. Almost all the legislation passed is restrictive or limiting in some way, where it is not its concessions to any sense of liberal, let alone more radical, values are severely rationed and parsimonious in the extreme. Political asylum cannot be viewed in isolation; whether you are seeking political asylum or simply a refugee from the ravages of war, famine or other deprivations, there is absolutely no guarantee that the UK will offer you a place of comfort and safety, permanent or temporary. In fact the opposite is more than likely. The bodies pulled out of container lorries, the dead floating in the cold waters of the English Channel, those sleeping rough on our streets, those unfortunates held in detention centres deprived of all their rights and eventually returned to the countries from where they came, putting them at enormous physical risk, are a grim testimony to the callous indifference of government policy. A secondary issue to the question of asylum is that although this is a small chapter in Trotsky’s life and is no doubt marginal when compared to other much more momentous events there is much to be learned here, not least Trotsky’s critique of the ILP, its centrism and his numerous polemics with, mainly, British Labour MPs, on issues as diverse as asylum, religion, reform or revolution, Fabianism and parliamentarianism. The contrast between the Turkish and Mexican governments (which both provided Trotsky with refuge) and that of the British and other European governments is

revealing. His joust with Churchill is also worth making acquaintance with. Although the main focus of this pamphlet is on the events of 90 years ago and, at first glance, might look like a museum piece, a historical curio, it isn't: the issues raised are still very much alive today.

Before proceeding any further, some attempt at explaining various terms is essential.

Refugee, migrant, illegal migrant, asylum seeker, political asylum and exile are used so often and casually that it can be difficult to sort them out. For many years there was no agreed terminology and exile and/or refugee often seem to be the words that were most used. With the development of world-wide organisations in the twentieth century, such as the League of Nations and then the United Nations there have been attempts to create a global response to people fleeing their own countries to find refuge elsewhere. This has involved attempts to define certain terms and their usage. The situation after WW2 when millions of people were on the move made it essential to have some kind of agreement around the world about how people should be defined, and much more importantly, how they should be treated. The sad truth however is that these attempts have hardly been uniformly successful.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) defines refugees as, 'People who have fled violence, conflict or persecution and have crossed an international border to find safety in another country.' The European Union (EU) definition of an asylum seeker (as contained in the European Commission's Migration and Home Affairs website) is, 'A third country national or stateless person who has made an application for protection under the Geneva Refugee Convention and Protocol in respect of which a final decision has not been taken'. While these definitions are clear and concise they are not particularly helpful in terms of what happens 'on the ground'. Neither the UNHCR nor EU guidelines have any real authority; there are plenty of examples of countries which are members of the EU and/or the UN which have blatantly disregarded the directives and recommendations of both organisations.

In reality, most of these definitions become lost in blurred, sometimes distorted and hysterical media coverage and political comment. Ultimately, the terminology is determined by the concrete political situation and the decisions of national governments. In the UK, currently, it seems highly likely that the term in most common usage is 'illegal migrant', mainly because the government has so restricted or blocked *legal* access that almost all migrants are now illegal simply by virtue of trying to reach the UK. Anyone crossing the Channel in a dingy or boat is *automatically* an illegal migrant. Clearly, a different approach, one that is open,

speedy, devoid of bureaucratic impediments and fully democratic, is needed. This will be briefly discussed in the conclusion.

A very brief history of asylum

The idea of asylum goes back to Ancient Greece and derives from the Greek word for sanctuary (*ásulan*). For centuries the fundamental basis of the right of asylum was religious. It was possible for someone who was being pursued by the authorities to seek sanctuary in a religious building, a church or a cathedral for example and in some European cities there were even areas designated as sanctuaries. Sometimes it was difficult to separate the religious element of sanctuary from the political. The shelter given to Huguenot refugees in Britain in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was often seen as a response, primarily, to their espousal of Protestantism, although the religious rhetoric hid the political stance adopted by the Huguenots. To what extent the Huguenots were allowed to live in Britain because of religious persecution, their political beliefs or because of their craft skills – they were highly valued weavers and textile workers – is hard to separate out. It was around this time that the word ‘refugee’ was first used. At this point there was little consideration of sanctuary or asylum as a purely political phenomenon. If you fled, say Spain, to escape from the wrath of the Royal Court then you basically took your chances and if you could find another royal household (or someone with a nice handy castle) somewhere else in Europe opposed to your persecutor then you were, usually, alright. After his crushing defeat at Culloden in 1746, Charles Stuart (‘Bonnie Prince Charlie’) was one beneficiary of this practice finding refuge, in the court of the Louis XV of France, where he eventually became a major embarrassment and was kicked out.

Gradually the religious basis of sanctuary began to erode and the religious-medieval notion and practice of asylum was abolished in Britain by James I in 1623. In the next century, France became the first country to establish a constitutional right of asylum in 1793 (Article 120), provision being made to shelter those who had fought for ‘liberty’ in other countries but there seems some doubt that it was ever put into practice at the time. Today, it is a part of the French Constitution, (see the Preamble to the Constitution of 1958) but rarely used and although Italy and Germany have similar constitutional provision, again it is rarely used as EU legislation has rendered much of it redundant. During the French Revolution Britain introduced restrictions for aliens but these were removed after the Napoleonic wars. In general British practice seems to have been guided by whether the monarch of the day (or others of the ‘great and good’) found favour with you and granted you shelter, the reasons for

which varied considerably. Voltaire, to take one example, found refuge in Britain in 1726 probably because it suited the government of the day to thumb their noses up at the French, the perennial enemy. Unsurprisingly, these considerations were complicated by the interminable power struggles in Europe between various competing royal dynasties and power blocs. The whole of Europe was in a more-or-less permanent political flux. As one manifestation of this it wasn't until the early seventeenth century that European maps began to show borders for the first time. Maps drawn by the great Dutch geographer Mattheus Quadt in 1608 showed state borders with coloured washes or dotted lines as if to demonstrate their uncertainty, shifting or temporary nature. The acceptance of finite boundaries, although some were not as 'finite' as others, was a complex political process that took hundreds of years and was hardly a smooth, untroubled development. All of which contributed to an atmosphere of uncertainty; a political refugee or asylum seeker, offered refuge one day, might be turfed out when the political wind changed and blew in an unfavourable direction. This made certain groups, particularly Jews, extremely vulnerable to changes in both the domestic and international political climate. However, the issue of political asylum really came into its own during and after the revolutions and upheavals of 1848-9 in Europe.

In the mid-nineteenth century, mainland Europe was aflame with revolution: in the German states, the Italian states, Hungary, Denmark, Wallachia Moldavia, Poland and France. These revolutions were essentially bourgeois-democratic in nature, advocating republicanism, the 'Rights of Man', suffrage, land reform etc. against monarchies and in some cases (e.g. Hungary and Poland) also fighting for national independence. With the defeat of this revolutionary wave many participants fled, seeking refuge in other countries such as Switzerland, Turkey, Britain and the USA. The suppression of the Hungarian and Polish independence movements was particularly brutal.



France 1848: 'Barricade on the rue Soufflot' painting by Horace Venet

The experience of the leader of the 1848-9 Hungarian independence movement, Lajos Kossuth, was not untypical. Forced to flee after the defeat of the Hungarian insurgents at the battle of Segesvár (31 July 1849) – in which he played no part – where the Austrians were joined by Russia, he eventually found refuge in Britain. He became a much celebrated and feted figure wherever he went, although Marx was sometimes critical of his actions. Despite his popularity, the British government of the time would not support his call for an independent Hungary.



Kossuth being greeted at Southampton, a contemporary illustration

To demonstrate that Kossuth's welcome ran deep among ordinary people in Britain, compare and contrast his reception with that of an Austrian visitor in 1850. General Julius Jacob von Haynau, while visiting London in 1850, was recognised by brewery workers in Southwark.

They attacked him with horsewhips and chased him through the streets shouting ‘Down with the Austrian butcher!’ Haynau had acquired a fearsome reputation for brutality during the Austrian suppression of the Hungarian insurrection, where he executed many Hungarian insurgents and regularly flogged women who were suspected of helping the rebels. His exploits earned him the nickname ‘the Austrian Butcher’ and the hatred of many people throughout Europe. It was only the intervention of the police that saved Haynau from severe injury or probably worse. A plaque in Park Street, Southwark commemorates this wonderful example of internationalism and working class justice. Haynau did not limit his actions to Hungary, he was equally brutal to Italian nationalists. On visiting Britain in 1864 Garibaldi, a very popular figure amongst the British working class, stopped off at the Brewery to thank the workers for their action.



The ‘Austrian butcher’ at the receiving end of some well-deserved internationalist, working class justice

Giuseppe Mazzini, the Italian nationalist; Louis Blanc the French radical; the Russian Alexander Herzen and of course the best known exile of all, Karl Marx, all benefited from this British ‘openness’ and many of them, like those later political exiles, Lenin and Trotsky reaped the benefits of study in the British Museum Library. By 1852 there were *at least* 7,000 political exiles of various descriptions living in Britain, most of them in London, frequently crowding into Soho. Charles Dickens writing in ‘Household Words’ (1853) notes this proliferation of foreigners – ‘swarthy Italians’ and Hungarians with ‘glossy beards’; much

later it was the milieu into which Joseph Conrad immersed his anarchist characters in his novel 'The Secret Agent' (1906).

Although it was relatively easy to get into Britain, there wasn't a 'welcome mat' for the exiles and life could be tough and riddled with poverty. The Marx family and many others frequently resorted to the pawnbroker, while Alexander Herzen wrote graphically of the exiles as '...a wretched population wearing hats such as no-one wears and hair where none should be, a miserable, poverty stricken, harassed population.' From officialdom, there was a degree of toleration of these foreigners with their, supposedly, strange, alien ideas (not to mention their hirsute propensities) but there was also the practical advantage (and ultimately the most important reason) for this largesse: the government of the day and the police believed that it was preferable to 'keep an eye' on these potentially troublesome individuals at home rather than simply barring them entry into Britain and allowing them to 'run amok' somewhere else, a policy sometimes casually referred to as 'keeping the key to the cage.' Hence, for example, the well-known visit to the Marx household by the police and their eavesdropping of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party (RSDLP) conference in London in 1903 (which produced the famous Bolshevik/Menshevik split).



The most famous exile of them all: Karl Marx (on the right) with daughters, (L to R.) Laura, Eleanor and Jenny. Behind them Friedrich Engels.

The situation, however, is far more complicated than it at first appears. Political asylum has never existed in a vacuum. The hospitality shown to Kossuth and others was often part and parcel of the power politics of the time, which ultimately did not work in Kossuth's favour.

British foreign policy, with regard to mainland Europe, was to maintain some kind of 'balance of power', primarily through naval strength and only putting 'boots on the ground' when it was felt to be absolutely necessary. This was just as well as a number of British land campaigns were disastrous, primarily the intervention in Crimea (1853-56) and the humiliating set-backs in the Boer War (1899-1902). The 'balance of power' policy frequently took the form of supporting those forces opposed to Imperial Russia and the Habsburg dynasty in Austria while keeping an eye on the French to ensure that they did not again become a threat. Hence, when Kossuth first fled Hungary and initially found refuge in the Ottoman Empire, the Ottomans were supported by Britain in their refusal to hand him over to either the Austrian or the Russian authorities. Up until the outbreak of the First World War it was increasingly Imperial Russia that was seen as a threat and Germany was seen as, at least, a potential ally.

Another exile, Gustave Flourens, implicated in a plot to assassinate Napoleon III, fled to London in early 1870 where he became a close friend of the Marx household. The French called for his extradition but the government of Gladstone, perhaps wary of some kind of Napoleonic revival, ignored this, although Napoleon III could hardly be compared to his uncle. Anglo-French relations at this time were on the mend. Despite tensions the two countries co-operated in the Crimea and jointly built the Suez Canal (1859-69) but neither government really trusted the other which probably accounts for British government reluctance to deport Flourens. He returned to France where he became a deputy to the Commune and was killed in the fighting in March 1871, aged only 33. As for Bonaparte's hapless nephew he was later, ironically, given asylum in Britain spending the rest of his life in Kent, which is, at least, an improvement on St. Helena.

The German exiles, who were the largest group in London, were a rather different consideration. Germany as a state did not then exist (it came into being in 1871) and consisted of a number of principalities the most powerful of which was Prussia. The British tended to be wary of Prussia, mainly because of its military prowess, even though they had fought as allies against Napoleon. The marriage of Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha to Queen Victoria and the popularity of the German composer Frederick Handel helped, to some extent, to legitimise the German presence in Britain. Even so, the Prussian Ambassador Ritter von Bunsen was constantly putting pressure on the government of the day to maintain a watch on the activities of emigre organisations like the German Workers' Educational Association – associated with both Marx and Engels – warning of their communism and atheism. It is easy therefore to see how political refugees or asylum seekers (though this term

appears not to have been in use at the time) were tolerated and in a number of cases became synonymous with the idea of the 'persecuted hero'. That is, as long as the individual was being persecuted by a rival of Britain, as testified by the warm welcome, official and unofficial, afforded the African-American activist Frederick Douglass. The British government found it convenient to support black emancipation in the USA when that country was emerging as a rival to Britain and its empire. The Americans for their part were angered by British protectionist policies in their empire which deprived the growing US industries of some potentially lucrative markets and were keen to highlight British misdeeds in the colonies of which there were no shortage of examples. Both the US and Britain governments engaged in the utmost hypocrisy in this respect. This seems simple enough but on examination it gets complicated and muddled. Not for the first time the Irish were excluded from these considerations: if you were an Irish nationalist you could be treated like a 'persecuted hero' in the USA, for example, but in Britain you were more likely to be thrown in prison and, like the Irish nationalist Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa in the 1850s, subjected to the most appalling treatment.

As the preceding account demonstrates the issue of asylum was by no means clear cut and depended not so much on some vague notion of the 'historical tradition of asylum' but on the power play of international politics. To add to this 'mix' it should also be borne in mind that the whole notion of political asylum whether in Britain or elsewhere was a grey area. At the time 'refugee' was not defined in British law and there was no legislation regarding political asylum, a situation that continued for many years. All that was required of the new arrival at Southampton or Dover was to fill in a registration form. The British government introduced passports in 1857 but other countries were slow in doing so and it wasn't until the First World War that passports became universal. It seems amazing, in these days of passports, visas, computerisation, scanning, luggage X-rays, retinal identification, etc., that before 1914 it was possible to travel almost anywhere without visas or passports. In his autobiography, 'The World Of Yesterday', the Austrian writer Stefan Zweig, famously wrote that,

Everyone could go where he wanted and stay there as long as he liked. No permits or visas were necessary, and I am always enchanted by the amazement of young people when I tell them that before 1914 I travelled to India and America without a passport. Indeed I had never set eyes on a passport.'

For those arriving in London from continental Europe there were few documents to complete and usually the main concern of the newly arrived political exile was making contact with fellow thinkers in one of the many clubs and societies that sprang up, finding somewhere

affordable to live and procuring some kind of income. The autobiographies of exiles rarely mention any problem with entry at Dover or elsewhere. The paperwork was minimal and much of the information we have about the number of political refugees living in London and their circumstances comes from other documentary sources such as their diaries, letters, census returns and so on.

This began to change with the bombing of the Greenwich Observatory in 1845 (an event which features in Conrad's novel previously mentioned) and the Sydney Street siege in 1911 where police (accompanied by the Home Secretary Winston Churchill) notoriously engaged in a shootout with two anarchists. The 1845 event in particular sparked off a national scare about supposed anarchist subversion and violence. In fact the numbers of anarchists in Britain was small and, unsurprisingly, reliable figures cannot be found. It was also the case that anarchism was seen as a distinctly un-British phenomenon and all anarchists were, therefore depicted as shifty, undesirable foreigners. Successive British governments started to take a more assertive and oppressive line against refugees. In response to what was perceived as the massive immigration of, mainly, Jews fleeing pogroms and political oppression in Eastern Europe and Russia, the government introduced the 1905 Aliens Act. The views expressed in newspapers and Parliament about this supposed 'invasion' were frequently alarmist, inaccurate in the extreme, thoroughly anti-Semitic and racist – a trend which was to be repeated again and again, with variations, as the twentieth century progressed. The comments of British MP Evan Gordon (who is mentioned later, see poster below) in the House of Commons, 29 Jan. 1902, were unfortunately not that unusual,

Not a day passes but English families are ruthlessly turned out to make room for ... Romanians, Russians and Poles. Rents are raised 50 or 100 per cent... It is only a matter of time before the population becomes entirely foreign... The working classes know that the new buildings are erected not for them but for strangers from abroad; they see schools crowded with foreign children, and the very posters and advertisements on the wall in a foreign language.

It must also be mentioned that organisations such as the Trades Union Congress (TUC), at the time, took a disgustingly chauvinistic line particularly with Jewish migrants.



Anti-immigration cartoon of the period. 'I no longer give shelter to fugitives...' Britannia is holding a copy of the 1905 Aliens Act. The wild-looking 'Jewish-Anarchist' with his flowing beard, black clothes and boots was a common stereotype.

**A GREAT
PUBLIC DEMONSTRATION**

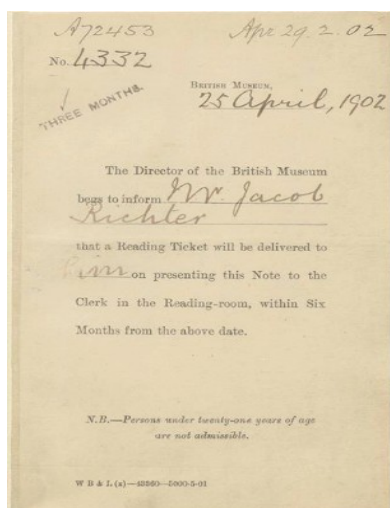
Under the auspices of
THE BRITISH BROTHERS' LEAGUE,
in favour of restricting the further immigration of
DESTITUTE FOREIGNERS
into this Country, will be held at
THE PEOPLE'S PALACE,
MILE END, E., on
TUESDAY, JAN. 14TH, 1902.

The Chair will be taken at Eight p.m. sharp, by
MAJOR EVANS-GORDON, M.P.,
who will be supported by Members of Parliament,
County and Borough Councillors, Members of
Boards of Guardians of all shades of politics, and
Ministers of Religion of all Denominations.

Public meeting 'in favour of restricting further immigration of destitute foreigners' in 1902. The British Brothers League was organised in 1901 by William Stanley Shaw. It developed anti-Semitic tendencies as it grew. In 1914 Arthur Conan Dyle donated ten shillings to the BBL.

However, despite the increasing ill-feeling towards migrants, it was still a time when political exiles were able to enter Britain relatively unhindered. In 1905, the very year of the introduction of the Aliens Act, Lenin was living in London, immersing himself in the treasures of the British Museum Library, registered as Jacob Richter or sometimes Oulianoff.

This was his second period in London and he was to return in 1907, 1908 and 1911 for varying lengths of time.



British Museum Library ticket for 'Mr. Jacob Richter' (Lenin)

He was visited in 1902 by Trotsky who joined him, Georgi Plekhanov, Julius Martov and Vera Zasulich to work on 'Iskra' ('Spark') the RSDLP newspaper. The outbreak of the First World War in August 1914 changed all this. Tight controls on cross-border movement were introduced, passports became ubiquitous and yesterday's allies became today's enemies and vice-versa and neither Lenin or Trotsky were ever to set foot in Britain again. These changes were nowhere so highlighted as in the incident when Trotsky, crossing the Atlantic in March 1917 to join the revolution in Russia, was detained by a British naval frigate and interned in a detention camp in Amherst, Canada. From this time on the attitude of British governments, Conservative or Labour, toward asylum seekers, refugees and migrants hardened. There was some easing of restrictions from time to time but these were often of the minimum required to maintain some façade of decency or humanity. A case in point would be the Kinder Transport of Jewish children from Nazi-occupied territory in 1938-9. Although this saved the lives of some 10,000 children, the government of the day could have done so much more. It was stipulated that the children travelled unaccompanied and their parents were left behind to await their grim fate.

Trotsky knocks on the door

We must now jump forward to 1929. Following Lenin's death in 1924 Trotsky and Joseph Stalin engaged in an increasingly vicious factional struggle to determine the leadership and the political programme of the Communist movement. Stalin gained the upper hand and Trotsky and his family were deported, first to Alma Ata in Kazakhstan and then to Turkey. Trotsky landed in Istanbul on 12 Feb. 1929. Stalin never even bothered to inform Kemal Attaturk's government of his intention and, in effect, Trotsky and Natalia were 'dumped' on the quayside. Attaturk accepted the situation and took the exiles in, going so far as to provide them with police guards once they had settled. After a few weeks Trotsky took up residence on the island of Büyük Ada, usually referred to as Prinkipo (The Princes' Isle), in the Sea of Marmara, a ferry-ride from Istanbul. Although Trotsky found his time on the island relaxing and he frequently went fishing with one of the local villagers, it was an isolated place and he desperately needed to be in regular, close contact with his supporters around the world. If he was to build an effective international opposition to Stalin it was essential that Trotsky broke out of this isolation and as soon as he had established himself he began to apply for foreign residence, preferably in Western Europe, assisted by his supporters abroad. He was refused time and again by various governments, including Germany, France, Czechoslovakia, Luxemburg, Holland (which had given refuge to the former Kaiser), Britain, the Irish Free State and Norway (ironic in that Norway did, later, grant him asylum). At this time Trotsky did not bother to apply to the USA for asylum, thinking it would be a waste of time. In early June 1929, he wrote to the British Consul in Istanbul requesting a visa for entry into Britain.

Initially, the signs were moderately encouraging. There were a number of people in Britain, politicians, writers and others – even some clergymen – who were favourably disposed to Trotsky, at least to the point of allowing him into the country. Whether or not this worked in his favour is a moot point but he was already very well-known (or notorious) and he was instantly recognisable to many people. Within the general labour movement the Independent Labour Party (ILP), various branches of ASLEF (the train drivers' union), USDAW (the shopworkers' union) and the National Union of Teachers supported Trotsky in one way or another. Importantly, there had been a change of government. In the General Election of 30 May 1929, the Labour Party won a narrow victory gaining 287 seats to the Conservatives' 260. The win however was not enough to give them an outright majority and they had to rely on support from the Liberal Party who had 59 seats. Labour Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald, Home Secretary, John Robert Clynes and Foreign Secretary, Arthur Henderson trod an extremely cautious path. They were focussed on being 'respectable' and demonstrating 'their fitness to govern' (in other words doing absolutely nothing that would even hint at 'radicalism' in any way). However, a number of Labourites, although disagreeing with Trotsky, supported his request for asylum in Britain. The list of Trotsky's supporters on this issue is actually quite long although the steadfastness and consistency of their support was not something that could be entirely relied upon. The list includes: J. M. Keynes (economist), Fenner Brockway (Labour MP), C. P. Scott (editor of the 'Guardian'), Arnold Bennet (author), Harold Laski (Labour MP), Ellen Wilkinson (Labour MP), J. L. Garvin (editor of the 'Observer'), the Bishop of Birmingham, Beatrice and Sydney Webb (Fabian Society) and George Lansbury (Labour MP and editor of the 'Daily Herald').

Some of these people had visited the Soviet Union in the days following the 1917 Revolution, sometimes being welcomed by Trotsky (something he saw as a chore). There were two TUC delegations (in 1920 and 1924) and a women's delegation. There is no record that Trotsky met with these delegations although he would no doubt have responded more favourably to meeting British trade unionists than he did to a visit by the Phillip and Ethel Snowden, Bertrand Russell and others. This visit was organised by Solomon Lozovsky who insisted, much to Trotsky's displeasure, that he meet them in a box in a Moscow Theatre. Trotsky takes up the story (from his autobiography 'My Life...' 598-599),

I went unwillingly. There were about a dozen British guests in the box. The theatre was crammed to overflowing [...] The British guests surrounded me and applauded too. One of them was Snowden. Today of course he is a little ashamed of this

adventure. But it is impossible to erase it. And yet I should be glad to do so, for my ‘fraternizing’ with the Labourites was not only a mistake, but a political error as well. As soon as I could get away from the guests I went to see Lenin. He was much disturbed. ‘Is it true that you appeared in the box with these people? (Lenin used a different word for ‘people’). In excuse I referred to Lozovsky, to the Commission of the Central Committee, to discipline and especially to the fact that I had no idea who these people were. Lenin was furious...’

On another occasion he met George Lansbury at Kislodovsk. The Labour MP was a guest of honour at a ‘modest banquet’ and on Trotsky’s arrival Lansbury offered a toast and then led in the singing of ‘For he’s a jolly good fellow’. In ‘My Life’ Trotsky finishes this brief recounting with the comment that ‘Today he too would probably like to forget about it.’ (‘My Life’ 599) To be fair to Lansbury he did try to help Trotsky but from ‘behind the scenes’ as he once remarked to Ivor Montagu. Like many of these ‘lefts’ Snowden and his wife Ethel were not so attached to the cause of the proletariat that they refused a title: in 1931 they became Viscount and Viscountess Snowden.



*Viscount Phillip and Viscountess
Ethel Snowden*



Many British delegates from the TUC, Labour Party and the ILP visited Russia. Here is the British TUC delegation to Russia in 1924 at Baku railway station. Fred Bramley (TUC General Secretary) and Ben Tillet are on the left.

Despite his isolation in the Sea of Marmara Trotsky was not short of British visitors (and others, including the famous author of the ‘Maigret’ novels, Georges Simenon) some of whom he had met before: these included Ivor Montagu and Sydney and Beatrice Webb. Cynthia Moseley, Labour MP for Stoke-on-Trent and the wife of Oswald Moseley, was also a visitor. Her letter to Trotsky, asking for a meeting, exudes a kind of apolitical, gushy, rather naïve enthusiasm which was not untypical of certain Labourites attitude to him. It was guaranteed not to please Trotsky who agreed to meet her but remained suspicious of her intentions. This was hardly surprising given her husband’s political pedigree (although she never embraced fascism) and her aristocratic origins (she was the daughter of Lord Curzon), it was rumoured that she turned up for her first Labour Party meeting in a fur coat,



Cynthia Moseley

Istanbul, 4th September, 1930

Dear Comrade Trotsky,

I would like above all things to see you for a few moments. There is no good reason why you should see me as (1) I belong to the Labour Party in England who were so ridiculous and refused to allow you in, but also I belong to the ILP and we did our very best to make them change their minds, and (2) I am daughter of Lord Curzon who was Minister for Foreign Affairs in London when you were in Russia! On the other hand I am an ardent Socialist. I am a member of the House of Commons. I think less than nothing of the present Government. I have just finished reading your life which inspired me as no other book has done for ages. I am a great admirer of yours. These days when great men seem so very few and far between it would be a great privilege to meet one of the enduring figures of our age and I do hope with all my heart you will grant me that privilege. I need hardly say I come as a private person, not a journalist or anything but myself—I am on my way to Russia, I leave for Batum-Tiflis-Rostov-Kharkov and Moscow by boat Monday. I have come to Prinkipo this afternoon especially to try to see you, but if it were not convenient I could come out again any day till Monday. I do hope however you could allow me a few moments this afternoon.

Yours fraternally, Cynthia Mosley.

There appears to be no record or transcript of their conversation, which probably speaks volumes about Trotsky's lack of enthusiasm for this meeting more than anything else. He was more inclined to meet Ivor Montagu, filmmaker, table tennis enthusiast and son of an aristocrat, who wrote to Trotsky on 1 July 1929, 'Allow me to volunteer to be of service... I should be glad to be of assistance in any way.' He followed this up with a visit to Prinkipo where he was warmly welcomed despite some suspicions that Montagu was favourably inclined to Moscow (which ultimately turned out to be true). In late April the well-known Fabians, Sydney and Beatrice Webb visited Prinkipo only a month or so before the Labour victory. They had met Trotsky before when they visited Russia in the early days of the revolution. Trotsky was not impressed. The Webbs represented everything that he detested about social democracy and Fabian gradualism. He was polite and courteous to his visitors but loathed their elitism and snobbish desire for 'respectability' (Sydney Webb was soon to hit the jackpot, when he became 'Lord Passfield'). The Fabian couple suggested to Trotsky that this would be a good time to apply for asylum in Britain, they would support him and if the Labour Party won the upcoming 1929 election this would change everything. They did however caution that the Liberals, on whom the Labour government would have to depend

for a majority, would be reluctant to support his application. The reality turned out to be more complex than the Webbs envisaged and their 'support' for Trotsky waned.



Sydney and Beatrice Webb (date unknown)

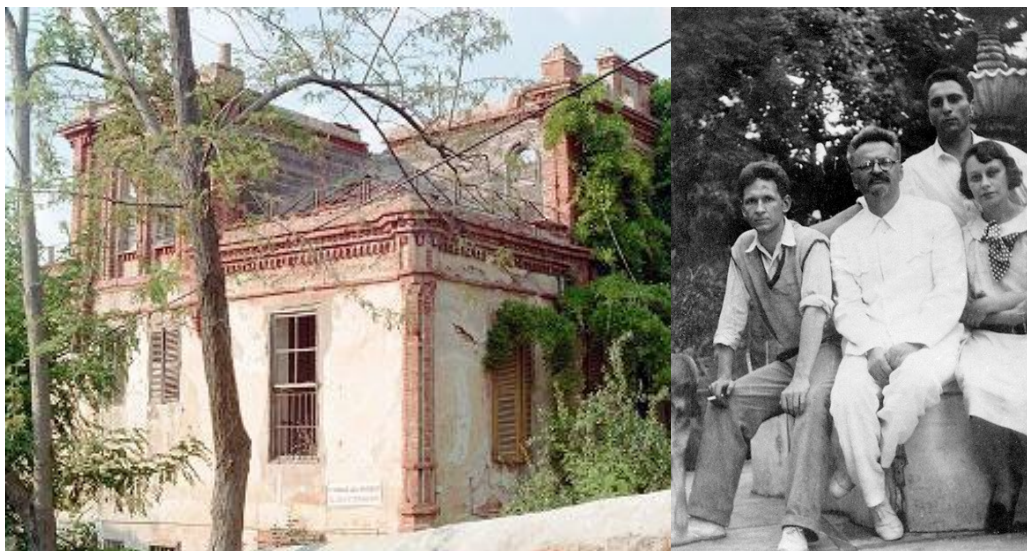
Snapshots from Prinkipo...



Trotsky on Prinkipo: fishing, that 'diverter of sadness and calmer of unquiet thoughts', was his favourite way of relaxing.



Georges Simenon, author of the famous Maigret detective novels, a surprising visitor.



Above Left: The now dilapidated villa where Trotsky lived on Prinkipo. Since this photo was taken much of the roof has collapsed. For reasons best known to the tourist authorities the villa is not signposted nor is it marked on most maps. On my visit to the island in 2009 I was surprised by how many people didn't know where the villa was, even a local taxi driver couldn't tell me!

Above Right: Three visitors in 1927, from L. to R. Pierre Naville (French Trotskyist), Trotsky, Gerard Rosenthal (Trotsky's lawyer in France) and Denise Levy (French Trotskyist).

After Trotsky's banishment to Turkey there was much speculation and discussion in the British press about whether or not he would be allowed to savour the delights of British democracy at first hand. As far as records indicate, the issue of Trotsky coming to Britain was first raised in Parliament on 13 Feb, 1929, while the Conservative government of Stanley Baldwin was still in power. Some brief questions were asked in the House of Commons about Trotsky by Harry Day, the Labour MP for Southwark Central (once, briefly, a tour manager for the escapologist Harry Houdini!) who asked Austen Chamberlain (the Conservative Foreign Secretary) whether or not the government had received a request from the Soviet government to allow Trotsky to enter Britain. He then asked whether Trotsky himself had made an individual request. The answer to both questions from Chamberlain was that 'His Majesty's government has received no such applications'. There was no further discussion. Ironically, given the subject matter of the questions, the next 'debate' concerned the ILP MP James Maxton being denied entry to Belgium!

Partly in order to earn some much needed income, Trotsky had already written a number of articles for the British and other press, his short book 'Where is Britain Going?' had been published in Britain in 1925, as was 'The Lessons of October' and other publications were in the pipeline. It soon became common knowledge that he was looking for a place to settle in

the west. On 18 March, 1929 he was interviewed by the 'Daily Express'. At the time the British government was discussing the possibility of re-opening diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union and the newspaper was anxious to hear his opinions. Sometimes press speculation bordered on the sensational and ludicrous. The 'Times' (10 May 1929) stated that Trotsky and Stalin were working together and, following suit, the 'Morning Post' (6-8 July 1929) reported on 'secret negotiations' between Stalin and Trotsky, which must have come as a shock to both men. As stupid as these reports were they played a role in keeping Trotsky in the public eye.

The wheels were set in motion and the issue of allowing the former commander of the Red Army and Lenin's right-hand man into Britain was debated in Parliament on 18 and 24 July. From the start, despite the Webb's breezy optimism, it was clear that there would be difficulties and Harry Day might have been thinking that he would need to enlist the skills of his former client Houdini to get Trotsky into Britain. The available evidence suggests that the decision on Trotsky's fate had *already* been taken (certainly the words of J. R. Clynes, Labour's Home secretary, give this impression), possibly behind 'closed doors' but then formally decided at the 23 July Cabinet meeting (five days *after* the debate in the Commons). The Liberal MP Percy Harris and Labour MP Fenner Brockway opened the bowling on Trotsky's behalf. In reply Clynes made a 'full statement' defending the government's position.

What follows is taken from 'Hansard', the official record of Parliamentary proceedings,

M. TROTSKY.

HC Deb 18 July 1929 vol 230 cc602-5602

§18. Mr. HARRIS

asked the Home Secretary what were the terms of the request of M. Trotsky when he asked to be allowed to land in this country; whether it was in order to receive medical treatment; if he was prepared to give an undertaking not to interfere or take any part in politics or engage in any form of propaganda; whether he has received any representations on the subject from the Russian Government; and if he can state what are the terms of the Home Office Regulations that govern the admission of political refugees?

§24. Mr. BROCKWAY

asked the Home Secretary whether, seeing that the application of M. Trotsky to visit this country is on medical grounds, he is prepared to reconsider his decision not to accede to the application, provided M. Trotsky gives a definite assurance that he will not engage in any political activities?

§30. **Mr. HORE-BELISHA**

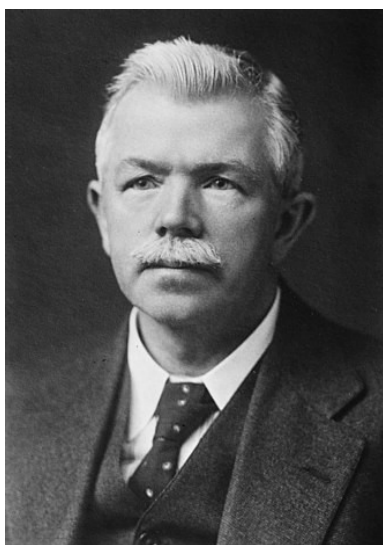
asked the Home Secretary whether any correspondence has taken place -between His Majesty's Government and M. Trotsky relative to the latter's application to take asylum in this country; and whether he will lay the papers?

§31. **Major Sir ARCHIBALD SINCLAIR**

asked the Home Secretary on what grounds His Majesty's Government have decided to deny the right of asylum to Lev Trotsky, a political refugee from Soviet Russia?

§**Mr. CLYNES**

With the leave of the House, I shall make a full statement. M. Trotsky based his application on his desire to undergo medical treatment, to follow scientific studies, and to superintend the publication of his life in English. Assurances were offered on his behalf that, if admitted, he would not interfere in the domestic affairs of this country, or take part in any public meetings, or seek to make himself prominent in any way. No communication on the subject of M. Trotsky's application has been received from the Soviet Government. The decision of His Majesty's Government to refuse facilities for his visit was taken after the fullest consideration of all the circumstances. It can be justified without impugning in any way the good faith of those who have offered assurances on M. Trotsky's behalf. In the view of the Government, if M. Trotsky were to come here, persons of mischievous intention would unquestionably seek to exploit his presence for their own ends, and if, in consequence, he became a source of grave embarrassment, the Government could have no certainty of being able to secure his departure. In regard to what is called "the right of asylum," this country has the right to grant asylum to any person whom it thinks fit to admit as a political refugee. On the other hand, no alien has the right to claim admission to this country if it would be contrary to the interests of this country to receive him. There are no special regulations on the subject.



J. R. Clynes, Labour's Home Secretary

Clynes would not budge on his position and the debate was marked primarily by his bluff and bluster on the question. It is particularly noteworthy that for Clynes, the ‘right of asylum’ rests with the would-be ‘host’ country – the applicant doesn’t appear to have any rights at all. All of which, as Trotsky was quick to point out, renders the notion of asylum meaningless. The question of Trotsky’s health (he required medical treatment) is not even mentioned and the ‘persons of mischievous intentions’ remained anonymous, mysterious figures. Presumably Clynes meant Trotsky’s supporters in Britain although it seems highly unlikely that he would have any idea who these people might have been or where they were based or what their so-called ‘mischievous intentions’ actually were. If he was alluding to members of the British Communist Party (CPGB) then he merely displayed his utter ignorance of the situation within the international communist movement. In the febrile and increasingly undemocratic environment of the Communist Party to speak up on behalf of Trotsky would invariably bring about an avalanche of opprobrium, probable expulsion and, sometimes, worse. In 1929 those who were actually prepared to break with the CPGB and form a Trotskyist opposition grouping, had not yet formulated their position and it would be August 1932 before the ‘Balham Group’, (as they became known) declared their support for Trotsky and became the first British group to join the International Left Opposition. Trotsky’s supporters in Britain would not give up and efforts, frequently, ‘behind the scenes’, continued on his behalf. Trotsky was kept informed of these and other developments, for a time at least, by the well-connected Ivor Montagu.

‘Round two’ of the Parliamentary ‘debate’ on Trotsky’s asylum application continued on the floor of the House of Commons some six days later. Clynes was not in attendance (or he did not bother to speak). Fenner Brockway was the main contributor (his speech is reproduced here with a number of deletions [...] for the sake of brevity. The ‘Hansard’ reference is given and the full speech can therefore be easily consulted. In an attempt to ‘declutter’ the text, Hansard page numbers have been deleted),

HC Deb 24 July 1929 vol 230 cc1423-46

§ Mr. BROCKWAY

[...] I gave notice a week ago that I would draw attention on the first available opportunity to the decision of the Government to refuse M. Trotsky permission to enter this country[...]

[...] Those hon. Members who know my attitude and record know that so far as political methods are concerned there are very few Members of this House whose political method is more different from that of M. Trotsky. Any change which is secured by force and violence must be of a temporary character and can have no long standing results. So far as political methods are concerned I am not pleading for M. Trotsky because of the views which he has

expressed. I am raising this question rather because of the illustration it is of the changed attitude which has been adopted towards the right of asylum as compared with the attitude which existed in this country before the War. Before the War it was the recognised policy in this country—not only of one party, but of all parties—that we should provide an asylum to those who were driven from other countries for political reasons. As long ago as 1858 Lord Campbell, who was then Lord Chief Justice, referred to this recognised right of asylum as a glory which, I hope, will ever belong to this country. He went on to define it in these words: Foreigners are at liberty to come to this country and to leave at their own will and pleasure, and they cannot be disturbed by the Government of this country so long as they obey our laws. They are under the same law as native-born subjects, and if they violate them they are liable to be prosecuted and punished in the same way as native-born subjects. I think I am right in saying that it was in the early years of this century that that recognised right of asylum was seriously challenged in this country. In 1905 there was a Debate in this House, but even on that occasion not only the Liberty party, which was then in the minority, the Labour party, which was in a smaller minority, but the leaders of the Conservative party, advocated the principle which I am applying to the case of M. Trotsky to-night. Lord Balfour, for example, speaking in that Debate, said: There was no difference of opinion in the House as to the desirability of admitting aliens into this country who were genuinely driven out of their own country on the ground of their being accused of political crime or involved in political agitation. In reading those Debates I can recollect one of those rare speeches which have made almost historic certain Debates in this House, delivered by the right hon. Gentleman who still represents the University of Oxford (Lord H. Cecil) in which he asserted, in very moving language the same principle which was expressed by Lord Balfour in the quotation to which I have referred. If that has been the general conception of the right of asylum in this country, I wish to draw attention to the new conception which is expressed in the answer of the Secretary of State for Home Affairs to the question which a number of Members of the House, including myself, put to him last week. In answer to our question he said: In regard to what is called 'the right of asylum,' this country has the right to grant asylum to any person whom it thinks fit to admit as a political refugee. On the other hand, no alien has the right to claim admission to this country if it would be contrary to the interests of this country to receive him. [...] the right of asylum is no longer a general right of political refugees. It has become the exceptional right of the Government to admit them when the Government think fit. Does the right hon. Gentleman apply that same doctrine to other rights? Does he apply it to the right of free speech? Have the citizens of this country the right to speak freely, or have they only the right to speak freely when they speak what is convenient to the Government? Have the people of this country the right to freedom of meeting, or have they that right only when it is convenient to the Government of the country that they should meet? Have the people of this country the right to the freedom of association, or have they that right only when it is convenient to the Government that they should associate? Have the people of this country the right to trial by jury or have they that right only when it is convenient to the Government that they should be tried by jury? In the doctrine of the right of asylum which is expressed in the answer of the right hon. Gentleman I suggest that the right of asylum exists, not as a general rule to political refugees, but only when it is convenient to the Government of this country.

From those general principles, I turn to the case of M. Trotsky. I want to suggest that there is not the least doubt that M. Trotsky can fulfil the definition which was laid down by Lord Balfour, and which I have already read. There is no doubt that he has been genuinely driven out of his own country, on the ground of his being accused of political crime or involved in political agitation. There he was, whatever our views may be of him, one of the most distinguished statesmen in Europe. There he was, a great figure who has had an extraordinary personal influence upon European affairs. By the Government of his own land

he is first exiled and then deported from his country. [...] He asks our Labour Government for permission to enter this country for that medical advice and treatment. He is prepared to lay down the strictest limitation as to his activities. He is prepared to live where the Government may desire him to live. He is prepared to accept any conditions of this kind which the Government will lay down. He is prepared to give an undertaking that he will remain in this country only for one month for the medical advice and treatment which he desires. When M. Trotsky, with that experience of his and with that request which he makes, is refused admission to this country by our Government, we can only regret that we have gone so far away from the principle of the right of asylum which used to apply to such cases.

May I just examine for a moment or two the case which is made against the admission of M. Trotsky in the answer given by the Secretary of State for Home Affairs? He states that, if M. Trotsky were to come here, persons of mischievous intention would unquestionably seek to exploit his presence for their own ends, and if, in consequence, he became a source of great embarrassment, the Government would have no certainty of being able to secure his departure. I very much hope that, when the right hon. Gentleman replies, he will indicate to us who are these people of mischievous intentions whom he has in mind. Does he mean the Communist party of this country? If he does, he knows how utterly feeble, how utterly futile, how utterly unimportant the Communist party is. But, in addition to that, I think he will recognise that M. Trotsky has been expelled from the Communist party, and if it be such people that he has in mind when he speaks of mischievous intentions, he will know that, if M. Trotsky came to this country, the discipline of the Communist party is so stern that no member of that party would dare to have any communication with him because M. Trotsky has been expelled from it. [...]

As to the second point, regarding the embarrassment that might be caused if M. Trotsky at the end of the period declined to depart, may I remind the right hon. Gentleman of one interesting precedent which I know will appeal to him? That precedent is the case of Karl Marx. Karl Marx was a political refugee. He was denationalised; he had no country to which he could return. There was some opposition to his entrance into and his remaining in this country, but the Government of that time was big enough to take the view that this country should serve as a refuge to those who had been politically excluded from other countries. I am sure the right hon. Gentleman will not regret the fact that Karl Marx was welcomed to this country and for many years lived here in our midst.

I conclude with an appeal to the right hon. Gentleman, I can understand that during the last few days there may have been a great desire that no step should be taken which might prevent events which are now likely, happily, to occur; but under present conditions I would ask the right hon. Gentleman to reconsider his decision. I ask him to remember the traditions of this country when we admitted Kossuth, Victor Hugo, Garibaldi, Karl Marx, Mazzini, and others. At that time there were small voices terrified by fear which raised opposition to their entry, but now we all recognise that our country is the greater because they have been in our midst. We all recognise that our country is bigger and more dignified in the mind of the world because of the attitude which we then assumed; and I am perfectly certain that, if our Government will reconsider its decision, it will go forth to the world big and dignified, because it will be recognised that in our power we do not fear the entry into our country of one man who has been hounded out of his own country for the political views which he held.

Fenner Brockway was certainly not short of eloquence (and stamina) but, ultimately, his arguments did not sway the government who, again, held firmly to their position and made

absolutely no concessions to him or anyone else. In later years his attitude, like many of these ‘supporters’ of Trotsky’s claim to asylum, was to shift and become more hostile.



Fenner Brockway, ILP MP for Leyton East.

Most of the arguments used by those in favour of Trotsky’s entry into Britain, including Brockway’s contributions from the floor of the House of Commons, evoked the so-called ‘tradition’ of asylum which the Labour government, so the argument went, was betraying. In an editorial in the ‘New Leader’ (26 July 1929) Ernest Hunter voiced support for Trotsky using arguments similar to Brockway. One of the few dissenting voices came in the pages of the same journal from ‘Historicus’ who argued (‘New Leader’ 19 Aug. 1929) that the talk of the British practice of granting asylum as some kind of magnanimous gesture inline with a great historical tradition was ‘sentimental’ nonsense. The reality was very different. The exiles were continually watched by the police, harassed and their activities curtailed where and when it was thought necessary. Whether he was right or wrong the voice of ‘Historicus’ was in a minority.

This might have looked like the end of the line for Trotsky and his supporters’ efforts to obtain a visa to enter Britain but they pressed on. The ‘Daily Mail’ (9 July 1930) reported that a petition, signed by ‘ardent supporters’ of Trotsky, was in circulation. A second petition was also doing the rounds, signed by, among others, C. P. Scott, Arnold Bennett, J. M. Keynes and Beatrice Webb. Perhaps most surprising of all, the second petition was also signed by R. A. Gregory the well-known astronomer. Both petitions arrived on the Home Secretary’s desk on 5 Nov. and, predictably, they failed to change his mind. Beatrice Webb’s comments to

Trotsky, no doubt concealing a sigh of relief, were shared by many others in the upper echelons of the Labour Party,

My husband and I are very sorry that you were not admitted into Great Britain. But I am afraid that anyone who preaches the permanence of revolution, that is carries the revolutionary war into the politics of other countries, will always be excluded from entering those other countries.

The prospect of asylum (or even a temporary entry visa) was beginning to fade. It looked, for a brief moment, as if there might be a possibility that Trotsky would gain entry to ‘these islands’ not via Dover but through Dun Laoghaire. In 1930 William O’Brien, the Irish trade union leader, petitioned the Irish Free State government (it became the Irish Republic in 1949) to grant political asylum to Trotsky and did so without seeking his permission beforehand. William T. Cosgrave of the ruling Cumann na n Gaedheal Party was adamantly opposed and the application was refused. Cosgrave recorded his thoughts in 1930 after correspondence (or a conversation) with O’Brien,

Told him (O’Brien) I could see no reason why Trotsky should be considered by us. Russian bonds had been practically confiscated. He said that there was to be consideration of this. I said it was not by Trotsky whose policy was the reverse. I asked his nationality. Reply Jew. They were against religion (he said that was modified). I said not by Trotsky. He said he hoped there would be an asylum as in England for all. I agreed that under normal circumstances, which we didn’t have here, that would be alright.

The issue was complicated by divisions within the ranks of the Irish trade union movement. There was serious rivalry between Jim Larkin and O’Brien. Larkin, the famous leader of the 1913 Dublin Lockout had returned from the USA in Jan. 1923 and by 1932 was supporting Stalin in the pages of the ‘Irish Worker’ and thus very unlikely to throw his weight, and considerable reputation, behind any application for asylum from Trotsky. The situation was further complicated when in Feb. 1932 Eamon de Valera’s Fianna Fail party ousted Cosgrave’s Cumann na n Ghaedheal. in the Irish Free State general election. There was much alarmist and ‘red-scare’ propaganda at the time (see poster below for an example). Perversely, much of it was directed at Fianna Fail not Trotsky, nevertheless this hardly helped create an environment where his voice would be lent a sympathetic ear. James Maxton of the ILP, among others, hoped that de Valera would be amenable to an application from Trotsky.



James Maxton

Eamonn De Valera

William T. Cosgrave

Despite being on good terms with de Valera, Maxton's optimism was unfounded. The staunchly Catholic de Valera was no more welcoming than Cosgrave and probably thought he had enough on his hands without extending an invitation to this troublesome godless-communist. The Irish Free State was only eight years old and the wounds of the war of independence, the civil war and the divisions that followed were slow to heal, on top of which the British government imposed an embargo on Irish meat and dairy products which threatened to ruin the Free State economy. The rate of social progress was glacial and the Catholic Church imposed a stultifying conformity on the Free State. If de Valera possessed any radical inclinations he mainly directed them against the British government. Trotsky was, once again, turned down.

One particularly unsavoury aspect of the reception given to Trotsky in the Irish Free State was its anti-Semitic overtones, Francis McCullagh, an Irish journalist who had been in Russia in 1917, Cosgrave and de Valera all referred to Trotsky's Jewish origins. In the early part of James Joyce's 'Ulysses', in a conversation between Mr. Deasy and Stephen Daedalus, there is a reference as to why there was an absence of anti-Semitism in Ireland, to which Deasy, answering his own question, smugly replies 'That's because she never let them in.' Joyce had a point, the extent of anti-Semitism in Ireland has been frequently underestimated. Disgusting as this Irish anti-Semitism was, it was hardly unique. By the late twenties and early thirties anti-Semitism was frequently part and parcel of the opprobrium hurled at Trotsky, made worse by the growth of fascist movements around the world: Hitler referred to him, in the pages of the Nazi mouthpiece 'Volkischer Beobachter' ('People's Observer') as a 'Jewish assassin and criminal' and the 'Soviet Jewish bloodhound'. Other abuse maybe wasn't so vitriolic but it was quite widespread and by no means confined to fascist publications.



Anti-Red scare hysteria: Poster for Cumann na n Gaedheal (the party of William Cosgrove), in the 1932 Irish Free State general election.

Back in Britain, it shouldn't come as a surprise to anyone that Winston Churchill relished the prospect of Trotsky 'begging' at the door of the British Home Secretary to be allowed in. Although this is somewhat outside the scope of this pamphlet, the polemic between the two is indicative of broader issues raised by the potential arrival on British shores of the Russian 'ogre'. Churchill loathed Trotsky. Of course, he loathed *all* Bolsheviks, but special opprobrium was reserved for the Commander of the Red Army that had totally destroyed Churchill's much-vaunted (and militarily incompetent and disastrous) 'anti-Bolshevik crusade' in the aftermath of 1917. Initially, it was Lenin who was Churchill's prime target, in his work, 'The Aftermath', published in 1929. Here is Churchill in full flow, attacking Lenin,

Implacable vengeance, rising from a frozen pity in a tranquil, sensible, matter-of-fact, good-humored integument! His weapon, logic; his mood, opportunist; his sympathies, cold and wide as the Arctic Ocean; his hatreds, tight as the hangman's noose. His purpose, to save the world; his method, to blow it up. Absolute principles, but readiness to change them. Apt at once to kill or learn; dooms and afterthoughts; ruffianism and philanthropy. But a good husband, a gentle guest; happy, his biographers assure us, to wash up the dishes or dandle the baby; as mildly amused to stalk a capercailie as to butcher an emperor.

Trotsky responded in 'John O' London's Weekly' (20 April 1929) where he defended Lenin from Churchill's invective. Apart from a myriad of other issues, Trotsky takes Churchill to task for his sloppy and inaccurate attention to historical detail,

Mr. Churchill's facts are miserably inaccurate. Consider his dates, for instance. He repeats a sentence, which he has read somewhere or other, referring to the morbid influence exercised on Lenin's evolution by the execution of his elder brother. He refers the fact to the year 1894. But actually the attempt against Alexander III's life was organized by Alexander Ulianov (Lenin's brother) on March 1, 1887. Mr. Churchill avers that in 1894 Lenin was sixteen years of age. In point of fact, he was then twenty-four, and in charge of the secret organization at Petersburg. At the time of the October Revolution he was not thirty-nine, as Mr. Churchill would have it, but forty-seven years old. Mr. Churchill's errors in chronology show how confusedly he visualizes the period and people of which he writes.

Churchill included a chapter on Trotsky, 'The Ogre of Europe' in his collection of pen-portraits 'Great Contemporaries', although first published in book form in 1937, 'The Ogre...' originally appeared in the US magazine 'Cosmopolitan' March 1930 and was subsequently revised. In the 'Cosmopolitan' article Churchill described Trotsky as '...a bundle of rags stranded on the shores of the Black Sea (clearly geography was not a Churchillian fort ). This was later changed to '...a skin of malice'.



'Cosmopolitan', March 1930. The subtitle reads 'A study of a living dead man.' Certainly, this was not the first time that Churchill had lambasted Bolshevism or individual Bolsheviks, which he frequently likened to a disease or plague or an infestation of vermin. At times he writes as if he is demented,

[To the East of Poland] lay the huge mass of Russia – not a wounded Russia only, but a poisoned Russia, an infected Russia, a plague-bearing Russia, a Russia of armed hordes not only smiting with bayonet and with cannon but accompanied and preceded by swarms of typhus-bearing vermin which slew the bodies of men, and political doctrines which destroyed the health and even the souls of nations. (quoted in Geoffrey Best's 'A Study of Greatness', p. 96)

Away from the swagger and bluster of Churchillian bombast, in the quotidian world of British politics, the ILP who had broken with the Labour Party in the previous year, invited Trotsky to speak at their 1933 annual summer school. Again, the government (by now the 'National Government' of MacDonald, formed in Oct. 1931) would not budge and refused to issue the appropriate documents. In the following year the ILP even tried to obtain government permission for Trotsky to live on the Channel Islands, this at a time when he was experiencing difficulties in France but the same old story was repeated. This was, in effect, the final, forlorn, move in a rather drawn out end-game, which for Trotsky had become a 'one act comedy on the theme of democracy and its principles' which could have been written by Bernard Shaw '...if the Fabian fluid which runs in his veins had been strengthened by as much as five per cent of Jonathan Swift's blood.' Trotsky's efforts to obtain political asylum finally bore fruit albeit from a more northerly direction and, at last, he could leave the Princes' Isle where he had lived for four years. Trotsky was granted asylum by the newly elected Labour-dominated Norwegian government and he disembarked in Oslo on 18 June 1935. Norway's acceptance brought an end to this chapter in Trotsky's search for asylum on the 'Planet without a visa' although this was hardly the end of the problems he had to face. Within a space of 18 months the Norwegian government changed its mind.

There remains two other aspects of Trotsky asylum quest in Britain to consider. The first is the possibility that MacDonald and Co. refused Trotsky's applications (four in total) partly because of a perceived threat from the ILP. Differences between the ILP and mainstream Labour were reaching breaking point at the time Trotsky made his first application in mid-1929. Was it the case that MacDonald didn't want Trotsky's presence in Britain, even though the latter had given his word on avoiding political activity and comment on domestic politics, because of some unspecified but benign influence he might have on the ILP? This suggests that either MacDonald didn't trust Trotsky to keep his word or that he believed his mere presence in Britain would galvanise an already leftward leaning ILP toward an even more critical stance vis a vis mainstream Labour. Most important of all would Trotsky's presence

boost the ILP at the expense of mainstream Labour and would members be drawn into the ranks of the ILP? The disappointing election results for the ILP in 1931 suggest that if this was the case MacDonald's fears were unfounded and besides, by 1931 and the sweeping victory of the National Government, Labour was also losing votes by the cart load, winning only 49 seats. One other possible reason for Labour's antipathy towards Trotsky was revealed in formerly secret Cabinet papers released in March 2000 (referred to in the 'Guardian' 3 March, 2000) where Clynes remarked that his admission into Britain might anger Stalin and the Soviet Union at a time when it was being regarded more favourably than in the past. Presumably this is 'Clynes-speak', for 'potential trading opportunities were opening up'. In his own words,

'His [Trotsky] admission might be regarded as an unfriendly act by the Soviet Government and was using him as a means of weakening the government in Russia, and to strike at the prestige of the Third International and the Soviet regime as a whole. Trotsky's supporters in other countries, France and Germany will be encouraged and would have an effect on their Communist parties...he would almost certainly become a centre of intrigue against a government with whom we are want to enter into friendly relations.'

One aspect of this whole messy and unappealing debacle is that the Labour Party, with some individual exceptions, comes out of it deeply tarnished and covered in ignominy. Nor was it the case that this was a 'blip', an exceptional case, as suggested by Clynes. In the years to come the Labour Party would again and again expose its already threadbare credentials on this issue. Attitudes towards asylum seekers and refugees fluctuated with events but over the years a hardening of attitude can clearly be discerned and the stench of hypocrisy continues to emanate from the floor of the House of Commons, the Leader's Office and Party headquarters. Looking back, the Labour leadership managed to get two things right. Clynes' warning about the 'persons of mischievous intentions' was shown to be correct but they were not to be found in the embryonic ranks of the British Left Opposition but in the very heart of the Labour Party leadership and the Cabinet of which he was a member. Lastly, as noted by Lansbury and duly passed on to Ivor Montagu, Ramsay MacDonald speaking in the Cabinet, was not just giving vent to his own fears when he stated, 'There he is, in Constantinople, out of the way – it is to nobody's interest that he should be anywhere else. *We are all afraid of him*'.

The Independent Labour Party

It should be obvious by now that most of the support for Trotsky from within the Labour Party came from the ranks of the ILP. Maxton, Brockway, Wilkinson and numerous others were all members of the ILP. At the time, members of the ILP were also members of the Labour Party and existed in a kind of parallel structure. The ILP held its own national conferences where it decided policy, although this changed in 1933 in the split mentioned in the previous section. It also published its own newspaper. It must be stressed that the ILP was not some political sideshow. In July 1932, it had over five times more members than the Communist Party and in Scotland in the 1931 General Election it stood more candidates than the Labour Party, although like the Labour Party, it fared very badly and its vote declined drastically. Within its ranks could be found some of the best militants and class fighters in Britain. In short, the ILP was a force that could not be ignored; Trotsky devoted considerable, often critical attention, to the ILP in an attempt to win, at least a section of them to the cause of the International Left Opposition and later the Fourth International.

Why did the ILP, ILP MPs and individual members support Trotsky in his bid for asylum? There is not enough space for even a brief history of the ILP but a little background is essential. The ILP was founded in 1893 by a small group of socialist and trade union activists the best known of whom were, Keir Hardie (editor of the 'Labour Leader') and Robert Blatchford. The ILP was prominent in forming the Labour Representation Committee in 1900 which evolved into the Labour Party in 1906. The ILP remained part of the Labour Party having roughly the status of an affiliated society.

There were tensions between the more militant and internationalist ILP and the right-wing, moderate Labour Party leadership and relations between the two were sometimes strained and became more so as the years progressed. At the outbreak of WWI the Labour Party supported the war effort but the ILP, from a pacifist perspective, opposed it. By 1918 the Labour Party decided to run its own system of individual membership but the ILP continued to hold its own conferences and published its own paper. Matters came to a head however in the 1931 General Election, the ILP refused to accept Labour Party standing orders and in the following year it disaffiliated from Labour. Decline followed: by 1936 membership had fallen from 16,773 (1932 figures) to 3,680. This was catastrophic enough but the fall in membership was matched by a decline in activity: By 1938 the ILP listed 220 branches but of these only 124 paid their affiliation fee. As an effective political organisation the ILP was increasingly

marginalised although it soldiered on, into the post-war period. In 1975 the ILP became the Independent Labour Publications which still exists today.

Clearly, the ILP was a different creature from the Labour Party, although it was by no means a unified body – it also had its left, right and centre. A number of its leading figures were militants with a proven track record in the major trade union and class struggles of the early part of the twentieth century, individuals such as the ‘Red Clydesiders’: John Wheatley, Emanuel Shinwell, James Maxton, Marjory Newbold and George Buchanan. Fenner Brockway had gone to prison for his pacifist beliefs during World War One and Maxton spent a year behind bars for ‘sedition’. Ellen Wilkinson had a prominent role in organising the Jarrow March of 1936. Bob Edwards, from Liverpool, visited Russia where he met Trotsky and later fought in Spain (it must be noted however that Shinwell’s record on the Clyde included an appalling racist attack on black seamen).

One key difference between the ILP and the Labour Party leadership was that the former did more than just pay lip-service to the values of internationalism. Many within the ILP were, to some degree, sympathetic toward the 1917 Russian Revolution and it is therefore unsurprising that they supported Trotsky’s application for political asylum. A joint TUC and Labour Party delegation to Russia in April 1920 included two ILP-ers (R. C. Wallhead and Clifford Allen). Their long discussions with various Russian leaders, which often centred around the question of the use of violence, were part of a process which ultimately decided the ILP against immediately joining the Third International (Comintern). At their National Conference in 1920, delegates voted to disaffiliate from the Second International by 529 votes to 144 but rejected affiliation to the Comintern, opting to further explore the question. They did however waste a lot of time with the fruitless attempt at creating the ‘Two and a Half International’ (sometimes referred to as the ‘Vienna International’) and later with the so-called ‘London Bureau’. Affiliation to the Comintern was finally ruled out by the ILP York conference in 1934 by which time it hardly mattered, the Comintern was now little more than a Stalinist husk. Later, they emphatically rejected any idea of affiliating to the Fourth International.

Unlike the Labour Party leadership which cravenly followed the government policy of non-intervention in the Spanish Civil War, the ILP was pro-Republic and organised a detachment of volunteers to go to Spain, which included George Orwell. The ILP was an opponent of many aspects of British colonial policy, unlike the Labour Party which rarely departed from its stance of following whatever the ruling class of the day decreed in India, Egypt and elsewhere. As an organisation, the ILP was a supporter of the League Against Imperialism

(which existed from 1927 to 1936) based in Berlin then Brussels (this was probably James Maxton's intended destination when he was refused entry into Belgium). When the Labour Party came to power in 1945 its colonial policy, again, differed little from that of the Conservative Party, the question of Indian independence being the major exception.

Sections of the ILP were anti-Stalinist and did have some kind of understanding of what Stalinism was but it was a weak analysis and did not prevent them from uncritically supporting the Five Year Plan for example, or participating in the aforementioned League Against Imperialism which was, essentially a Stalinist Front. Trotsky called for its 'liquidation' as 'an urgent measure of revolutionary sanitation' ('Bulletin of the Left Opposition', Sept. 1930. p. 35 of 'Writings 1930-31'). Their confusion over the nature of Stalinism and what was happening in the Soviet Union is clearly demonstrated in their attitude to the Moscow Trials and the accusations levelled at Trotsky and his supporters. The ILP NAC (National Administration Committee) and the London Bureau refused to condemn the Moscow Trials outright, instead it called for a 'full investigation to be carried out'. The London Bureau's refusal centred around the 'disastrous mistake' in calling the Dewey Commission headed by the American philosopher John Dewey, the 'Committee for the Defence of Leon Trotsky' (letter signed by Brockway, 21 May 1937). Although there is no meaningful explanation as to why this title should cause such apoplexy. The ILP and the London Bureau were invited to send a delegates to Mexico to attend the Commission's hearings but this was turned down, as referred to in the 'Socialist Appeal' (18 Dec. 1937), the paper of the American Trotskyist movement,



London Buro Aids Stalin Frame-Ups By Refusal to Join Probe Commission

Headline in the 'Socialist Appeal' 18 Dec. 1937 (the American Trotskyist Newspaper of the time). The American Trotskyists had joined the Socialist Party of Norman Thomas. In early 1938, they left, or were expelled and formed the Socialist Workers Party.

The detailed investigations of Trotsky and his supporters, including the Commission (which ran from 10 April – 17 April 1937 and was officially 'The Commission of Enquiry into the

Charges Made Against Leon Trotsky') were dismissed by, again, Brockway who did not see them as 'impartial' although he offers no explanation for this curious judgement. The 'Manchester Guardian' (1 Dec. 1937) published an 'Open Letter' calling precisely for such an impartial enquiry but Brockway refused to sign despite the signatures of fellow ILP-er Henry Brailsford and Frank Horrabin (a well-known left cartoonist, journalist and illustrator). It was not lost on a number of commentators that while Brockway was prevaricating in this spineless manner his Spanish and Catalan comrades in the POUM were being rounded up by the Stalinists, frequently tortured and then executed.

The main problem with the ILP, as far as Trotsky was concerned, was its centrism. Time and again the ILP would adopt a position on a particular issue (some examples have already been cited) but not follow through, 'hedged its bets', or was content to adopt a slightly more 'leftist' position than mainstream Labour. The final analysis was often weak or muddled. First, we need a definition of centrism but the oft-mentioned notion that it is a position halfway between left and right is inadequate and ignores the specifics of the ILP's politics. It is necessary to go beyond this. Fortunately, Trotsky has, rather conveniently provided us with an article he wrote on 28 May 1930, entitled 'What is Centrism?' and published in the 27 June edition of 'La Vérité' the paper of the French Trotskyist movement (see 'Writings of Leon Trotsky 1930'). Although he is primarily concerned with various French individuals and organisations what he writes can also be applied to the ILP. Attacking the simplistic notion of centrism as merely being 'in the middle', Trotsky makes the point that,

It is a fundamental error to think that 'centrism' is a geometrical or topographical description as in a parliament. For a Marxist, political concepts are defined not by characteristics of form but by their class content considered from an ideological and methodological standpoint. (234)

Under the stress and strains of the class struggle centrism is unstable, it zigzags, veers from left to right, 'it is never the same, and never recognises itself in the mirror even when it pushes its nose right to it' (239). Frequently the centrists console themselves with the claim that they are autonomous, yet their autonomy is a sham as they are forced to adopt one position, abandon it and adopt another according to the fluctuations of the class struggle. The ILP, unable to commit on the one hand to the official Labour Party leadership and on the other hand to join with the International Left opposition existed in the eddies and cross currents in between – bounced this way and that, nowhere more clearly illustrated than in its utterly muddled attitude to the CPGB and the Comintern. To illustrate this one only needs briefly to look at the collaboration between the ILP and the Communist Party in 1933 when

the ILP agreed to work with the CPGB, at a time when social democracy (even in its ‘left’ variant) was being denounced as ‘social fascism’ by the Communist Party as dictated by the politics of the so-called ‘Third Period’. Trotsky (in his article ‘Whither the Independent Labour Party’ 28 Aug. 1933) explains the situation thus,

Under the exceptionally favourable conditions of Great Britain, the Comintern managed completely to isolate and weaken its British section by the ruinous policies of the Anglo-Russian Committee, the ‘third period’, ‘social fascism’ and the rest; on the other hand, the deep social crisis of British capitalism pushed the ILP sharply to the left; not heeding consistency or logic, the totally discouraged Comintern this time grabbed the alliance proposed to it with both hands. (53-52)

Alas, the problems illustrated briefly here did not go away. The ILP, in order to survive and play some positive role in the building of an international movement had to make a choice. It broke with the Second International, it dallied with the Vienna Bureau and the Comintern and later also aligned itself with a group of independent left socialist parties, in the London Bureau. The stance of many ILP-ers on Trotsky’s claim for political asylum was principled and praiseworthy but there was never any concerted attempt to make it a fighting, campaigning issue and confined itself mainly to questions in the House of Commons, petitions and letters to the press. The judgement of history on the ILP must be harsh: it needed political clarity and decisiveness, it had to become more than just a left-leaning pressure group within the labour movement but it never achieved this despite the efforts of many active, dedicated rank and file members, with whom British Trotskyists often collaborated. As a result, the ILP faded from view. (Appendix 1 lists some further reading and a selection of Trotsky’s writings on the ILP).

Asylum and the strange case of the Romanovs

If the tradition of granting political asylum meant anything at all in Britain then it might be assumed that Tsar Nicholas Romanov II of Russia and his family would be at the front of the queue in order to benefit from supposed British openness and generosity and, of course, their connection to the British Royal family. Yet this was not the case. Despite being, like almost all royalty throughout Europe, related to the British crown (through Queen Victoria), in 1917 the Romanovs were refused admission to Britain. Given that over 300 British soldiers were to die in vain in the totally bungled military efforts to restore the Tsar to his throne, as part of

Churchill's inept 'Crusade against Bolshevism', it was, to say the least, a curious decision. It is a stark illustration of what has been suggested earlier – the right of asylum (or, more properly in this case – 'residence') does not exist in a vacuum.

By 1917 Russia was weary of the war and with mounting casualties, wide-spread desertion in the army, unrest and strikes at home, was on the point of collapse. In response to riots in St Petersburg on 8 Mar 1917, the Tsar ordered the unrest to be put down but soldiers refused to carry out his orders, the Duma (Russian Parliament) called on him to stand down and the government resigned. The Tsar had no option but to renounce the throne, intending to pass it on to his brother Michael who, clearly no idiot, declined this poisoned chalice. The Tsar and the Tsarina were then detained by the Provisional Government at Tsarskoye Selo, one of the Romanovs' many country residences, and later in Tobolsk in Western Siberia. They and the rest of their family eventually ended up as prisoners of the Bolsheviks in Yekaterinburg. On 17 July, 1918 all the family, the family doctor and servants were shot. Although the exact circumstances and reasons for their execution are still debated there was clearly a danger that advancing White pro-monarchist forces would take the region and release them. Nine days later pro-monarchist forces overran Yekaterinburg.



A defeated and hollow man. It is almost as if the Tsar knows he is near the end. One of the last photos of Nicholas II.

Why did the British government or the King refuse entry to the Tsar? George V and Nicholas II were cousins, their mothers were the sisters Alexandra and Dagmar (both of the Danish Royal household) hence the frequent comments that the two men looked like twins. Initially,

it appeared as if the British government refused the Tsar on the grounds that it might provoke unrest in an already volatile political situation at home. The news of the Russian revolutions in February and October 1917 were enthusiastically received by many sections of the working class in Britain and the ruling class became alarmed at what might follow. The Tsar was not popular in Britain nor was the Tsarina because of her German nationality. It seems to have been conveniently forgotten that the Windsors were, until quite recently the Saxe-Coburg-Gothas. They had the wisdom to change their name on 17 July, 1917. (Why didn't they change their name at the outbreak of hostilities?). As usual in these kinds of situation, given the 'dramatis personae', it is *possible* that someone was telling the truth but it is hard to find out who. As far as it can be put together, the story goes something like this.

After Nicholas' abdication, the Provisional Government put the Tsar and Tsarina under house arrest at Tsarsko Seloe and it was agreed with Pavel Milyukov, the Provisional Government's Minister of Foreign Affairs, that a ship would take them from Port Romanoff (now Murmansk) to England. Milyukov was in contact with George Buchanan, the British Ambassador to Russia and he was in agreement (presumably he had been in contact with London already) and a British cruiser would be sent to Murmansk and take them away. Presumably a British vessel was preferred to one crewed by potentially mutinous Russian sailors who tended, in the main, to be pro-revolutionary. When no cruiser appeared, Milyukov asked Buchanan what was happening and the Ambassador replied, 'The government no longer insists on the Tsar's family coming to England'. Unravelling the diplomatic language of the time this meant 'no deal'. This version of events was confirmed later by Kerensky, the head of the Provisional government. However, in his memoir 'My Mission to Moscow' (1923) Buchanan states that, 'Our offer remained open and the offer of asylum was never withdrawn.' Apparently Buchanan had wanted to mention the withdrawal of the offer in his memoirs but he was told that he might be prosecuted under the Official Secrets Act and his pension withdrawn. Buchanan's version of events is supported by his daughter's own account of this period. George V's Private Secretary Lord Stamfordham wrote to the British Foreign secretary on 6 April 1917, 'He [George V] must beg you to represent to the Prime Minister that from all that he hears and reads in the press, the residence in this country of the ex-Emperor and Empress would be strongly resented by the public, and would undoubtedly compromise the position of the King and Queen from whom it would generally be assumed the invitation had emanated.' Some accounts cite George V's secretary Arthur Bigge as the prime mover in the King's change of mind (why George V needed a 'private secretary' *and* a 'secretary' is a question I cannot answer). If Stamfordham is to be

believed, it was George V *not* Lloyd George who had the offer of asylum withdrawn, yet George V *must* have known that his cousin was in danger if he remained in Russia. George V and the British government were hardly consistent. A number of Romanovs, including the Grand Duchess Xenia Alexandrovna (the Tsar's sister) were allowed to reside in Britain in some comfort at Hampton Court. This did not prevent them from asking the government to provide them with the £10 fee required for the naturalisation process!

The author of this essay has no strong feelings one way or the other about the fate of the Romanovs except to say that it was originally planned to put the Tsar on trial in Russia (as envisaged by Trotsky and others). This would surely have been the best way to proceed but a rapidly evolving political and military situation in Russia and elsewhere made this impossible. The response of both the British Royal family and the British Government clearly demonstrates that other factors – outside the immediate concerns and well-being of the Romanovs – dictated their stance and this ultimately sealed the Romanovs' fate.

Other European Royal families fared rather better. Having the good sense to get out while the going was good, the German Kaiser dumped himself on the Dutch and the Habsburg clan ended up in Spain. They could only return to Austria if they gave a pledge beforehand to disavow any claim to the throne. The royal families of Charlotte of Luxembourg, George of Greece, Haakon of Norway, Wilhelmina of the Netherlands, and Peter of Yugoslavia all made Britain their home during WWII, the latter pitching their tent until 2001 when they returned to what is now Serbia. King Zog of Albania was not so fortunate. The British government saw little use in supporting someone who they believed had been friendly to Mussolini and were initially cool about his request for asylum. They, reluctantly, changed their minds after the Nazi invasion of France and on 18 June 1940 Zog and his entourage were allowed to enter Britain but only as private citizens. Ensclosed in Buckinghamshire he sat out the war ignored by the British government and just about everybody else. Once again asylum was shown not to be a principle, part of long-held and cherished historical tradition, but a dishrag to be used and discarded as and when appropriate. As a final comment: it speaks volumes about the values of the British Royal family that they were quite prepared to let the Romanovs die to avoid their own position being compromised.



AN UNDESIRABLE.

HOME SECRETARY. "WE CAN'T HAVE YOU HERE."

TROTSKY. "BUT I'M AN OLD FRIEND OF THE HOUSE."

HOME SECRETARY. "YES, I KNOW. THAT'S WHY."

[During an interview in which he gave various reasons for his request to be permitted to visit England, Trotsky is reported to have said: "The party which for the second time assumes power in Great Britain believes that the difficulties created by private ownership can be surmounted. . . . I want to see how it will be done." Mr. Punch's cartoon expresses a speculative hope, not a prediction, that Trotsky's curiosity will be discouraged.]

The government's refusal to grant Trotsky asylum evoked much mirth and gloating from certain sections of society, as here in this famous cartoon from the pages of the satirical magazine 'Punch' 23 June 1929.

What happened next?

As already mentioned, Trotsky's Norwegian interlude proved to be short-lived. Under pressure from the Soviet Union, a vocal conservative opposition and a growing fascist movement at home (which included the infamous Vidkun Quisling whose name later came to symbolise collaboration with the Nazis and treachery in general), the Norwegian Labour government caved in to pressure and withdrew the welcome mat. On 19 Dec. 1936 Trotsky and Natalia were expelled and put on a Norwegian tanker the 'Ruth' (they and their police escort were the sole 'cargo') and taken to Mexico, the only country prepared to accept him. There is no record that Trotsky contemplated a return to Turkey. They landed in Tampico on 9 Jan. 1937 to be met by the artist Frida Kahlo and the American Trotskyists Max Shachtman and George Novack both members of the US Socialist Workers' Party (no relation to the British SWP). Later, en route to Mexico City, they were joined by Kahlo's husband, the famous muralist Diego Rivera.



Trotsky and Natalia arriving in Tampico, Mexico. Greeted by Frida Kahlo (on Natalia's right) and Max Shachtman (partly obscured directly behind Natalia) with various police and government officials also in close attendance.

The contrast between Trotsky's reception when he landed in Mexico and the niggardly treatment he received at the hands of the British Labour government could not have been more striking. On arriving in Tampico, Trotsky and Natalia were met by an official

delegation, including General Beltran the commander of the local garrison who put his Packard at their disposal. Although not present in person, there was a message of welcome from Mexican President Lazaro Cardenas, Whether by chance or design he and Trotsky never met. Cardenas made his personal train (called *El Hidalgo – The Nobleman*) available to Trotsky and Natalia to take them to Mexico City, along with a friendly police guard. There was even a plane waiting at a nearby airport but a flight was ruled out due to high winds along the proposed route. Trotsky must have felt quite at home; *El Hidalgo* was heavily armoured, no doubt evoking memories of another armoured train used by the commander of the Red Army as a mobile HQ during the civil war in Russia. They were later joined by a group of soldiers who serenaded the new arrivals with songs from the Mexican Revolution. Cardenas declared that Trotsky was not only granted political asylum but invited him to stay as the government's guest. The only condition placed on Trotsky was that he refrain from any interference in Mexico's internal domestic affairs, to which he readily agreed. As Isaac Deutscher, Trotsky's biographer, explains, 'It never occurred to him [Cardenas] to ask Trotsky to refrain from political activity; and he himself stood up for Trotsky's right to defend himself against Stalinist attacks.' (Deutscher Vol. 3 p. 358) The Mexican government provided a round-the-clock police guard for the Trotsky household in the suburb of Coyoacan, Mexico City where they finally settled. Despite the denunciations of the thoroughly Stalinist Mexican Communist Party, Cardenas consistently defended his right to political asylum upholding Mexico's long held policy of providing refuge for those who were persecuted for their political beliefs.

The situation was not however quite as comforting as it first appeared. A number of Trotsky's supporters in the USA and elsewhere were not exactly overjoyed at his residence in Mexico, a country which had a reputation for political violence where guns could be easily obtained and, it was rumoured, assassins could be bought just as easily. This was not lost on Max Shachtman who, on his arrival in Mexico City, wasted no time in purchasing a Thompson sub-machine gun. Everyone believed that the 'Old Man' would be safer in the USA; however, their efforts at trying to obtain asylum or even a temporary visa for the USA met with no more success than previously in Britain. The rest, as they say, is history. There was a bungled assassination attempt in May 1940 and the Trotsky residence in Coyoacan was turned into a mini-fortress. To no avail. Three years and approximately eight months into his stay in Mexico, on 20 Aug. 1940 Trotsky fell victim to an assassin, the Stalinist agent, Ramon Mercader, a Catalan who was recruited in Spain and went under the name of Jacques Mornard.

Some of those who have benefitted from Mexico's asylum policy:

Cesar Augusto Sandino (Nicaraguan revolutionary)

José Martí (Cuban nationalist, writer and poet)

Luis Buñuel (Spanish filmmaker)

Hortensa Bussi (wife of murdered Chilean President Salvador Allende)

Rigoberta Menchu (Guatemalan activist)

Victor Serge (left political activist and writer, one-time supporter of Trotsky)

Anna Seghers (German Communist Party, KPD, and writer)

Walter Oettinghaus (German syndicalist later a member of the KPD)

Marceau Pivert (French socialist)

Jacob Abrams (Jewish anarchist, expelled from the USA and then from the Soviet Union)

Benjamin Péret (French anarchist)

Approximately 20,000 exiles from Republican Spain

Evo Morales (former president of Bolivia)

Asylum revisited - the case of Rudi Dutschke

11 April 1968, West Berlin. Rudi Dutschke, a prominent activist in the West German student and radical movement had just stepped out of the office of the Sozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund (SDS, German Socialist Students' Organisation) to go to the local chemist to pick up a prescription for his son. He didn't get very far. He was shot three times by a neo-Nazi, Josef Bachman. With two bullets in his head and one in his shoulder it was touch and go whether Dutschke would survive. Amazingly, he pulled through but at a terrible price: his eyesight was affected, he suffered memory loss and became prone to anxiety and panic attacks and epileptic seizures. Fearing for the safety of himself and his family, Gretchen and their sons, he looked round for somewhere, other than West Germany, where he might receive medical treatment and rest and recuperate



Rudi Dutschke in the centre with French Trotskyist Alain Krivine on his left (who died while this essay was being written).

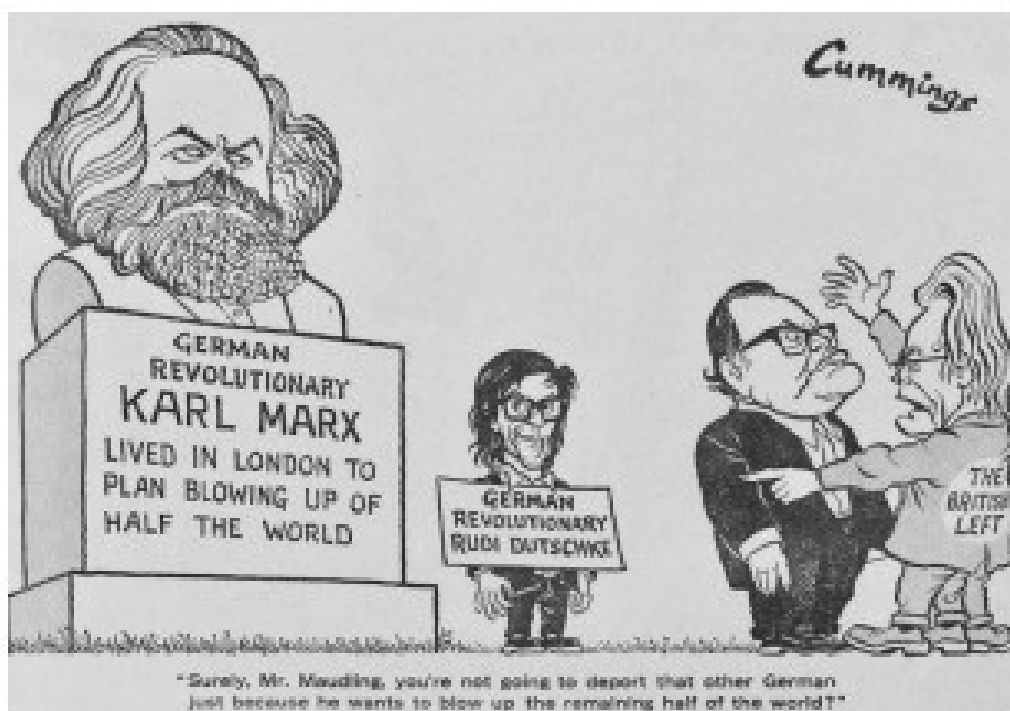
After a short period in Italy, he was admitted to the UK in December 1968 for one month. Labour MP Michael Foot had been recruited by Dutschke's supporters and he wrote to Jim Callaghan (then Home Secretary in the Harold Wilson Labour government) stressing the need for Dutschke to receive medical treatment with the condition, originally suggested by Dutschke himself, that he did not engage in any political activity. Given his poor condition this seems entirely unnecessary. He and his family stayed in London, for part of the time at the home of the journalist Neal Ascherson. The two had met in Germany when Dutschke was active in the SDS. While in London Dutschke made the acquaintance of Rosa Levine-Meyer, the widow of Eugene Levine who was executed in the aftermath of the Munich Revolution in 1919. According to Ascherson the two had a number of interesting and, for Dutschke, inspiring conversations. Dutschke was allowed to stay for another six months in January 1969, the arrangement being renewed in July 1969 and January 1970. Why the Labour

government couldn't have been more generous and offered him an unlimited stay has never, as far as I am aware, been adequately explained. In early 1969 Jim Callaghan gave Dutschke permission to earn money by writing, however it was made clear that he could not receive a student visa to study at a British University.

After the January 1970 extension some, supposed, problems arose; there are various stories about this (he attended a public meeting of the Socialist Workers Party, he met some political activists in London and had the temerity to actually speak to them etc.) but it is difficult to piece it together. There were fears he would be deported. In response to an approach from the Irish Journalist Connor Cruise O'Brien, Ascherson arranged for Dutschke and his family to move to the Irish Republic *in cognito* using the name 'Schreiber'. After a train journey to Holyhead they took the ferry to be met at Dun Laoghaire by O'Brien and driven to his house in Howth, a suburb of Dublin. After a few months, in mid-March, Dutschke decided to return to the UK. On 31 July 1970 he received a letter from Cambridge University regarding his acceptance for a PhD programme at Clare Hall, starting on 1 Oct. The Dutschkes moved to Cambridge in early August and from 1 Sept. lived in a flat in Clare Hall. Apart from the obvious academic and scholarly reasons for this move his doctors thought it was essential to his recovery that he had a long period of focussed research and study in a quiet, settled environment.

There was a general election on 18 June 1970 and a Conservative government, led by Ted Heath took office. The Dutschke family's stay in the leafy glades of Clare Hall was to be short, the Heath government lost little time in bringing deportation proceedings against him. It was decided, after an Immigration Tribunal, that his continued presence in the UK 'was not desirable'. Dutschke appealed against the decision and this was heard before a special tribunal (partly held in camera) which wound up its proceedings on 23 Dec. 1970, although their decision wasn't announced until the new year. According to at least one source which leaked out, the proceedings in camera, where the Special Branch and MI5 presented their 'evidence', revealed nothing of any consequence whatsoever and was largely a sham, to demonstrate the government's 'toughness' and implicate Dutschke (if the proceedings were held in camera, he must have something serious to hide). His plight was part and parcel of a growing hysteria in the UK about two things – both of which were embodied by Dutschke: first there was mounting concern in the media and in the ranks of the Conservative Party about students and the way in which numbers of students had become politically involved, primarily by opposition to the war in Vietnam and later by their support for the miners in the

1972 National Union of Mineworkers national strike. Gone were the days when students automatically sided with the ruling class, as in their enthusiastic attempts at strike-breaking during the 1926 General Strike. The second issue was the hysteria whipped up over immigration. As a foreign student and a radical, Dutschke was an ‘ideal’ target but the prime target of the xenophobes was, doubtless, Tariq Ali, former student at Oxford, of Pakistani origin, well-known radical, involved with ‘Black Dwarf’ and prominent member of the International Marxist Group. Nor was this a phenomenon confined solely to the UK; across the Channel, there were calls, including from the French Communist Party, for the student leader Daniel Cohn Bendit (often nicknamed ‘Danny the Red’) to be deported from France. Despite being born in France he was expelled as a ‘seditious alien’ to West Germany after a campaign with anti-Semitic overtones. The xenophobes crude and ignorant melding of ‘immigrant’ and ‘lefty student protester’ became a mantra, perhaps nowhere expressed more blatantly than in the Cummings ‘Daily Express’ cartoons, whose unique blend of philistinism and racism was only matched by their total lack of any humour whatsoever (see below).



‘Surely Mr. Maudling, you’re not going to deport that other German just because he wants to blow up the remaining half of the world?’ (‘Daily Express’, 4 Jan. 1971. The figure on the extreme right is Labour MP Michael Foot).

The issue of Dutschke’s status in the UK was debated in parliament (on 19 Jan. 1971) with the Labour Party (now in opposition) this time on the offensive. The shadow Home Secretary Jim Callaghan made a long defence of Dutschke’s right to stay in the UK, ignoring his own and the Labour Party’s previous ambiguous and parsimonious attitude to Dutschke’s plight,

and was joined by Michael Foot and others (see appendix 2 for part of this). Reginald Maudling, the ignorant oaf who masqueraded as Home Secretary, defended for the government and despite his feeble and sometimes incoherent efforts it was affirmed that Dutschke's presence in the UK was still 'not desirable'. He eventually left the UK on 19 Feb. 1971 on a ferry for Denmark in a battered-looking Volkswagen Beetle, an event captured on grainy black and white Pathé News footage. He continued his PhD at the University of Aarhus and he remained in Denmark, occasionally visiting West Germany. He died of an epileptic seizure on 24 Dec. 1979. His would-be assassin Josef Bachmann killed himself in prison some nine years earlier (24 Feb. 1970). Dutschke sent a bunch of flowers to the funeral.

A brief afterword: asylum today, for an open door policy!

Currently, any claims for political asylum by particular individuals have been engulfed by the Johnson government's war on what it terms 'illegal migration'. Added to which there is now the issue of Ukrainians fleeing Putin's invasion. Thousands of refugees have left their homes for the safety of neighbouring countries, particularly Poland, raising once again the spectre of displaced families, the aged and children standing in line at borders, hungry, cold and weary. And once again we see a British government (Boris Johnson's Tories) refusing to take a clear stance on allowing refugees in to the UK. At the time of writing Johnson, through the Home Secretary Priti Patel, has committed to allowing in those Ukrainian refugees who already have relatives living here. The system is cumbersome and time-consuming in the extreme: you have to apply for a visa online and fill in complicated forms; if you have lost your passport or simply left it at home in your rush to escape bombs, then you must attend a visa application centre. All of which means a long wait for visas to be issued while the applicant is often living in cramped, uncomfortable, insanitary conditions. The other government policy, the Homes for Ukraine scheme announced by the ridiculously named Department for Levelling Up is a sham, a total evasion of any governmental responsibility for asylum seekers – shifting the work and the burden of helping them find homes etc. to charities and the generosity of individuals.

Those fleeing from other countries fare even worse than this. Under the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (introduced in August 2021), an individual cannot make an application enter the UK, he or she must be *referred* by the UN High Commissioner. The only chance of making a *personal application* to enter the UK is via the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Programme but this is only valid if you worked for the British military, as a translator for example. Even then your entry is hardly guaranteed. *The government could, if it wished, act more generously and swiftly. It chooses not to.* By contrast, in the immediate aftermath of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution the UK settled 20,990 Hungarian refugees, the most of any European nation. Only Canada (27,280) and the USA (40,650) took more. In yet another contrast, the UK government took approximately 2,500 Chilean refugees in the aftermath of the September 1973 Pinochet coup against the Allende government. This pales into insignificance compared to the 40,000 taken by Sweden.

What is needed is a clear commitment to a policy, decided by socialist internationalist political principles and not by vague and ultimately meaningless talk of the historical ‘tradition of asylum’. The labour movement should throw its weight behind an *open door policy*. This policy establishes clear criteria for asylum seekers and must be coupled with domestic policies that enable the asylum seeker to settle, receive the necessary documentation and support (e.g. language tuition) and find work. An open door policy dispenses at one stroke with the idea of ‘illegal migration’. It might be possible to create a situation where illegal migration no longer exists without an open door policy but it would entail either: a country which has no demand for unskilled labour (which is unlikely) or a society which is structured like a cross between an army barracks and a prison and therefore impregnable but where life would be utterly intolerable using any civilised criteria. One thinks of Albania under Enver Hoxxa or North Korea today. Under all other circumstances illegal migration would continue to exist and no amount of ‘being tough’ on illegal migration will eradicate it. An open door policy has the undoubted benefit of making people smugglers redundant. Smugglers only prosper in conditions of illegality. Detention Centres would also become redundant and would be closed. The two major elements of an open door policy would be free movement and the right to work. Asylum seekers would no longer be ‘dispersed’ (as under the Blair government) or ‘offshored’ to Rwanda or elsewhere (as in the current proposals of Priti Patel). The right to work as soon as the asylum seeker enters the country is essential: in this way asylum seekers can support themselves and not have to rely on state benefits and can integrate quicker into society.

Organisations and Biographies:

Anglo-Soviet Committee. Formed in April 1925 to supposedly foster unity in the international trade union movement. Was terminated in September 1927 when British-Soviet relations worsened. In Trotsky's opinion it was an attempt by the Comintern to by-pass the British Communist Party and foster relations with the British trade union bureaucracy and Fabian 'leftists'.

Baldwin, Stanley. (1867-1947) Three times Conservative Prime Minister between the wars. PM during the General Strike of 1926. Introduced the anti-working class Trades Disputes and Trade Union Act of 1927 which, among other measures, outlawed solidarity strikes.

Balham Group. The first group in Britain, based in S. W. London, to affiliate to the International Left Opposition in August 1932. Most of them were former members of the CPGB. Their first printed paper was the 'Red Flag'. Henry Sara, Harry Wicks and Hugo Dewar were among the founding members and Reg Groves has written a short history of their early days, 'The Balham group: How British Trotskyism Began' (London: Pluto Press, 1974).

Brailsford, Henry. (1873-1958) Vegetarian, prolific writer and journalist. Foreign correspondent for the 'Guardian' and in 1907 helped found the Men's League for Women's Suffrage. Joined the ILP in 1907 (left in 1932). Visited Russia in 1920 and 1926. Editor of 'New Leader' from 1922-1926. He was one of the ILP's strongest critics of Stalin.

Brockway, Fenner. (1888-1988) Joined the ILP in 1907, became the editor of the 'New Leader.' Was a vegetarian and pacifist, serving a short prison sentence during WW1. Born in India he was a lifelong advocate of Indian independence. Elected MP for Leyton East in 1929. During the Spanish Civil war he helped recruit volunteers to fight (did he abandon pacifism?), one of whom was Eric Blair (George Orwell). MP for Eton and Slough from 1950 to 1964. Became Baron Brockway.

Clynes, J. R. (1869-1949) Labour Home Secretary who rejected Trotsky's application for asylum in Britain. An organiser for the Gas Workers' Union he was elected MP for Manchester North East. Regarded by all around him as an uninspiring plodder, he split with MacDonald in 1931, lost his seat but regained it later.

Cosgrave, William T. (1880-1965) Former insurgent in 1916 Easter Uprising. Supported the Anglo-Irish Treaty. President of The Executive Committee of the Irish Free State, 1922-32

de Valera, Eamonn. (1882-1975) Former insurgent in the 1916 Easter Uprising. Taoiseach of the Irish Free State (and then the Irish Republic) from 1932. Main figure in Fianna Fail which dominated Irish politics for many years.

Dewey Commission. Popular name for the investigative body headed by American Professor John Dewey, originally initiated by the American Committee for the Defence of Leon Trotsky. The Commission sat in September 1937 in Mexico City and concluded by exonerating Trotsky of the charges laid against him by Stalin.

George, David Lloyd. (1863-1945) Liberal Prime Minister from 1916-1922. Opposed the Boer war. Represented Britain at the Paris Peace Conference.

Horrabin, Frank. (1884-1962) Popular artist, illustrator, writer and cartoonist. Editor of 'Plebs' magazine which supported working class education. Labour MP for Peterborough 1929-31.

International Left Opposition. The organisation established by Trotsky and his supporters to oppose Stalinism. In September 1938 representatives of the ILO met in Paris and established the Fourth International, issuing its founding statement, usually referred to as the 'Transitional Programme'.

Lansbury, George. (1859-1940) Labour MP at various times. Editor of the 'Daily Herald'. Met Trotsky on a visit to Russia. One of a number of councillors imprisoned in 1921 for his part in the Poplar 'rates revolt'. Broke with MacDonald in 1931. Became Viscount Lansbury.

London Bureau. Formed on 27-28 Aug. 1933, by a number of independent socialist organisations. The main participants were the ILP, SAP (Germany), the Norwegian Labour Party and the PUP (France). It was called the London Bureau because the HQ soon moved there. It was never a stable organisation and most parties in the LB moved to the right. At the suggestion of the POUM it disbanded on 27 April 1939 having achieved nothing.

Maxton, James. (1885-1946) ILP. Opposed WW1 from a pacifist position and was prominent in the Clyde Workers' Committee. Imprisoned in 1916 for sedition. Elected MP for Bridgeton, Glasgow in 1922, a position he held till his death. Wrote a popular biography of Lenin and a 1928 joint manifesto with miners' leader A. J. Cook calling for the overthrow of capitalism.

McDonald, Ramsay. (1886-1937) First Labour Party Prime Minister in 1924. Headed second Labour government 1929-1931 when he opposed Trotsky's asylum application. From 1931-1935 he headed a National Government in which the Conservatives were in a majority. He was expelled from the Labour Party and widely denounced as a traitor.

Montagu, Ivor. (1904-1984) Born into a very wealthy family, he established the British Film Society and counted Sergei Eisenstein among his friends. Worked as producer on a number of Hitchcock films. Founded the International Table Tennis Federation in 1926. Was friendly to Trotsky and visited him on Prinkipo; ultimately he threw in his lot with Stalinism and for a time spied for the Soviet union.

Moseley, Cynthia. (1898-1933) Daughter of Lord Curzon and first wife of Oswald Moseley. They divorced and she did not follow Moseley in his journey to fascism. Briefly Labour MP for Stoke on Trent and supporter of the ILP. Did not stand in the 1931 general election. Died suddenly of acute peritonitis after an operation.

POUM. (Workers' Party of Marxist Unification). Formed in 1935 by Andres Nin and Jaquin Maurin. Was strong in Catalonia and organised its own militia during the Spanish Revolution. Although at one time close to Trotsky, he and Nin parted company. The POUM was ultimately suppressed by the Spanish Communist Party, Nin was captured by Stalinist agents, tortured and shot.

'Second and a Half International' (International Working Union of Socialist Parties, also Vienna Bureau) Arose from a dissatisfaction with both the Second and Third International. Formed in Feb. 1923, its first secretary was Vienna-based Friedrich Adler. Otto Bauer and Julius Martov were also prominent participants. It was supported by the ILP. It had a short and inauspicious existence and in May 1923 returned (with the exception of the ILP) to the fold of the Second International

Shachtman, Max. (1904-1972) Born in Warsaw but his parents moved to New York in 1905. An early member of the American Communist Party, he was expelled in 1928 along

with Martin Abern, James P. Cannon and others for supporting the International Left opposition. Visited Trotsky on Prinkipo. Differences with Cannon and the SWP majority led to a split in 1940 after which he established the Workers' Party. In 1949 this became the Independent Socialist League but in 1958 the ISL dissolved and joined the Socialist Party. Later in life Shachtman aligned himself with the US Democrats and in 1961 refused to condemn the attempted invasion of Cuba at the Bay of Pigs. His advocacy of the 'Third Camp' position has been very influential.

Third Period. The phase in the history of the Comintern, introduced at the 1928 Congress, when it was decided that the world was entering a revolutionary period and all social democrats were denounced as 'social fascists'. The result was that the Communist Parties around the world became isolated, sectarian and increasingly viewed with suspicion if not hostility by many sections of the militant working class. The rise of the Nazis in 1933 brought the 'Third Period' to an abrupt end and it was replaced by the 'PopularFront'.

Webb, Beatrice. (1858-1943) Longstanding Fabian and one of the founders of the London School of Economics (LSE). Joined Labour Party in 1924. Wrote (with her husband) 'Soviet Communism: A New Civilisation?' (later editions deleted the question mark) which was uncritical of Stalin.

Webb, Sydney. (1859-1947) Along with Beatrice Webb was long standing Fabian and co-founder of the LSE. Labour MP for Seaham in County Durham from 1922. One of the founders of the New Statesman. In 1929 became Lord Passfield.

Wilkinson, Ellen. (1891-1947) An early member of the Communist Party she switched to Labour and the ILP and was elected MP for Middlesbrough East in 1924. Later, MP for Jarrow. A strong supporter of the Spanish Republic, she became Minister for Education in the post-WW2 Labour government, led by Clement Atlee.

Appendix 1: Some Writings on the Labour Party, Centrism and the ILP

Cohen, Gidon. 'The Independent Labour Party, 1932-1939.' PhD Thesis. University of York. Sept. 2000 (available online).

Milliband, Ralph. *Parliamentary Socialism*. London: Merlin Press, 1972. Good general background.

Trotsky, Leon. *Problems of the British Revolution*. London: New Park Publications, 1972. A collection of various articles including polemics with Henry Brailsford and Bertrand Russell.

-----, *Where is Britain Going?* (orig. 1925). London: New Park Publication, 1970. Chap. 4 is a critique of Fabianism

-----, 'Whither the Independent Labour Party?' *Writings 1933-4. Militant* 23 Sept. 1933.

-----, 'The Paris Conference: A Firm Nucleus for a New International.' *Writings 1933-4. Militant*, 23 Sept. 1933.

-----, 'The ILP and the New International'. *Writings 1933-4. Militant*, 30 Sept. 1933.

-----, 'An interview by C. A. Smith.' *Writings 1933-4. New Leader*, 13 Oct. 1933.

-----, 'How to Influence the ILP'. *Writings 1933-4. Internal Bulletin*, British Section of the International Left Opposition, Nos. 15-16, 24 Oct. 1933.

-----, 'The Lever of a Small Group'. *Writings 1933-4. Militant, Internal Bulletin*, British Section of the International Left Opposition, Nos. 15-16, 24 Oct. 1933.

Appendix 2: Jim Callaghan's speech in Parliament. 19 Jan, 1971.

What we wish to raise on this Adjournment Motion is the handling by, and the policy of, the Home Secretary in relation to the refusal to allow Mr. Dutschke to remain in this country as a student. We hope to get a satisfactory explanation from the right hon. Gentleman of his reasons and of his policy on these matters.

A number of people say, "Why bother? Why waste the time of the House with an obscure, or not so obscure, student who holds extremist views, is very unpopular, clearly commands very little support, and to whom we owe no hospitality?" It is a view which has been expressed to me in a number of letters. However, I think that it misunderstands both the nature of the British tradition and the nature and quality of our democracy. If a simple issue like this, as it is regarded, is to be dismissed without taking up the time of the House, even if it is thought to be important—I believe that it is important—then, in a time when standards are faltering, when a number of our traditions are being undermined—a number of them very desirable traditions—we should be taking one more step on a path which would lead downwards, not upwards.

It is important to go back to what the Home Secretary gave as his reasons for excluding Mr. Dutschke, when he ORDERS OF THE DAY was asked as long ago as last August, especially in view of the developments which have taken place since and all the other new issues which have been introduced.

The Home Secretary, on 25th August, in turning him down, said: Jim made it a condition of his admission"— that is, Dutschke's admission— that he should refrain from political activities and I should certainly not be prepared to withdraw any such condition. But I frankly do not believe that it is a satisfactory condition to make in any but the most exceptional circumstances. I think it is wrong in principle that people who come to this country should do so on the basis that they refrain from any activities which are lawful for the ordinary citizen. Nor do I think in practice that such a condition could be enforced. I am afraid, therefore, that I cannot agree that Mr. Dutschke should now continue to reside in this country as a student. As I understand that, the Home Secretary was saying that it was not satisfactory to require him to refrain from political activities, that it was wrong in principle, that it could not be enforced, and, therefore, he could not agree to him remaining.

That was the major issue which arose at that time. There was a subsidiary reason: that, as he is now fit enough to undertake full-time study, it is reasonable to conclude that his period of convalescence is complete and we should put a term to his stay in this country for that purpose.

Those were the only two reasons which were adduced at that time: first, that it was wrong, except in the most exceptional circumstances, to try to exact an undertaking of this kind; and, secondly, that it was unenforceable; and, subsidiary to that, that his convalescence was now complete.

Did the right hon. Gentleman have any other reasons at that time? If so, it would have been more open and frank if he had exposed them. Did the right hon. Gentleman have in mind that the nation's security was at stake—the very procedure which he has invoked—because he did not say a word about it? The right hon. Gentleman did not even say that Dutschke had failed to observe the conditions which had been laid down. I really find myself wondering—I must put this to the Home Secretary, and I expect a candid answer from him—why he did not at that time say that in his view the security of the nation was involved and that Dutschke had failed to observe the conditions.

Even if the right hon. Gentleman says that he did not want to raise the first question—I can understand the arguments, though I should not think that they were right, and I do not agree with them—it would have been more frank to say to those sponsoring Mr. Dutschke's entry, "This man has not observed his condition." But the Home Secretary did not say that. The nearest he got to it was to say that in practice such a condition could not be enforced. The right hon. Gentleman did not say, "And, what is more, he has not endeavoured to abide by it."

As far as I can see, this fact is hotly disputed. I shall argue in a moment that in my view—these are matters of judgment—Dutschke broadly kept to his undertaking. [Interruption.] If the argument is that he did not, then I should have expected him to be warned about it. I should have expected somebody to have said to those sponsoring him, "Look here, this man is having discussions in his study on political questions. He is sitting quietly at a meeting. We regard this as going beyond the bounds of the undertaking which he gave. If he is going to stay here, he should observe strictly the requirements which were laid down."

But not a word was said—[Interruption.] I will come to my part later. There is no reason why I should not. If the hon. Gentleman wants to say anything, no doubt he will.

That is the first question that I want to raise. I ask the Home Secretary clearly: on what grounds is he standing in refusing this man permission to study here?

Many people do not need any grounds or reasons. They just want to rely upon their prejudices. I have had letters from them. There are those for whom it is sufficient that Dutschke is a German or, as they more usually say, a Hun, and, therefore, he should not be allowed to remain in this country.

There are those who say that he is a student. That clearly condemns him out of hand—and a student who wants to study here clearly has committed a double error.

Then there is the—I should not dignify it by the word "argument"—prejudice that is exposed in some correspondence, "He is keeping our boys out of university. It is wrong that a German foreign student should keep a British boy out of a university."

Then there are those for whom it is sufficient to say—it is getting nearer to an argument, but it is basically a prejudice—"The man holds extremist views. We owe him nothing. Let him get out."

Then there are those who say, "We are in national danger. Our traditions are in danger of being undercut. Our values are being undermined. We do not want this man here to continue that process. Therefore, Dutschke should go."

The Home Secretary has given some countenance to this by using the procedure of hearing part of the case in camera and involving the security of the nation. I would never accuse the right hon. Gentleman of beginning to get anywhere near a smear. I do not say that the right hon. Gentleman was trying to smear the man, but he made a basic mistake in his handling of this case by introducing the state of the nation's security. It gives rise to all those who say, "The Home Secretary knows. There is never smoke without fire. There is much more to this than we think. He has involved the national security." It is that which is opened up by this reference.

Where does the Home Secretary stand in this gallery? Does he espouse any of these particular reasons or prejudices which my correspondents have adduced to me as the reasons for not allowing this man to stay here? It is a pretty odoriferous brew when one adds it up compounded by a mixture of hatred of foreigners and dislike of students. [...] What is the Home Secretary's attitude? We will hear later. I gather that one of the right hon. Gentleman's complaints, so it is said by the newspapers in the kind of statements which we get, is that he feels that his case has not been fully deployed, although those who are opposed to him have had their full say. I have seen that said more than once in the Press. I understand what he means after listening to the Attorney-General in the Tribunal, when I heard him floundering as he did. There is no other word to describe the manner in which he dealt with Mr. Dutschke. I think that the Home Secretary has a point, and he now has the opportunity of making the case which has failed to be made before. I hope that he will take advantage of this opportunity to explain it. I understand his policy, but I find his handling of the matter unsatisfactory.

The Chief Whip is sitting there looking as innocent as a new born babe. Was he responsible for the statement that the Whips were rubbing their hands at the prospect of a debate on this issue? [...] Is it because they want to cash in on the anti-foreign feeling, the xenophobia, that exists beneath the surface in many people in this country? Do they want to do the job which the right hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Powell) did on race? Let hon. Gentlemen opposite know of the passions and prejudice which they are arousing on this matter, especially by their intolerant handling of it, and the Attorney-General did nothing in his intervention in the Tribunal to allay those feelings.

Having gone very carefully into the facts, I do not know how much more we shall learn this afternoon about Mr. Dutschke and his activities, but I think the Home Secretary must take note of the fact that we shall learn a great deal about him. We shall learn what is his attitude and his approach to this issue. We shall learn, and it is important that we should learn, what is his future policy on these matters.

The right hon. Gentleman will have received a letter, as I have, signed by a number of. I hardly dare say it, students at Cambridge, who write to say that they have always associated the idea of 748 tolerance of different political views with the United Kingdom and they ask the Home Secretary to make explicit the limits and conditions imposed upon foreign students with respect to political association, discussion, and other political activities. They go on to say: We hope that before Parliament enacts new legislation governing the entry and continued residence of foreign students you will encourage and participate in the widest possible discussion of it. That is signed by a group of students from many countries—Canada, France, the United States, Australia, Finland, Sierre Leone, Japan, Jordan, South Africa, Israel, Argentina, and so on.

Perhaps they ought not to be here at all, and there are many people who think that they should not. There are about 24,000 foreign students studying in this country, but are any

conditions laid down for them? I expect and hope to hear the Home Secretary say "No". We are, however, entitled to expect a certain reticence from foreign students living in this country in relation to our domestic affairs and there would be.

An Hon. Member

What about Tariq Ali?

§ Mr. Callaghan

He is not a foreigner. He is a Commonwealth student who is registered as a British citizen, but that is another question. I am referring to foreign students who come here. We are entitled to expect a certain reticence from them. I do not dispute that but, in relation to what they do at their universities, and because they traditionally associate this country with tolerance, I should not expect any interference with their activities at university.

I remember that the first time I went to the Oxford Union I found that an American was president. I never had the good fortune to go there as a student—if it was bad fortune not to go there. The next time it was an Indian who was president. These students take an active part in our political affairs, and many of them hold different offices at our universities. What is to be the principle? We must return to this. The Home Secretary is nodding. He should tell us again whether the traditional view which has been observed in this matter will continue in relation to these foreign students. I do not suppose that it will be altered at all, but it is going to make a little more difficult this afternoon the right hon. Gentleman's explanation why he refuses to allow Mr. Dutschke to stay here if there is to be no alteration in our traditional approach to these matters.

Appendix 3: British legislation and other measures on migration and asylum. A record of infamy.

What follows is by no means a comprehensive list and attempts to mention only the most important and impacting acts and other measures. Statutory Instruments (used to update or amend existing primary legislation) are not mentioned.

1905: ***Aliens Act***. Mainly aimed at restricting immigration from Eastern Europe and Russia, most of whom were Jewish.

1914: ***Status of Aliens' Act***. From this date on every entry into Britain had to show proof of identity.

1919: ***Alien Restrictions Amendment Act***.

1920: ***Aliens Order***. Gave wide-ranging powers to the Home Secretary.

1925: ***Coloured Alien Seamen Order***. Overtly racist legislation, in effect a 'colour bar', banning black sailors from working on British ships.

1947: ***Polish Resettlement Act***.

- 1949: ***Ireland Act***. Introduced after Irish Free State became the Irish Republic.
- 1953: ***Aliens Order***.
- 1962: ***Commonwealth Immigrants Act***.
- 1965: ***British Nationality Act***.
- 1968: ***Commonwealth Immigrants Act II***.
- 1971: ***Immigration Act***. Updated 2012.
- 1994: **‘Golden Visa Scheme’**. Designed for wealthy individuals or companies intending to invest in UK bonds up to a threshold of £1m, later raised to £2m. The scheme was expanded in 2011.
- 2021: Points-based immigration system introduced after UK had left the EU
- 2004: ***The Accession State Workers Registration Act***. Restricted incoming workers from 8 EU member states (ended in 2011).
- 2004: ***Gateway Protection Programme*** (in partnership with UNHCR and EU). In March 2020, the GRP was closed after settling only *594 applicants per year* in a 15 year period
- 2006: ***Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act***.
- 2008: Free English language tuition for migrants scrapped.
- 2021: ***Hong Kong British (National Overseas) Act***.
- 2021: ***Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme***.
- 2021 ***Afghan Relocations and Assistance Programme***.
- 2021: ***UK Resettlement Scheme***. Replaces Gateway Protection Programme and Syrian Vulnerable Person Resettlement Programme.
- 2022: ***Nationality and Borders Bill***. At the time of writing this Bill has gone through all the various stages of first, second and third readings in the Lords and the House of Commons. Amendments are being discussed and finalised, after which, given the government’s majority, it will probably receive Royal Assent and become law.
- 2022: At the time of writing the government has announced plans to deport or ‘offshore’ ‘illegal migrants’ to Rwanda.

Acknowledgements, sources and references

Most of the information regarding Trotsky's life, particularly his exile, comes from Isaac Deutscher's biographical trilogy, vol. 3. 'The Prophet Outcast'; Trotsky's autobiography, 'My Life: An Attempt at an Autobiography' and Bertrand Patenaude's 'Stalin's Nemesis: the Exile and Murder of Leon Trotsky' (London: Faber, 2009) were also consulted. For Trotsky's analysis of the political situation in Britain, see his 'Where is Britain Going' (1925) and 'Problems of the British Revolution' (London: New Park Publications, 1972). Many thanks to Liam McNulty for his essay, 'Trotsky's English Friends: Leon Trotsky's asylum application and the British Left in the early 1930s' in the journal 'Twentieth Century Communism' (no. 10. Spring, 2016) which proved invaluable. The various quotes from speeches in the British Parliament come from 'Hansard' (easily accessed online). Alexander Herzen's memories of his years in London are contained in 'The Memoirs of Alexander Herzen' Vol. IV (London: Chatto and Windus, 1924). Karl Marx's time in London is covered in many different titles including Yvonne Kapp's two volume biography of his daughter Eleanor, other German exiles in London are discussed in 'Revolutionary Refugees: German Socialism in Britain 1840-60' by Christine Latteck (London: RKP, 2006). Caroline Shaw's 'Britannia's Embrace: Modern Humanitarianism and the Imperial Origins of Refugee Relief' (Oxford University Press, 2015) proved very useful as did the opening chapters of Matthew Carr's 'Fortress

Europe: Inside the war Against Immigration' (London: Hurst 2012). Nigel Harris' excellent 'Thinking the Unthinkable: The Immigration Myth Exposed' (London: I. B. Tauris, 2002) also proved invaluable. 'Attempts to procure Trotsky asylum in the Irish free State' by Jack Traynor is available online (theirishstory.com) and most of the background to the situation in the Irish Free State came from Dermot Keogh's 'Twentieth-Century Ireland: Nation and State' (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1994). Trotsky's time in Norway is discussed in 'With Trotsky in Norway' by Nils Dahl, 'Revolutionary History' vol. 2 no. 2 Summer 1989 (available online at: marxists.org). For information about King Zog of Albania see Jason Tomes' book, 'King Zog: Self-Made Monarch of Albania' (London: Sutton, 2003). There is much written about the ILP. I have found Gidon Cohen's PhD thesis, mentioned in appendix 1, very useful and informative as was Ralph Miliband's 'Parliamentary Socialism' (London: Merlin Press, 1972). Katharina Karcher of Birmingham University was generous in sending me two essays she has written on Rudi Dutschke: 'The Pleasure and Pain of Passing (Dis)abled: Rudi Dutschke's Exile in the United Kingdom (1969-1971) and the Ableism of the West German Student Movement' in 'New German Critique' 144, Vol. 48, no. 3 Nov. 2021 and 'A Threat to National Security? The Legal Dispute Between "Red Rudi" and the British Home Office, 1970-71.' To be published in 'Contemporary European History'. The issue of constitutional asylum is discussed in 'Comparative Perspectives of Asylum in France, Italy and Germany: *Requiescat in Pace?*' by Helene Lambert et al. 'Refugee Survey Quarterly' Vol. 27. No. 3, 2008, pp 16-32. [The Latin phrase means 'Rest in Peace']. Thanks to Ioan Nedelcu of TopFoto for permission to use the famous 'Punch' cartoon of Trotsky and J. R. Clynes. Thanks to Neal Ascherson for so generously responding to my request for information on his acquaintance with Rudi Dutschke. I wrote to the Institute of Astronomy at Cambridge asking them if they could confirm that R. A. Gregory had indeed signed the petition to help Trotsky in 1930 – reply came there none. Likewise, I received no reply from ASLEF to my request for any information on the union's stance on Trotsky's asylum request in 1929. I asked Tariq Ali, via the 'London Review of Books', for any reminiscences he might like to share about the 'Dutschke affair' but received no reply.