

Between Empire  
and Revolution:  
A Life of Sidney  
Bunting, 1873–1936

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*Allison Drew*



Number 1

BETWEEN EMPIRE AND REVOLUTION:  
A LIFE OF SIDNEY BUNTING, 1873–1936

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A LIFE OF SIDNEY BUNTING, 1873–1936

BY

Allison Drew



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They that go down to the sea in ships:  
and occupy their business in great waters;  
these men see the works of the Lord:  
and his wonders in the deep.

For at his word the stormy wind ariseth:  
lifteth up the waves thereof.  
They are carried up to the heaven,  
and down again to the deep:

So when they cry unto the lord in their trouble:  
he delivereth them out of their distress.  
Then they are glad.

Because they are at rest:  
And so he bringeth them unto the haven  
where they would be.

From Psalm 107  
Engraved in Shepherd Memorial Chapel  
Christ Church  
Appleton-le-Moors  
North Yorkshire

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ANC	African National Congress
Comintern	Communist International
CPGB	Communist Party of Great Britain
CPSA	Communist Party of South Africa
ECCI	Executive Committee of the Communist International
FNETU	Federation of Non-European Trade Unions
ICU	Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union
ILP	Independent Labour Party
ISL	International Socialist League
IWA	Industrial Workers of Africa
JMR	Johannesburg Mounted Rifles
LAR	League of African Rights
OUMU	Oxford University Musical Union
PB	Political Bureau
UNIA	United Negro Improvement Association

## 1 TO SAVE SOULS

The South African mission stations of Buntingville and Old Bunting, founded in the Eastern Cape in the nineteenth century, were named after Sidney Percival Bunting's great grandfather, Dr Jabez Bunting. Born in 1779 to humble parents in Manchester, England and noticeably bright, Jabez Bunting attended Manchester Grammar School and entered the Wesleyan Methodist ministry in 1799. Convinced of his own rectitude, he sought to change the world around him. Over three decades he built an impressive reputation as a preacher. He moved to London in 1833 and rose up the Wesleyan hierarchy to become the dominant figure in orthodox Wesleyan Methodism. He zealously led the Wesleyan Missionary Society as it spread its tentacles around the globe, reaching from North America to South Africa. Rigid and authoritarian, 'a born disciplinarian' who centralized control by expelling critics and dissidents, Jabez Bunting broke Methodism from its Anglican base and established it as an independent self-governing church.<sup>1</sup>

The Wesleyan tradition in which Jabez Bunting raised his family promoted the ideal of service to worthy causes. This reflected the personage of its founder, John Wesley, whose message to his followers was unequivocal: 'You have nothing to do but save souls.' Yet, by attracting the upwardly mobile and economically successful, Wesleyan Methodism was very much 'a religion *for* the poor'. In contrast, Methodism's working-class strand, known as Primitive Methodism, was 'a religion *of* the poor' – but most working-class Methodists preferred compromise and conciliation to class struggle and socialism. Methodist societies were insular and strictly disciplined; marriage to those outside the fold was frowned upon, and a 'spiritual police' kept careful watch for signs of moral slippage.<sup>2</sup>

Jabez Bunting married Sarah Maclardie. They had three boys and three girls. The first son, William Maclardie Bunting, continued in his father's footsteps as a Wesleyan minister.<sup>3</sup> The second son, Thomas Percival Bunting – Sidney's grandfather – was a Manchester solicitor and, like leading Methodists of his day, 'a strong party man on the Tory side'. He was also a wit with a flair for writing who loved penning rhymes for his grandchildren. 'The Duke of York, the Duke of York, Was very fond of roasted pork', went a favourite ditty. 'Sir Humphrey Davy made the gravy, And Old John Dalton put the Salt on.'<sup>4</sup>

Inspired by his father and older brother, Thomas Bunting published biographies of both. He married Elizabeth Bealey, the daughter of Lancashire bleachers who had carried on their trade for three centuries. Thomas and Elizabeth Bunting passed on the Wesleyan heritage and high aspirations to their own four children. The eldest child, Percy William Bunting – Sidney's father – was born in Manchester in 1836. Also intellectually gifted, he was one of the first students at Owens College, Manchester, forerunner of the University of Manchester. He went on to read mathematics at Pembroke College, Cambridge. There, he attended the Jesus Lane Sunday School, where he met Sheldon Amos, another Cambridge man and the youngest son of the noted jurist Professor Andrew Amos. Percy and Sheldon became good friends. Percy graduated as twentieth wrangler in 1859, and then, following his father, turned to law. In 1862 he was called to the bar at Lincoln's Inn, the oldest of four Inns of Court, centuries-old unincorporated bodies of lawyers who determined who could practise law at the bar.<sup>5</sup>

Nonconformists – those whose religious beliefs led them to dissent from the dominant Church of England – faced political and social disabilities; middle-class Nonconformists felt these keenly and aspired to the social status of their Anglican counterparts. But by the late nineteenth century Wesleyan Methodism had become respectable.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, its values sat easily with Victorian society's 'gospel of work' and censure of idleness. Methodism remained actively concerned with saving souls but believed that individuals could save themselves by their personal commitment. Methodists encouraged judicious reforms and eschewed open social conflict.<sup>7</sup>

Percy Bunting was a passionate Methodist and, unlike his father, a committed Liberal. His liberal views extended from the political realm to the religious: within the Methodist fold he was 'the trusted adviser and supporter of all promoters of liberal advance'.<sup>8</sup> He dedicated his life to social welfare, particularly to what was then known as moral purity. His political and religious activities took him frequently to the continent. There, while walking in the Wengern Alp in Switzerland in 1863, he met Mary Hyett Lidgett. She was a trim, austere woman with a serious gaze who, in the style of the day, wore her dark hair parted in the middle and pulled back in a low bun. They had in common not only their religious and social backgrounds – both born into well-connected, socially prominent Methodist families who had only recently moved to London from the provinces – but a mutual interest in issues of social justice and morality. But theirs was a long courtship. Mary had to overcome her mother's resistance; she had hoped her daughter would make a better match.

Mary Hyett Lidgett was born in London in 1840, the second daughter of John and Ann Lidgett. John Lidgett, a sea captain and shipowner and the son of a pilot on the Humber, had turned to Methodism as a young man in Hull. His wife, Ann Hyett of Gloucester, was raised an Anglican, but embraced Method-

ism as a young girl. Ann's younger sister Mary Hyett remained an Anglican and wed Joseph Shepherd, also a sea captain, who made his fortune in shipping. He had been born in the tiny North Yorkshire village of Appleton-le-Moors, one of sixteen children, ten of whom had died in infancy. Linked as brothers-in-law through their wives, in 1841 John Lidgett and Joseph Shepherd became business partners in Hull.<sup>9</sup>

If Sidney's paternal line of family first made contact with South Africa through missionary work, his maternal line made it through trade and colonial settlement. Lidgett and Shepherd began trading in guano obtained from one of the Penguin Islands off the south-western coast of Africa – now Namibia. The partnership was short-lived, and John Lidgett tried organizing emigration to Natal Colony; at the time, Wesleyan missionaries were seeking to persuade English Methodists of means to purchase land in Natal Colony to help spread the doctrine.<sup>10</sup> Lidgett found receptive ears in northeast England, which had been hard hit by a depression in the late 1840s. The port of Hull suffered badly with high unemployment, and Hull shipowners petitioned Parliament to retain the Navigation Laws that protected trade. But the *Hull Advertiser* advocated free trade and railed against 'those who cling to the last plank in the rotten and sinking raft of Protection'.<sup>11</sup> It dedicated a column to the 'Hull Workhouse' and ran a series called 'Inquiry into the Social Condition of the Working Classes in Hull'. Emigration seemed an ideal solution, one that accorded with both economy and gospel.

The attraction of emigration to South Africa was spelled out in January 1849 in a lecture newsworthy enough for the local press. The speaker highlighted the advantages of Natal Colony, not least 'the cheap supply of labour which could be obtained from the Zulu's [*sic*], who are capable of doing a great quantity of rough work, and might soon be trained for all kinds of labour, under the direction of a European labourer'. Adults could purchase ship passage and twenty acres of land for £10. The following year a lecture in nearby Beverley described Natal Colony as 'one of the most promising sites of emigration'. A local Methodist minister offered prayers for Hull's renewed commercial prosperity to maintain the 'missions to the heathens'. 'Africa was 8,000 miles long and 3,000 miles broad,' he informed his listeners, 'so there was room enough to work'.<sup>12</sup>

About one thousand people left Yorkshire in 1849–50 on various emigration schemes bound for Natal. John Lidgett's scheme was 'perhaps the best managed of all', even though he never made a significant profit. He purchased ten thousand acres of land along the Lions River in Natal, advertising ship passage and the 'advantages of beginning a new life in the Colony'. In 1849 four of Lidgett's ships carried close to 250 immigrants, mostly Methodists dreaming of a better life. The ships landed at Durban. But the aspiring settlers faced a harsh existence. The local buildings, even in Durban, were wattle and daub, not stone and brick,

and the journey to the remote site known as Lidgett's Town took several days by ox-wagon. Many of them gave up their land rights, which reverted to Lidgett.<sup>13</sup>

John and Ann Lidgett settled at Morden Hill, Blackheath, south of Greenwich. Their daughter Mary showed artistic and musical talent but had to leave school at fifteen due to poor health. However, she was able to travel to Europe with her sisters. On a trip to Italy in 1862–3 she became passionately interested in Giuseppe Mazzini's Young Italy Association and the movement to unite Italy, an issue that attracted the sympathy of many English liberals of the day. On the way back to England, the sisters went walking in the Wengern Alp in Switzerland and met Percy Bunting.

Percy and Mary finally married in 1869. After their marriage they moved to 14 Oakley Square in Somers Town, St Pancras, an area stretching north-west from the main thoroughfare of Euston Road, sandwiched between two railway stations, Euston, and the newly-built spectacular iron and glass St Pancras. They lived comfortably, with two servants. Oakley Square, consisting of smart four-storey houses arranged around a long narrow garden, was one of the better areas of Somers Town, and was situated opposite the red-bricked Working Men's College founded in 1854 by Charles Kingsley and F. D. Maurice. Between Oakley Square and Somers Town Chapel on Seymour Street, which led down to Euston Road, lay blocks of modest houses, the homes of many of the labourers who had helped build St Pancras Station.<sup>14</sup>

The next year, Sheldon Amos married Percy's youngest sister Sarah. Born around 1840, Sarah had moved to London in 1865, where she helped found the Working Women's College in Queen Square and became the lady superintendent. Sarah was a plain-looking woman, with a long face and dark hair tied back in a bun. Like her brother Percy she had faced resentment from her mother-in-law for marrying up. In the eyes of Sheldon's family Sarah was 'a strange, impulsive, uncomfortable, most unusual young woman; with no money' – she worked to earn her living – and 'no family that anyone ever heard of' – after all, her father was a Manchester solicitor. And to top it off, she was a Dissenter, a Nonconformist. But she had surmounted her father's prejudices to acquire an education and become a school mistress, and she had an intense, almost mystical personality. She always succeeded in 'at once establishing an atmosphere of equality', no matter whom she met.

Sarah and Sheldon were idealists. Sheldon, tall and thin with a dreamy faraway expression in his eyes, wore a moustache and long scraggly beard that pointed in two directions at the end. He had been called to the bar in 1862 and was appointed as reader at the Inner Temple. In 1869 he became Professor of Jurisprudence at the non-sectarian University College, London – the 'Godless College' of Gower Street – which had been inspired by the philosophy of Jeremy Bentham. A believer in reconciliation, whose views had been shaped by J.

S. Mill and F. D. Maurice amongst others, he desired 'to be a moral teacher'. He taught democracy and government at the Working Women's College, where he and Sarah had met, and law at the Working Men's College. The couple were then living in East Street, 'a mean street in the neighbourhood of Theobold's Row', an area they had chosen 'in order to be amongst the poor'. They were in constant contact with Percy and Mary Bunting.<sup>15</sup> The two young couples had much in common. All four were committed social activists, particularly concerned with moral purity and involved with Josephine Butler and James Stansfeld in the campaign to repeal the 1864 Contagious Diseases Act. This law enabled policemen to arrest alleged prostitutes and subject them to compulsory health checks for venereal disease, even though men were not subjected to similar sanctions.<sup>16</sup> However, Percy and Mary were upwardly mobile and faithfully followed the social conventions of their class, while Sheldon and Sarah were known at times to practice their convictions at the expense of their own comfort.

Yet Percy and his sister Sarah got along famously. Sarah's interests were many: anti-vaccination, anti-vivisection, vegetarianism, homeopathy and temperance to name but few. She loved to argue and would stay up late into the night engaged in all sorts of debates. These were not always lofty: on one such occasion she castigated her brother Percy 'for wearing elastic-sided boots – *horresco referens*; that good and clever man was indifferent to appearances'.<sup>17</sup> Following the tradition of the day, Percy and Mary did not wait to have children: their eldest child, Evelyn Mary, was born on 7 April 1870. For most of the century, large families had been the norm, but by the 1870s this was changing. Percy and Mary followed this trend. Sidney was born at Oakley Square on 29 June 1873, three years after his older sister. In the meantime, Sheldon and Sarah's son Maurice was born on 15 June 1872, and their daughter Cornelia Bonté, on 19 July 1874.<sup>18</sup>

By the time Percy and Mary's third child, Dora Elizabeth, was born on 6 January 1877, the family had moved south to 43 Euston Square, squeezed between Euston Station and Euston Road. Little Sidney was about four. By then, his uncle Sheldon had become debilitated by severe asthma and kidney disease. Percy was so concerned that in mid-1879 he visited a medical clairvoyant in the hope of getting some insight into Sheldon's condition, to no avail.

In August 1879, when Sidney was six, his uncle Sheldon and aunt Sarah left England with their two children in search of better climes. They ended up in Egypt. Captivated by the country, Sheldon obtained a position at the Alexandria bar. In 1882, when the British army occupied Egypt, Sheldon was offered a post on the newly-created Native Court of Appeal in Cairo; Sarah ran a home for emancipated women slaves.<sup>19</sup> That same year, when Sidney was nine, Percy Bunting's career took a new turn. It kept him and the family firmly in London, where Sidney grew up, but it brought politics, both national and international, directly into their home and their lives.



## 2 GOD AND GLADSTONE

Despite Percy Bunting's highly prestigious position at Lincoln's Inn, he 'never attained high place at the Bar nor gained a great practice'. Nonetheless, he earned a good income through conveyancing, and the family was very comfortable by the standards of the day. His middling performance as a barrister may have been because 'he possessed too much versatility and did not sufficiently concentrate on his legal profession'.<sup>1</sup> Instead, like his father Thomas, he 'drifted into literature'. In 1882 he became editor of the prestigious *Contemporary Review*, founded in 1862 by Alexander Strahan. With an editorial style deemed 'consistently moderate and judicious, eschewing sensationalism of any kind', he held the position for the rest of his life.<sup>2</sup> He used his position as editor to ensure that issues he felt were important were given their just due and discussed from a variety of angles and viewpoints, helping to shape the intellectual, religious and political debates of the day.

The Buntings moved again, this time to 18 Endsleigh Gardens in leafy Bloomsbury. The family was moving up in the world. Although Methodists and other Nonconformists still faced social disadvantages, the Buntings' religious beliefs and championing of unpopular causes did not deny them a secure niche in late nineteenth-century English society. Endsleigh Gardens lay just south of and parallel to Euston Road, off Upper Woburn Place, across from the imposing six-columned St Pancras Parish Church. The houses there were much larger and grander than their first home at Oakley Square. The Bunting household had grown. It included four children (the youngest, Sheldon Arthur Steward, was born on 29 May 1882), Percy's spinster aunt Emma Bunting, and a number of servants. Several years later they moved a few houses down to number 11, a stately four-storey house, with a two-columned stoop and a narrow terrace elegantly decorated with a wrought iron balustrade that ran across the front. Around the corner from Endsleigh Gardens, down Taviton Street, where the Methodist preacher Hugh Price Hughes lived at number 8, was Gordon Square. Mary's unmarried sister Elizabeth Sedman Lidgett lived at 40 Gordon Square. Other Lidgetts lived at Blackheath.<sup>3</sup>

The Bunting home at number 11 was the site of bustling activity, full of relatives and friends. Victorian society placed strong strictures on women, along with the sharp divide between the domestic and public spheres. Nonetheless, middle-class women had options in philanthropic work, if their husbands were open-minded, and political influence as hostesses in their own drawing and dining rooms, where they entertained public figures and politicians – the domestic sphere was not entirely private.<sup>4</sup> Sidney's mother excelled in these activities, while Percy himself was 'delightfully urbane' and 'an admirable talker'; conversation flowed from his tongue.<sup>5</sup> To visit the Buntings, recalled one visitor, 'was in itself a liberal education ... one met people of various nations and tongues, amongst them the upholders of unpopular causes and forlorn hopes. At the table were pioneers and reformers, all sure of a sympathetic hearing.'<sup>6</sup>

Mary's nephew, the Reverend John Scott Lidgett, born in 1854 to Mary's oldest brother John Jacob Lidgett and Maria Elizabeth Scott Lidgett, was a regular visitor to the Bunting home, and he and Percy often worked on committees together. By the 1880s he had developed a reputation as an up-and-coming proponent of Wesleyan Methodist reform who hoped to prove 'to his contacts in other denominations that his Church was aware of current theological thinking'. He owed much to Mary and Percy, crediting them with 'unfailing stimulus' and the 'broadening' of his views. The Bunting home, he recalled, was 'a centre to which came religious workers, people of literary eminence and lovers of music, politicians and municipal reformers, to say nothing of the leaders of all forms of urgent moral and social advance'.<sup>7</sup>

Percy and Mary's marriage revolved around their religious values and common interests. As one perhaps idealized account put it, 'they were completely at one in their aims and purposes', yet 'in disposition and temperament so complementary ... that their partnership was perfect'. Mary Bunting was particularly concerned with the plight of poor and working-class girls and women. She visited the dreary St Pancras Workhouse week in week out, a familiar figure with a fringed shawl around her shoulders. She was active in the movement to reform London music halls, seen by some as dens of iniquity, and she ran an office for the Metropolitan Association for Befriending Young Servants in her own home, receiving frequent visits from Poor Law school girls and other servant girls. She often invited girls and women to stay in the large family home. Her sister Elizabeth was an authority on Poor Law administration and a life-long member of the St Pancras Board of Guardians.<sup>8</sup>

Percy sat on the executive committee of the National Liberal Federation, founded in 1877 as the Liberal Party's extra-parliamentary organization. Its formation was a response to the widening male franchise; its development inevitably posed the question of the appropriate relationship between Liberal MPs and the party's grass-roots supporters. Percy's election to the executive commit-

tee signalled his national standing with the Liberal Party. He was constantly busy with the *Contemporary*, as it was known colloquially, and becoming well known through his editorial work. He conducted much of the *Contemporary's* work from his law office at 11 Old Square, Lincoln's Inn, W. C. But as the 1880s progressed, his work for the *Contemporary* was often done at home. He also worked closely with Hugh Price Hughes, who launched the *Methodist Times* in 1885 and who was trying to transform the Wesleyan Connexion, as it was then known, into the Methodist Church. Percy was involved in myriad social causes and could receive any number of callers on any one day. 'It would be hard to name a social reform movement at home, or an oppressed nationality abroad which he did not help by voice or pen,' noted one admirer.<sup>9</sup>

Theirs was an extremely cultured home. They were an exceptionally musical family. Percy's unusual musical talent – the piano was his *forté* – was inherited by Evelyn, the oldest child, who played the cello, and Sidney, who was enamoured with the violin. Percy and the two eldest children would engage in frequent musical trios. Then there were the Saturday museum outings. Percy would lead the children on weekend treks to London's museums, an enthusiasm fostered by the growth of museums and galleries in the Victorian era. A museum, wrote influential art critic John Ruskin, was not 'a place of entertainment, but a place of education.'<sup>10</sup> This was a view that Percy Bunting took to heart.

Once the law courts were no longer in session, the entire family went on holiday, often in North Yorkshire. Like many men of their day who did not inherit their wealth but made it, Sidney's uncles John Lidgett and Joseph Shepherd had built country houses: Lidgett's, Kingston House, was on Pembury Road, south of Tunbridge Wells; Shepherd's, Appleton Hall, was in Appleton-le-Moors, his home village, where he had returned as the local benefactor to build the village's first school. Appleton Hall, an imposing two-storey four-columned house with 'coach house, stable and hothouses', was designed by Ryedale architect John Gibson and built in 1858. But Joseph Shepherd died unexpectedly in 1862, and his wife Mary began inviting the family to Appleton in the summers.

Appleton Hall stood at the top of the village, overshadowing the other houses. At first sight, it might have seemed feudal, and Sidney might have appeared the young lord, coming up to his rural domain. But this house was built with new money, representing the commercial bourgeoisie, not the aristocracy. Indeed, although Appleton-le-Moors dated at least as far back as the twelfth century, it was a village of independent farmers who owned their own holdings, rather than an estate village attached to a big house. With its own Methodist community, the village was a congenial locale for visiting Nonconformists. In 1832 twelve local men had organized the building of a Methodist chapel – a small, unpretentious building – in order 'to keep Faith'.<sup>11</sup>

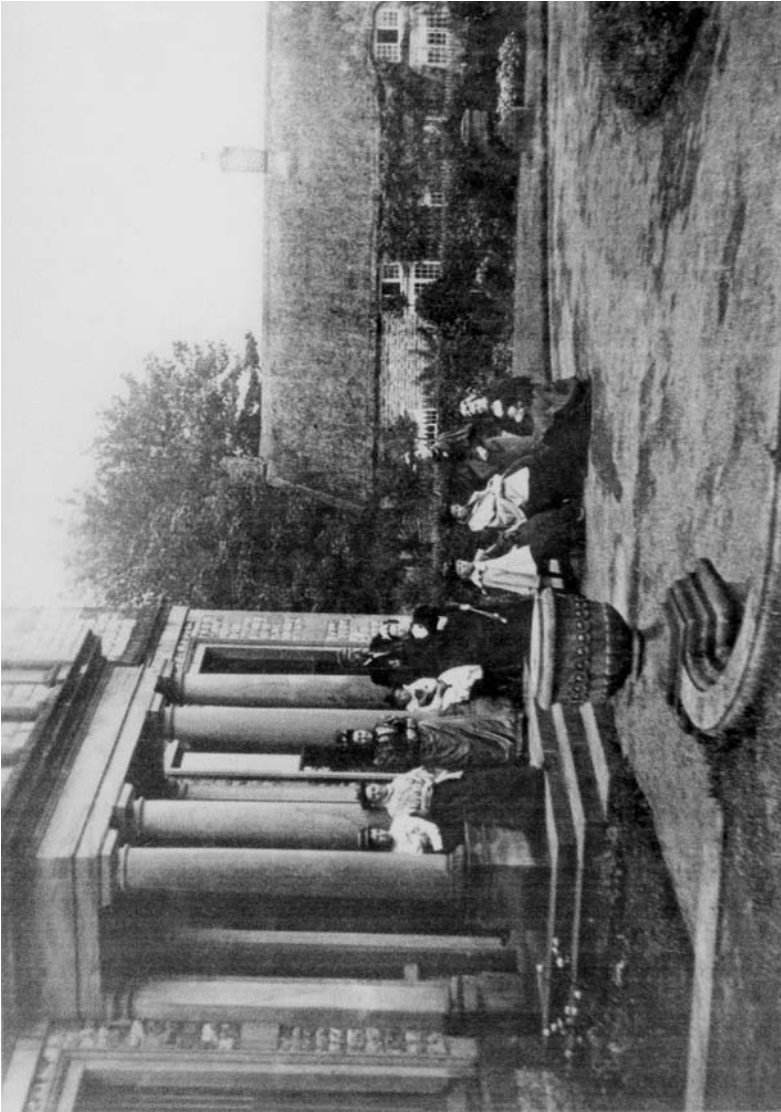


Figure 1: Appleton Hall, *c.* mid-1890s. From left to right, standing on steps, Hilda Lidgett, Francis Lidgett, unknown, Margery Lidgett McDougall, John McDougall, Ellen Lidgett McDougall; seated, Ann Budgett (née Lidgett), Mary Bunting (née Lidgett) Elizabeth Lidgett (standing), Judith Hoole (née Lidgett). Courtesy of Madge Allison.

Mary Shepherd, though, was High Anglican, and in the early 1860s she commissioned an Anglican church – in a High Victorian Gothic style – situated directly across from the hall. The Reverend John Scott Lidgett, who from childhood on had spent many summers at Appleton, was present when the foundation stone was laid. Her home, he recalled, ‘was frequented by the clergy of the immediate neighbourhood, and in particular by the respected vicar of Lastingham’; the atmosphere fostered in him a ‘sympathetic attitude towards the Anglican Church’, which was found amongst the other members of his family as well. Despite Sidney’s family’s unswerving commitment to Nonconformity, their openness towards Anglicanism signalled their religious tolerance.<sup>12</sup>

In 1884, when he was eleven, Sidney began attending University College School, a preparatory day school for boys located on Gower Street, not far from his home. Before that, like his older sister Evelyn, he had received private tuition at home. But Percy and Mary ensured that Sidney – a boy – would have access to all that was needed to step into the secure professional class.

During much of the Victoria era, education had been the responsibility of the church and the family, rather than the state. As a result, one could find a range of schools – charity and parish schools, endowed or ‘free’ schools, and private schools. Endowed schools, especially those known as the great or public schools, were virtually all for boys only. Private schools were run by individuals for profit, and lacking endowments, their existence was precarious; they catered to girls of the middle and upper classes and competed with public schools for male students.<sup>13</sup>

At a time when the relative merits of day versus boarding schools were hotly debated amongst middle-class parents, day schools offered affordable and high-quality education to the sons of professional men of relatively modest means; the annual fee for University College School was £88. But the success of the day school experience depended on the parents’ cooperation. For day school boys, argued Classics tutor Christopher Cookson, ‘the cultivation of a taste for literature and art, for politics, for modern history and modern science, must be left largely to the home and to the holidays.’<sup>14</sup> In both regards, Sidney was lucky.<sup>15</sup>

English public schools of the late nineteenth century stood at the crossroads of tradition and modernity, and were subjected to intense public scrutiny and commissions of investigation. Social pressure for public schools to educate not only the sons of the aristocracy but of the expanding middle and professional class was mounting; there were even calls for access for bright working-class boys. With the Education Act of 1870 public education became the direct responsibility of the state rather than simply a matter of private charity.<sup>16</sup>

Yet public schools still bore the imprint of their centuries-long association with the religious establishment. Most leading headmasters were clerics in the Anglican Church, as were many masters, and only in 1860 did public schools

admit children from Nonconformist families. Leading Methodists – Percy Bunting amongst them – had launched the Leys School in Cambridge in 1875 to cater for the sons of lay Methodists. Interestingly, Percy and Mary did not send Sidney to the Leys. But they were concerned that Sidney be educated in an environment of religious tolerance.<sup>17</sup>

University College School had been founded in 1830 as a feeder school for University College. Like the college, it was dedicated to tolerance and non-discrimination: Catholics, Nonconformists, Jews, agnostics, atheists and even Anglicans could be found amongst its students. The school was known for its distinctive approach to education, which aimed at mental discipline, instilled through frequent examinations rather than corporal punishment. Unusually, the school taught modern subjects – French, German, English, mathematics and sciences – as well as the Classics – Latin and Greek – and there were no compulsory subjects or religious teaching. Students took examinations three times a year, and there were monthly reports to parents. The headmaster, Henry Weston Eve, tall, bespectacled and bewhiskered, was an innovative teacher: one student from 1886–7 recalled him ‘demonstrating the course of the ocean currents by twirling a globe round and at the same time pouring ink over it’.<sup>18</sup>

When Sidney was there the school faced financial problems and uncertain status; it was losing both its aging masters and its students. These problems reflected the general perceptions of middle-class parents that London was not the best place to educate their sons. On his way to school Sidney passed ‘houses where candles and oil lamps were gradually giving way to gas’, walking ‘through old streets ... where there were still mediaeval houses, gabled affairs with overhanging storeys projecting over the road’. Buses and cabs were horse-drawn, and there were frequent traffic jams and accidents. But crucial were the inescapable smells: ‘London fog had not only its peculiar yellowish colour, a regular pea-souper, from the thick coal smoke that poured out of every chimney into the misty air, it had a “peculiar odor” – the stink of bad drainage. Many middle-class parents, ‘holding their collective nose, were drifting from the squares to the suburbs’. But Sidney’s parents were well established in Bloomsbury with its circle of Nonconformity, and they preferred Sidney to stay close to home.

Despite the school’s difficulties, student activities and societies flourished: the Scientific, Debating and Musical Societies were popular. Public school boys with academic aptitude were trained from an early age to compete for academic prizes. These were offered by the headmaster not only for academic success but for worthwhile activities during the holidays – to compensate for the school’s examinations culture. Games played on the adjacent grassy playground were growing in popularity when Sidney was there; they were seen as essential in building an *esprit de corps*. From the outset Sidney showed an aptitude for schol-

arly achievement and, like his father, an ability to do committee work, which he displayed in the school's Musical Society.<sup>19</sup>

Sidney had been at University College School almost two years when his uncle Sheldon died in January 1886. A few months later his widow left Egypt with her two children. She intended to carry out the plan of education that she and her husband had agreed on before his death. In marked contrast to his friends Percy and Mary, Sheldon had not believed in public schools – he had been miserable as a child at Charterhouse. Sarah Amos was to take the children around Europe, where they would learn culture and languages. So, Sarah and her two children came back to Europe. That summer of 1886 Sarah rented a huge thirty-nine-roomed house called Schloss Merzhausen – a former Jesuit Convent – for £3 a week, unfurnished; they purchased furniture and sold it at the end of the summer. It was situated on the side of the Schonberg Mountain in the Black Forest, about three miles from Freiburg in Breisgau. She wrote to the Buntings and invited them to join her.

The entire family came as soon as school let out, bringing with them two Swedish girls, Maria and Sophia Tamm. The girls' father, Hugo Tamm, was a family friend; the girls had stayed with the Buntings over the winter. The sensationalist and radical journalist William Stead, a good friend of Sarah's and of the Buntings, joined them for a week.<sup>20</sup>

Born near Newcastle and raised in a deeply religious home, Stead had begun his career at the Darlington-based *Northern Echo*, which he made into the most important Nonconformist paper in the north. In 1883 he became editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette* in London, by then a Liberal paper. Putting his journalistic ideas into practice, he campaigned for social justice issues – promoting, as but one example, Reverend Andrew Mearns's exposé of urban poverty, *The Bitter Cry of Outcast London: An Inquiry into the Condition of the Abject Poor*. This exposé made a profound impact amongst Wesleyans, not least Sidney's own family. In 1885 Stead began campaigning with Josephine Butler and others on the issue of white slavery. Stead bought a thirteen-year-old girl from her mother for £5 and had her transported to a London brothel, where she was drugged. Stead came to the brothel as the man who would have his way with her – but withdrew and wrote up the story, entitled 'The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon'. It caused an uproar across London. Stead was found guilty of kidnapping the girl and in November 1885 sentenced to six months' hard labour in Holloway Gaol – jailed, ironically, for allegedly doing what he had sought to expose. Undaunted, he edited the paper from prison. It was during this period that he met Percy Bunting, who was treasurer for Stead's defence fund during the prosecution.<sup>21</sup>

Schloss Merzhausen was a child's paradise. Sidney was an impressionable thirteen years old. There were seven children between the ages of ten and seventeen, and four 'lively grown up people' – one of them fairly fresh from prison.

They 'spent long days in the forest picknicking [*sic*] and gathering fruit'. They 'made nests in the hay loft ... sat in the garden reading "King Solomon's Mines" aloud ... played hide and seek all over the vast house' and 'cricket in the long corridors'. But the summer's highlights were the days 'when the whole party, young and old, set off together on a two or three days walking tour, carrying knapsacks and occasionally getting a lift on up hill on a country waggon, and spending the nights at some nicely kept little inn'. Sidney's mother had brought a sketch pad with her and spent many hours trying to capture the scenes, relieved from the pressures of her social crusades. It was a magical summer escape from the strict London routine.<sup>22</sup>

At the end of the summer, the Buntings went back to London. Sidney resumed his studies. That autumn – Michaelmas term 1886 – he received a scholarship covering half his fees. This was quite a distinction. Only a dozen or so of the more than 500 boys each year received a scholarship enabling them to pay the reduced fee of £44.<sup>23</sup>

That same year Percy Bunting began assiduously cultivating a relationship with the renowned Liberal Party leader, William Ewart Gladstone. By then Gladstone had already served three tenures as Prime Minister: the first from 1868 to 1874; the second from 1880 to 1885; and the third from February to July 1886. In the winter of 1885–6 Gladstone had aligned himself with the Irish politician Charles Parnell, leader of the Irish Home Rule movement and the Irish Parliamentary Party. But Gladstone's bill for Irish Home Rule – seen by critics as a challenge to Britain's imperial authority – was defeated in the House of Commons in 1886, following a split amongst Liberal MPs, and he was forced to resign.

It is hard to exaggerate the esteem in which Gladstone – the Grand Old Man of English politics – was held by so many British people. 'Now checked – some say defeated – Gladstone watches o'er the fray', wrote T. E. Sherlock following Gladstone's resignation in 1886. 'Strong – in the justice of his cause – the law stands at bay; Before him stretch the serried ranks opposing freedom's plan, But undismayed, undaunted still – stands England's Grand Old Man ... For liberty and freedom's right – stands England's Brave Old Man.'<sup>24</sup>

The Buntings were fiercely loyal Gladstonians. Percy 'had a supreme admiration for Mr. Gladstone'. He believed in Home Rule 'as a general principle'. Even if he had secret doubts, as he admitted to his nephew Maurice Amos, 'Well the Old Man is in favour of it, and that is enough for me.'<sup>25</sup> Percy wanted Gladstone to write for the *Contemporary* and made his initial overtures to the Old Man by way of his son Herbert Gladstone.<sup>26</sup>

With contact established, he began writing to Gladstone, sending him proofs of forthcoming articles that he thought would be of interest and suggesting possible subjects on which he might write, always hoping that Mr Gladstone



would ‘not misunderstand me or accuse me of impetuosity in this writing. It is a mere suggestion.’<sup>27</sup> If he were reading Mr Gladstone right, he wrote to him on 6 October 1886, ‘you favour the gradual withdrawal of England from European interests’ and a tendency towards ‘a Federation, with the English-speaking nations’. Percy wondered if Mr Gladstone might like to expand on this theme for an article in the *Contemporary*.<sup>28</sup> He had much success; Gladstone contributed to the journal with regularity.

The three Amoses, in the meantime, wintered in Bonn before proceeding to Italy in 1887. They returned to London later that year – the year of the Queen’s Golden Jubilee, marking fifty years of Victoria’s reign and celebrating Britain’s imperial might. Sarah Amos took out a lease at 5 Upper Woburn Place, right around the corner from Endsleigh Gardens. Maurice and Sidney, a year apart in age, became very close. Percy was now very busy: in addition to his law practice, his editorial work and his social and political commitments, he became treasurer of the West London Mission that Hugh Price Hughes had set up that year.

That summer the Buntings and Amoses once again shared a house, this time at Bexhill-on-Sea in East Sussex, a fashionable seaside resort easily accessible from London by railway. Sidney gave his cousin Maurice violin lessons. But he was not a good teacher: Maurice, even though a year older, was so overwhelmed by his cousin’s ‘superiority’ that he gave up the instrument, his spirit broken. At the end of the summer the families decided to return to London on foot, passing through tiny villages on the way. They brought along ‘a wicker bath chair’, which they ‘pushed and pulled along’, using it ‘as a transport cart, to carry coats and knapsacks’. But at ‘the top of a sufficiently steep hill, someone had a ride in it down to the bottom’. Sidney’s zany aunt Sarah tried it and went ‘careering down the road, propelled by gravity, and steering herself, somewhat erratically, with the handle’. The rest of them ‘ran beside shouting with glee’.

Summer ended. But that autumn of 1887, when he was fourteen, Sidney was allowed a break. He spent the term with his two cousins and aunt Sarah in Paris. They had a flat on Rue St Honoré, and the three children ‘all worked very intensively at French’. It was an autumn of scandals. The Third Republic was at risk. The son-in-law of President Jules Grévy was at the centre of the controversy; there were calls for the president’s resignation. General Georges Boulanger – Grévy’s leading rival – had built up a powerful movement, and his supporters led demonstrations down the Place de la Concorde. From a high terrace at the Tuileries, the three cousins, Sidney, Maurice and Bonté, watched tens of thousands marching in the streets. Grévy resigned on 2 December. It was a far cry from Sidney’s life in London.<sup>29</sup>

There, almost every moment was orchestrated. Despite his mother’s generosity towards the less fortunate, she was a formidable woman, ‘intolerant of indolence whether of body or mind, and young people who lived only for pleas-

ure and self-indulgence were apt to be “all too ruffled” when in contact with this “splendour of spiritual energy”.<sup>30</sup> His father led family prayers every morning and on Sunday evenings. He ‘prayed ex tempore, in a manner which always appeared ... dignified and impressive’, recalled his nephew Maurice, who was ‘generally ... impatient for the proceedings to be over.’<sup>31</sup> Sidney, who had to endure the ritual every day, was known to rebel. When Sidney’s mother once rebuked him for misbehaving: ‘Be quiet, Sidney, we are praying’, he quickly retorted: ‘I’m not!’<sup>32</sup>

This was another sharp contrast with his aunt Sarah’s home. Like the Buntings and the Lidgetts, Sheldon Amos had shown tolerance towards both the established Church and Nonconformist variations. His son Maurice was baptized and confirmed in the Church of England, but the family would go either to the Church or to the Methodist Chapel. Sarah Amos had taught their children that the Wesley’s separation from the Church of England ‘had been as little desired and as little necessary as was the separation of America from England’. The Amos home was certainly very religious, ‘strongly Evangelical ... of the Universalist school’, thought Maurice. It was even ‘too emotional ... too religious’. But when Sarah discovered one evening that her two children had fallen asleep kneeling at their chairs after listening to a chapter from the bible followed by prayers, she burst out laughing and gave up family prayers. Percy, for his part, thought his sister’s handling of her children ‘very odd and imprudent.’<sup>33</sup>

The Buntings often had well-known guests staying with them. One such guest, the following summer, June 1888, was the distinguished journalist Emily Crawford, the Paris correspondent of the Liberal London *Daily News*. She was a lively, interesting person, ‘rather short of stature, with blue eyes and a decidedly pleasing countenance full of varying expression and of great intelligence’ and ‘a deep musical voice, finely modulated.’<sup>34</sup> Her presence might have had special meaning for Sidney after his previous autumn in Paris. Percy, for his part, wondered if Gladstone himself might be interested in making her acquaintance. He wrote to the Old Man in June 1888 to let him know that Mrs Crawford was staying with him. Would Mr Gladstone like to meet her? Perhaps he would care to come for dinner?<sup>35</sup>

Indeed, the Old Man was happy to meet Mrs Crawford. He came to dine the evening of 2 July 1888. Sidney and his cousin Maurice were present after dinner, when the discussion turned to bimetallicism. Gladstone poured ‘scorn on the idea that the relative value of gold and silver could be affected by legislation.’ The boys may have been sceptical about this but would not have ventured to say so. Maurice thought to himself that if he himself were to put forward such an idea, it would ‘seriously imperill [*sic*]’ his ‘chance of getting a first class’ on his Political Economy paper. As for the fifteen-year-old Sidney, it was an evening that he never forgot.<sup>36</sup>

That autumn Sidney entered the sixth form. His cousin Maurice was sent to Egypt in late 1888 for his health and to work on archaeological digs with William Petrie, so Sidney had no distractions that year. He excelled at French, not surprisingly, as well as German, Greek and mathematics. But Latin was his favourite. He was one of only four boys on the upper bench in sixth-form Latin, taught by the headmaster, and he received the highest category of ‘very highly commended’. Sidney loved going off with his aunt and cousins when his parents allowed it. But he had no problem submitting to Latin’s rigours. He was becoming accustomed to academic competitions – and to winning. He left the school in July 1889 with its Latin Prose Prize in hand. His parents had high hopes for him, and he had every expectation of realizing them.<sup>37</sup>

### 3 A CLASSICAL BOY

In September 1889, when he was sixteen, Sidney entered St Paul's School as a capitation scholar. St Paul's was one of the best-known public schools; these included Eton, Westminster, Charterhouse, Harrow, Rugby, Shrewsbury and Winchester – all boarding schools – and Merchant Taylors' and St Paul's, both day schools.<sup>1</sup> St Paul's was located in a green and leafy suburb next to the River Thames. Sidney trekked daily between home and school, perhaps taking the Hammersmith and City underground line from Gower Street to Hammersmith or the District line to West Kensington or possibly bicycling; the invention of chain-driven safety bicycles in 1885 had started a cycling boom. That same autumn Sidney's younger sister Dora entered the North London Collegiate School for Girls, located at Sandall and Camden Roads. She had been recommended by Hugh Price Hughes; attitudes towards education for girls were changing.<sup>2</sup> St Paul's School was founded around 1103 as a grammar school attached to St Paul's Cathedral. In the sixteenth century the school was endowed by John Colet, Dean of St Paul's Cathedral and a close friend of the Dutch humanist and theologian Desiderius Erasmus of Rotterdam. Colet's humanism inspired religious toleration, and under his statutes the school offered free education to 153 boys 'of all nations ... indifferently', the number 153 a biblical allusion to the miraculous haul of fish in St John's 21:11. The boys could be irreverent about the school's eminent founders. 'After dinner Erasmus told Colet not to be 'blas'mous, which Colet, with some heat, requested him to repeat', penned Edmund Clerihew Bentley, a student during Sidney's day. But the school took its tradition and mission with the utmost seriousness.<sup>3</sup>

Unusually, St Paul's went up to the upper eighth form – most public schools ended after the sixth form. Perhaps Sidney's parents felt he should spend two more years in the intense study of Classics, at which he excelled. But keeping one's son at school until the age of eighteen was a status symbol, indicating that the family could do without the young man's earnings.<sup>4</sup>

By the late nineteenth century St Paul's was thriving under the leadership of Frederick William Walker. With a background representative of the rising middle class, Walker had been educated at Corpus Christi College, Oxford, where

he became friends with Benjamin Jowett, a brilliant Greek scholar and an Old Pauline, as those who had studied at St Paul's were known.<sup>5</sup> Walker continued Colet's tradition of toleration: during his tenure as High Master, the school began admitting non-Christians. Most of these were Jewish, but Manmohar Ghose, who attended the school from 1884 to 1890, was a Hindu who, under the name of Sri Aurobindo, later became venerated as a saint.<sup>6</sup> Once again, the Buntings were assured that Sidney would spend his days in an atmosphere of religious tolerance.

Access to public schools for the sons of the ambitious professional class was facilitated by the growing use of written examinations, a seemingly neutral means for determining entrance to and scholarships at schools and universities. But while undermining the aristocracy's use of patronage, successful performance on examinations was premised on good prior education and, hence, was biased in favour of the middle class against the less privileged.<sup>7</sup> Eager to boost St Paul's profile, Walker adapted to the times – despite heavy criticism that the school's admissions policy precluded access for poor and working-class boys.<sup>8</sup> St Paul's, wrote the author G. K. Chesterton, who attended the school between 1887 and 1892, 'was more than most others a school of "swots" ... The diligent type', he noted, 'was in a larger proportion than is usual; for the school was chiefly celebrated for winning scholarships at the Universities, rather than for athletics or other forms of fame.'<sup>9</sup> By Sidney's day, St Paul's was topping the league tables of public schools whose students obtained open scholarships at Oxford and Cambridge. From 1886 to 1895 Paulines won 173 scholarships to Oxford and Cambridge, twenty-six more than students from any other school. In the Oxford and Cambridge Higher Certificate Examination it was second only to Eton and tied at first place with Eton for the number of distinctions its students obtained.<sup>10</sup>

When Sidney attended St Paul's there were close to 600 students, mainly day-boys, the numbers limited only by the capacity of the buildings. The school had recently moved from the City of London to a sixteen-acre site called Deadman's Fields in West Kensington – popularly known as Hammersmith. The location and acreage made it the only London day school with playing fields on the site – quite an attraction for prospective students. The new red-brick, pinnacled building, consisting of three storeys, an attic and a basement, was designed by the renowned architect Alfred Waterhouse. The school was set back from Hammersmith Road behind a grassy courtyard studded with trees, the entire location surrounded by a red brick wall and iron palings. At one corner of the site near the Hammersmith Road stood a public house called the Red Cow. The new premises included a Great Hall, used for both teaching and prayers; twenty-four classrooms; an art school; a lecture theatre; and a large dining hall with a vaulted ceiling and the masters' table on a dais at one end.<sup>11</sup>

Walker made discipline a priority. Seen by many as remote and awesome, true to his name Walker spent much of the day walking around, 'a small man with a large beard and a large voice', wearing a tasselled academic cap and black gown. Edmund Bentley recalled that Walker's appearance, 'burly, bearded, red-faced and angry-looking, was enough to strike terror into the most dauntless'. He was known for 'suddenly buttonholing in a corridor, or even in the street outside, some boy who had imagined himself to be unknown to "the Old Man"' and chastising him. Chesterton compared him to Dr Johnson 'in the startling volume of his voice, in his heavy face and figure, and in a certain tendency to explode at what did not seem to be exactly the appropriate moment'.<sup>12</sup>

When a boy was deemed to have engaged in a sufficiently egregious infraction, he was caned. The Head Porter, a former military man and, in Sidney's day, 'a huge strapping fellow', would dispense beatings. 'Everything was done to make the performance as terrifying as possible', recalled William Nichols Marcy, who was in the lower eighth form with Sidney in 1889–90. 'The High Master presided with two assistant masters and the executioner himself. One of the masters held the watch and counted the strokes.' Punishments consisted of a minimum of twelve strokes, with a half-minute between each stroke. 'It is said', added Marcy, 'that many of the victims fainted before the whole sentence was complete'. Edmund Bentley's recollection was slightly more sanguine: 'Whackings were by no means unknown at St. Paul's, though they were rare'. However, 'the idea that boys should be terrorized into [learning] by thrashing was practically dead'.<sup>13</sup>

The boys had their own notions of order, hierarchy and duty. The eighth form had a union modelled after the Oxford and Cambridge student unions. It had its own clubroom and library, engaged in debates, and its members were elected by ballot.<sup>14</sup> Eighth formers were allowed to wear tail coats and top hats, but the rest of the school was arrayed, in Marcy's words, 'in a motley manner. Some wore Etons, some short black coats and striped trousers, some lounge suits and in the summer ... grey flannel suits.' Eton, by contrast, had 'its Eton jackets, tail coats and much ruffled silk hats', Harrow 'its weird straw hats and swallow tails' and Westminster 'its tail coats, top hats and umbrella or walking stick'. During breaks between classes the boys would descend on the tuck-shop, run by the middle-aged 'Mother Clark'. There they would throw down their penny for a Chelsea bun. Mother Clark's absolute trust was reciprocated: if one of them had grabbed a bun without paying, 'someone would have seen the defaulter and he would most certainly have been exposed'.<sup>15</sup>

By the nineteenth century, pressure to extend the curriculum beyond Latin and Greek became intense.<sup>16</sup> St Paul's dragged its feet; only in 1876 did it appoint permanent mathematics and French teachers. The move to Hammer-smith saw better provision of mathematics and sciences and greater attention

to preparation for the civil service and the military. Walker finally established a special upper-eighth section for history around Sidney's time – for the boys in Chesterton's circle – a recognition that the diverse talents and interests of his students did not all lie in Classics. Yet Classics still ruled. It was fundamental to the training and education of gentlemen, and most of the masters responsible for the formation of these young gentlemen had themselves trained as Classicists.<sup>17</sup>

'Every nation has educated its best minds on the culture of a past age. The Greeks were brought up on Homer ... the Romans on the literature of Greece,' insisted Walker. The most liberal and broadening education, he contended, was one 'which compels you to cast your ideas into the language and thought of another age'.<sup>18</sup> The advice of Sidney's Latin tutor, Christopher Cookson, provides insight into Classics teaching at St Paul's: 'Homer, Sophocles, Thucydides, Plato, Demosthenes in Greek, Cicero, Virgil, Horace in Latin are the best staple commodities'. Grammatical and syntactical accuracy were more important than style, which would 'develop more or less of itself'. The master was responsible for instilling an appreciation of classical scholarship and intellectual discipline, acquired through 'the minute and conscientious study of a text'.<sup>19</sup>

Sidney thrived in this system even though other boys found it tiresome. 'Classical boys were soaked in the classics,' recalled Marcy disparagingly. 'We did classics the whole day with the exception of one hour's French a week. We did no English history ... no English literature ... Everything was sacrificed to proficiency in Latin and Greek.' Nonetheless, he conceded: 'Judging by the scholarships won at Oxford and Cambridge the arrangement of the time-table would appear to be a successful one'.<sup>20</sup> Edmund Bentley succinctly summed up his thoughts in a clerihew:

The Rev. J. H. Lupton  
Did not care what he supped on.  
Praise the Lord for His mercies!  
I never did his Latin Verses.<sup>21</sup>

When Sidney first entered St Paul's, like other boys he was sent to the Special Class, as it was known from 1885. This was taught by Walker, who, unlike most headmasters, did not teach the highest form, and had no form of his own after the move to Hammersmith. The Special Class was held in the Great Hall, a wood panelled, high roofed hall, with the master's table on a dias at the front, and rows of students at their desks below 'doing nothing all day long but Greek and Latin'.<sup>22</sup> The Special, apparently unique to St Paul's, was composed of two groups, boys who had just entered the school and those who were in transition from one part of the school to another. V. M. Coutts-Trotter, who was with Sidney in the upper eighth form, recalled that the boys 'wrote exercises of various kinds ... by themselves, and they received individual and not class teaching'.

Walker had an eye for spotting boys with aptitude for Classics. He 'would go round and examine these exercises, and thus, at the very start of a boy's school career, he had an opportunity of forming a judgment as to his abilities.' Walker soon spotted Sidney.<sup>23</sup>

Sidney was placed in the lower eighth form, which included eighteen boys ranging from fourteen to seventeen years. It was led by A. M. Cook, formerly a scholar at Wadham College, Oxford. Despite Marcy's criticism of Classics teaching, Cook was 'a master of his craft ... a gold-mine of information on almost every topic'. At last, thought Marcy, 'Latin now began to be a real thing to me.'<sup>24</sup>

Perhaps Sidney felt the same way. He was a diligent student who planned his work carefully, was punctual and never missed classes. He was ranked third in Latin Composition: his 'verse composition [was] behind hand, but improved,' remarked his tutor. His French was 'very good'; Divinity and English were 'good'. In his next report, for the half-year ending July 1889, he was still third in Latin Composition; the tutor's notes indicate: 'improved; is slow and rather cumbrous in his methods, but is good and thorough'. His French was 'very good', Divinity, 'good' and Mathematics, 'very good'.<sup>25</sup> In midsummer he passed the Oxford and Cambridge Schools' Higher Certificate Examination, along with 22 other Paulines. It was altogether a very successful year, capped by a summer visit to the Amoses, who were staying near Pforzheim in the Black Forest.<sup>26</sup>

The next year, 1890–1, Sidney was moved up to Christopher Cookson's middle eighth form. Eighth-form boys wrote four pieces of composition per week. In the middle or upper-middle eighth these were done at home, with the aid of dictionaries. Sidney's home was always full of activity. Aunt Emma was still with them, along with a parlour maid, kitchen maid, cook and nursemaid and frequent guests.<sup>27</sup> Moreover, his father was winding down his work at the bar and spent more time at home working on the *Contemporary* or other projects. But Sidney shut himself away at his desk with clock-like regularity, with his dictionaries for company.

This was the period of the Parnell crisis. Charles Parnell, immensely popular leader of the Irish Home Rule movement and leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party, had been named in divorce proceedings the previous December 1889. The news caused a scandal in England and Ireland. Those involved in the moral purity campaign could hardly tolerate an adulterer. In November 1890 Sidney's father travelled to Sheffield for the National Liberal Federation conference. The Liberal Party depended on the electoral support of the Nonconformist constituency. However, the Nonconformists were not willing to maintain their alliance with the Liberal Party if it continued to support Parnell. Percy Bunting's own view, he confided to William Gladstone, was that 'if Mr Parnell did not retire from the leadership the effect on the next election would be disastrous'. 'The practical question,' he went on, 'seems to be to bring the utmost pressure privately



to bear upon Mr Parnell for the Irish representatives to secure his retirement as quickly as possible'. Parnell's 'election at this moment even if declined might be an irreparable mischief'.<sup>28</sup> Yet Parnell refused to resign. In December the Irish Parliamentary Party split over the issue. The majority sided against Parnell, maintaining their alliance with the Liberals, while Parnell lost the leadership of his party.

To the Nonconformists in the Liberal Party, this outcome signalled the potential for united action. The remarkable Henry Simpson Lunn, Methodist minister and medical doctor, moved to 5 Endsleigh Gardens around that time, and he and Percy began putting their heads together about the prospects for Protestant unity. Percy was a big believer in the power of the pen. He and Lunn began planning a new journal to be called *Review of the Churches*, influenced by the monthly international *Review of Reviews* that W. T. Stead had just launched in January 1890, and that aimed 'to make the best thoughts of the best writers in our periodicals universally accessible'. The *Review of the Churches*, they hoped, would provide a forum for discussion about reuniting the various Protestant denominations.<sup>29</sup>

Sidney soaked up the numerous discussions that the Parnell crisis and its aftermath provoked around the dinner table and after dinner, but the political drama did not distract him from his work. His Latin tutor reported: 'knows a good deal; composn good, but careless'. His Greek tutor wrote 'Has some knowledge + at times does good composn. Rather wanting in promise of really higher scholarship.' His French was 'good'. The reports were understated.

In early 1891 Sidney was moved to the upper eighth form, where compositions were done in class without books; only one other middle-eighth-form boy, Kirsopp Lake, moved up with him. The upper eighth was taught by F. Carter, who sought to convey to his students that 'they were not merely being taught foregone conclusions, but were scholars adding something to the store of classical knowledge'.<sup>30</sup> 'A few books were read minutely', noted Coutts-Trotter, 'with full attention to all textual, exegetical, or other difficulties'. Other literature 'was read in a quicker and less detailed way', with the aim of quick translation. The result was that 'Paulines who went up to the Universities ... had a solid and extensive knowledge of the standard authors and a fair acquaintance with the less known ancient literature'.<sup>31</sup> Sidney's Latin report ending July 1891 stated that he was 'industrious + vigorous – considerable ability'. The report for Greek stated: 'Has ability + uses it. Will make a fair scholar, but not, I think, a good one. Prose good in places.' The French tutor wrote 'Good on the whole, but inclined to neglect his composition', while the report for Divinity and English noted: 'Good. Style is too aggressive'.<sup>32</sup>

Over that year Sidney became involved in extra-curricular activities. Hobbies, such as cricket, football, bicycling, stamp-collecting, and even poetry, were

encouraged at St Paul's. A boy without a hobby was a 'pitiable individual', one with 'a listless air and shuffling gait', who 'eats many sweets', argued an article in the *Pauline*. There were '[t]wo classes of boys', the athletic boy, who 'flourishes in the spring', and the 'musical boy', who 'blooms in the winter; he is very much like any other boy, his only peculiarity being perhaps that the neatness of his dress is somewhat above the average'. Cricket, football and rowing on the River Thames were popular, while the opening of a school gymnasium in 1890–1 and the provision of more lockers added greatly to the school's athletics life. Sidney loved bicycling and walking, but he did not play school sports. He was a 'musical boy'.<sup>33</sup>

He played in the Musical Society, making friends with a very fine young violinist named R. C. Davis. The Musical Society's programme generally consisted of part songs, choral arrangements and short orchestral works, works that were feasible for day-school boys with limited time for group practice. But Sidney practised at home in the evenings with his family. At the school's annual Christmas concert in 1890, Sidney, R. C. Davis and two others played in a string quartet – Handel, Mendelssohn and Haydn were the fare. He performed again the next Christmas and sang bass in a small glee performance.<sup>34</sup>

Sidney was also active in the Union, which debated foreign policy and social and political issues of the day. 'Creeds are questioned and abandoned, temples crumble into ruin, Dogma and tradition vanish, church and system pass away', wrote Chesterton idealistically in the *Pauline*, but like students everywhere, Paulines both challenged and accepted the norms of the day.<sup>35</sup> During Michaelmas term 1890 the Union debated the motion that 'the European powers are fully justified in annexing native territory in Africa.' The opener 'admitted that much good would result to the natives of Africa if they were left alone, but ... that far greater good was produced by annexation'. The opposer argued that annexation was motivated by greed. Sidney was amongst the other gentlemen addressing the house. The motion was passed, nineteen votes to five. On 7 November the Union debated whether the 'maintenance of armed forces is a disgrace to the civilization of our age'. Sidney's intervention 'was evidently the result of careful preparation and for the first time for many a day afforded an opportunity of applying the Closure'. The motion was carried, eight to four.

Sidney was becoming more confident at public speaking, although admittedly in small groups. On 6 February the Union debated the motion that 'this House strongly disapproves of the Copyright Act of 1842'. This Act gave authors lifetime property rights in their own work and introduced the notion of *post mortem* copyright protection. Sidney, who had presumably come across the issue through his father's work on the *Contemporary*, intriguingly proposed abolishing copyright completely, 'proposing as substitutes either an academy to reward good authors and suppress bad ones, or a royalty on every copy sold'. He was

not convincing: the motion lost, two to six. Two weeks later he added his views on a motion that ‘greater restrictions should be put on posters and advertisements’, which had the Union discussing the ‘Pears’ baby and Madame Tussaud’; the motion passed.<sup>36</sup>

That July, Sidney won the Sleath Prize for Latin prose for an essay on the first chapter of Macaulay’s *History of England*, and Sidney, his friend R. C. Davis and two others, were *proxime accesserunt* [runners up] for the Governor’s Prize in French Prose. It was a brilliant year for the school: during 1890–1 St Paul’s students had won eighteen open scholarships, including the first Balliol scholarship. Six students won classics open scholarships to Oxford that year, and one to Cambridge – Laurie Magnus, in the upper eighth with Sidney, was elected to a scholarship, or demyship, as it was known, to Magdalen College.<sup>37</sup>

The summer was spent in the countryside. Mary Shepherd, the widow of Joseph, the former partner of John Lidgett, had died on 15 February 1891. As her own sister had already passed away, she left Appleton Hall to her nephew George Lidgett and his four sisters, Mary – Sidney’s mother, Elizabeth, Ann and Judith – Ann was now Mrs William Henry Budgett and Judith, Mrs Elijah Hoole.<sup>38</sup> With this transition, the extended family visits to Appleton became even more of a habit.

More honours came to Sidney that autumn. In November 1891 he, too, won a Classical demyship at Magdalen College. With his university future assured, Sidney became even more active in Union debates. In October 1891 the Union had debated whether ‘the recent riotous outbursts of the French mob are not evidence of genuine patriotism’. Sidney’s contribution drew on his love of music and his experience in Paris. ‘[T]he desecration of art by a crowd of French roughs, as in the recent disturbances of *Lohengrin*, was not an instance of patriotism’, he argued. ‘The work of men like Wagner’, he maintained, ‘did not belong to one nation only, but was common property, and should be defended and protected alike by every country’. The motion carried, fifteen to five.<sup>39</sup>

In late November the Union shifted its concern to the Conservative government. This had come to power in July 1886 in a backlash against Prime Minister Gladstone’s support for Irish Home Rule, which had split the Liberal Party. The Union debated whether ‘this House reposes entire confidence in the present Government’. Sidney, having clearly imbibed his parent’s Gladstonian Liberalism, vigorously opposed the motion, arguing ‘that the Government had abused its office, not in an aggressive way, but by sins of omission’. Irish Home Rule was still a burning issue; while the opener of the debate contended that the government’s Crimes Act had reduced crime in Ireland, Sidney ‘denied that the decrease of crime in Ireland was due to the Crimes Act, but attributed it to the promise of Home Rule. The split in the Irish party was a healthy sign’, he continued, ‘being a protest against the despotism of Parnell’ – he clearly took

his father's point of view. He added another point: 'Modern politics were conducted on too academical grounds, and all legislation should be carried out on true social principles. The Local Government Act and the Free Education Act', he explained, 'themselves imperfect, were the only measures for which the Government could claim any credit, even if they were in the main Liberal measures'. But on this issue Sidney failed to convince his peers. Most of the boys at St Paul's came from good Conservative households, reflective of London's middle class, and supported the government. The motion was passed, twenty against two.<sup>40</sup>

The next term, in April 1892, the Union debated the motion that 'this House considers that the education of the two sexes should be as far as possible combined'. Sidney opened the debate. His own sisters were cases in point in favour of education for girls; Dora, particularly, was showing great promise at North London Collegiate. Despite the opposer's view that 'the average girl was distinctly inferior to her brother in mental capacity', a position that was 'cordially endorsed by nearly all the speakers', the vote carried in support of the motion.<sup>41</sup>

A curious incident took place during Sidney's last year at St Paul's. 'B.' – presumably a reference to Bunting – 'an extremely clever boy and the son of a distinguished father, had already obtained a scholarship at Oxford and naturally felt that he was entitled to rest on his laurels', recalled Marcy. 'One morning, he was talking rather loudly in class and laughing somewhat uproariously with the boy next him when C., the Greek master, came down from his desk and, without a word, gave B. a resounding smack in the face, calling him "an impertinent fellow"'. B. was surely not intentionally rude, thought Marcy; in fact, he 'was really a particularly well-behaved boy, but in the exuberance of his spirits he no doubt forgot himself'. The master himself was normally good-natured; this was 'a *faux pas*. No form of corporal punishment was allowed in the Upper Eighth, and it certainly ill befitted the Eighth Form room for such a scene to take place.' B. 'went white as a sheet ... rose from his seat and with considerable dignity walked out of the room' and complained to the High Master. The next day C. apologized in front of the class, and the master and student subsequently 'became warm friends'.<sup>42</sup>

Sidney's final report, for the period ending July 1892, when he was nineteen, suggests that he probably did relax in his last term once his scholarship was assured. His Latin was 'uneven – sometimes quite good – works well', while his Greek tutor commented: 'Works well + learns. Prose composition at times good.' But his French tutor noted: 'Inattentive + indifferent to the subject. V. troublesome – does no work.' Intriguingly, his Divinity and English were judged: 'Too rhetorical – but plenty of knowledge + ability'.<sup>43</sup>

But Sidney had also been caught up in his father's campaign for Parliament in the early summer. East Islington, a middle-class area that was becoming more working-class, was reputed to be 'one of the strongholds of London Noncon-

formity'. It had been Liberal in 1885, but had elected a Conservative in 1886. The Liberal Party had decided to run Percy Bunting as its candidate against the Conservative Benjamin L. Cohen.<sup>44</sup>

It was Sidney's first experience of electioneering; he presumably accompanied his father on his campaign rounds. Percy Bunting was extremely knowledgeable about foreign affairs, and his speeches were said to be 'excellent'. But even sympathetic observers found them 'more like "Contemporary" essays than platform oratory'. His Liberalism was 'of too academic an order to inflame the mind of the suburban voter', while his grey side-whiskers and thinning hair gave him the appearance of 'the learned professor, or the Nonconformist minister'. It was hardly surprising that young Conservatives in the area would chant 'in cacophonous chorus', adapting the old nursery rhyme: 'Baby baby Bunting, Mother's gone a-hunting.'<sup>45</sup> Nor was it unexpected when the Conservative candidate polled a decisive 53.1 per cent in the July elections – a blow for Percy and his family – despite the Liberal Party's victory at the national level.<sup>46</sup> Such encounters may have helped Sidney develop a thick skin, but it could not have been easy for him to see his father taunted by youths his own age.

Sidney was once again prominent at Apposition Day, a momentous, if tedious, occasion. The boys who had won scholarships at Oxford and Cambridge 'lined up in the full glory of cap and gown in the corridor, immediately behind the Masters preparatory to the procession up the Hall, with Walker dominant and colossal sweeping on in front'. After this grand entrance, prizes were distributed – 'huge piles of books' that typically went to 'the shining lights of the Classical Eighth'. A number of Sidney's schoolmates from the classical upper eighth were going up to Oxford that autumn; his friend R. C. Davis, the musician, would be an Exhibitioner at Worcester College. Every boy who won an Oxford or Cambridge scholarship received a special prize, generally to perfunctory applause. G. K. Chesterton was awarded the Milton Prize for a poem on the Jesuit preacher, St Francis Xavier. Sidney won the Truro Prize and Medal for the best English Essay and, moreover, one of three four-year classical leaving exhibitions that year; his third-place exhibition prize was worth £40 per year.<sup>47</sup>

Finally came the extracts of Greek and Latin plays, 'performed in tail coats'.<sup>48</sup> Sidney had the title role in a Greek speech from Herondas called *The Schoolmaster*, the comical story of a mother who brought her 'wilful and disobedient' son Cottalus to the school master, Lampriscus, to be flogged – complaining that she 'ought to have sent him to herd donkeys, instead of trying to make him a scholar'. The boys may have done their best, but the piece no doubt conveyed 'little meaning to the majority of the audience and none whatever to the Governors sitting solemnly in the front row'.<sup>49</sup>

The back of the Apposition programme bore a wry quote from Samuel Pepys's *Diary* of 1662–3: 'went to Paul's School, it being Apposition Day there.

I heard some of their Speeches, and they were just as Schoolboys' used to be – ; but I think not so good as ours were in our time.' Pepys was mocking the older generation's fear of the younger. The Paulines who would go up to Oxford in autumn 1892, however, and among whom Sidney was one of the best, had only the hopes and dreams of fearless youth.

## 4 IMPERIAL UNIVERSITY

Having said his good-byes to St Paul's and with Oxford ahead of him, Sidney spent an extraordinary summer at Grindelwald, a quaint Swiss village surrounded by snow-capped mountains and glaciers. He had been hired as a Classics tutor at the grand Reunion Conference organized by Henry Lunn with the aim of reconciling and uniting the various strands of Protestant Christianity. Lunn's *Review of the Churches* had been in publication since October 1891. Sidney's father was the *Review's* Methodist editor and worked very closely with Lunn on the Reunion Conference.

The conference had been advertised as 'A Twelve Days' holiday in Switzerland for Ten Guineas, with the option of prolonging the Holiday for a month, available for Christian workers of both sexes'. To drum up enrolment Lunn had held a competition offering twelve free tickets. Keen to add an educational dimension, and impressed by the Chautauqua adult education summer school movement in the United States, Lunn had arranged for four tutors in various subjects 'to undertake special reading with individuals or the formation of small classes for study'. Sidney was one of the tutors, the only one who did not already have a degree.<sup>1</sup>

It was a smashing summer. Sidney was earning a little income teaching his beloved Classics in a social milieu that he knew thoroughly. His father was one of the leading figures at the conference. Hugh Price Hughes and W. T. Stead – whom he had met six years earlier with the Amoses at Schloss Merzhausen – were there, and so was his aunt Sarah. She had led an advance party from London in July and was supervising a chalet for unmarried women who did not feel comfortable staying unchaperoned at a large hotel. There were hundreds of people, with new parties arriving every week – the *Times* dubbed it 'the big ecclesiastical picnic to the Grindelwald'.

The conference opened with the question: 'Is the hope of unity a chimera?'. On the one side were Baptists who rejected the need for bishops; on the other were Anglicans who opposed the idea of Nonconformist churches. Percy Bunting and Hugh Price Hughes tried to mediate the extremes, arguing that a united

church could encompass both Nonconformity's emphasis on evangelicalism and the Church of England's 'institutional effectiveness'.<sup>2</sup>

Sidney may well have ignored those debates – didn't he have enough religion at home? He no doubt spent much of his free time with his two cousins, Maurice and Bonté, the latter by then a vivacious young lady of eighteen studying medicine in London.<sup>3</sup> When the conference wound up in September, the youthful trio went their separate ways – Maurice to Cambridge, Bonté to London, and Sidney to Oxford.

Like other young men coming up to Oxford from London that autumn – Michaelmas term – Sidney presumably took the train from Paddington and then hired a hansom cab to the college. There the head porter would have met him and introduced him to his male servant – or scout, who would have helped him with his luggage to his rooms. In October, the coal fireplace would have been lit. His scout would have served him lunch in his rooms. If it were a 'commons' lunch his first day, this would have been bread with cheese and, perhaps – as a Nonconformist Sidney presumably consumed little if any alcohol – 'ale foaming in a silver tankard'.<sup>4</sup>

He had stepped into a completely different world. The university was dizzily celebrating Britain's superiority across the globe; the pages of *Oxford Magazine* acclaimed the empire's architects. 'Wherever our flag goes in Africa, it means the substitution of peace, industry, and freedom, for war, militarism, and slavery,' the magazine quoted Cecil Rhodes, the mining magnate who made his fortune in the Transvaal and became Prime Minister of the Cape Colony. A homage to Rhodes opened: 'Deep-voiced, broad-fronted, with Caesar's brow, A dreamer with a diamond in his hand Musing on Empire!'. This was a man's man, an Oxford-trained, self-made millionaire spreading the salvation of empire: 'at his touch', the verse ended, 'the slave-king disappears, Hails Africa at peace from sea to sea, Dried up the source of slavery's ancient tears'.<sup>5</sup> More affirmation followed: 'we are all "imperialists" nowadays', wrote the magazine's editor.<sup>6</sup>

Over centuries, Oxford scholars navigated the seas, helped found colonies, argued their use as repositories for Britain's unemployed, and educated their governors. Leading Oxford intellectuals – Benjamin Jowett, John Ruskin, T. H. Green and Arnold Toynbee – justified imperialism on moral grounds: it gave Oxford men the opportunity to serve the state and to help the less fortunate at home and abroad. Jowett, in his day the university's most renowned figure, opened up civil service opportunities in India for Oxford graduates. Ruskin, Victorian renaissance man, urged Oxford men to colonize for England – Rhodes proclaimed his debt to Ruskin. The philosopher T. H. Green emphasized the state's moral role in social reform. Arnold Toynbee, Green's student, tutored probationers in the Indian Civil Service, stressing the role of the colonial state in Indian development. The philosophical and ethical foundations built by such



men were supported by lectures from visiting missionaries and prospects of civil service careers overseas. Classics – Sidney’s subject – underpinned the imperial role. Aristotle and Plato both believed in rule by an elite; their works emphasized the qualities necessary for governance – and imperial rule. Classics students read Aristotle’s *Ethics*, which had so impressed Rhodes that he carried a copy with him to South Africa.<sup>7</sup> This culture of empire seeped into Sidney’s pores.

The culture of empire was linked to a cult of manhood and masculinity. Oxford lagged notably behind Cambridge, London and other British universities on the question of education for women. Halls for women had been established in 1878, but women were not allowed to matriculate for degrees. The question of whether they should be was a heated subject when Sidney was there.<sup>8</sup> But he had his family experience to draw upon in forming his views on the matter. His younger sister Dora was now in her final year at North London Collegiate. She had done splendidly on her Cambridge Local Examination and had won the school’s French Prize and the Crane Scholarship. Following their cousin Bonté’s lead, she was contemplating a medical career.<sup>9</sup>

If most Oxford dons favoured empire – and likewise resisted pressure to admit women – Oxford nonetheless had its critics of empire. Goldwin Smith, former Regius Professor of Modern History, opposed empire on economic grounds. Gilbert Murray, Regius Professor of Greek, buttressed his anti-imperialist arguments by reference to the corruption of imperialist Athens. The Wadham Positivists were influenced by Auguste Comte’s argument that no nation was fit to rule another. A later group of empire critics was centred around C. P. Scott of the *Manchester Guardian*; he recruited Oxford graduates J. L. Hammond, L. T. Hobhouse and J. A. Hobson, the paper’s first reporter in South Africa. Critics of empire typically supported Irish Home Rule. But in 1886 when the Liberal Party split over Gladstone’s Irish policy, only about seventeen senior members of the university remained loyal to Gladstone.<sup>10</sup> In many respects, therefore, Sidney entered a milieu that was far more conservative, both politically and socially, than that of his Gladstonian Liberal parents, despite their belief in empire. It was also a milieu that was more socially exclusive and religiously intolerant than his school environments.

Moral certainty of empire was accompanied by uncertainty about the university’s direction. Teaching at Oxford had begun around 1096 and had expanded rapidly after 1167. Thirteenth-century riots between students and townspeople led to the establishment of residence halls; the colleges began as residence halls supervised by masters. Intellectually, Oxford developed as ‘a University not of England but of Christendom’.<sup>11</sup> The nineteenth century saw the decline of clerical influence, a reflection of scientific and intellectual developments that were eroding the power of religion. The Oxford University Act of 1854 led to greater employment of resident lay fellows, replacing the clerical and non-resident lay

fellows. The trend continued in 1871, when tutorial fellows were allowed to marry.<sup>12</sup>

The expansion of public schools brought a rapid rise in student numbers, sparking competition amongst the colleges for the best students and leading to charges of commercialism and intellectual deterioration.<sup>13</sup> Wealthy colleges like Magdalen grew by building new accommodation and bringing in more students; Magdalen's undergraduate student body grew from 13 in 1842, to 91 in 1871, to 143 in 1891. The increase in students led to the introduction of intercollegiate lectures and 'private hours' or tutorials. Student clubs and societies mushroomed, with tutors bemoaning the effect on their studies.<sup>14</sup> Inevitably, these changes placed more pressure on tutors, shifting the balance of power between college heads, fellows and students.<sup>15</sup> Within Magdalen, the tensions were mediated by the forward-looking vision of its President, Thomas Herbert Warren.

Magdalen, steeped in accumulated traditions and snug insularity, was founded in 1458 by William of Waynflete – Bishop of Winchester and Lord Chancellor of England. When Sidney entered the college through its main gate off Oxford's High Street, he stepped into St John's Quadrangle, built on the site of the Hospital of St John the Baptist in 1180. Gargoyles peered down at him. To the right, and on the wall in a corner of the quadrangle, he saw the fifteenth-century pulpit commemorating the Feast of St John the Baptist. There stood the Great Tower, completed in 1509 and used during the English Civil War to keep watch in case Oxford was attacked by parliamentary forces. Further to the right was the chapel, built in 1480.

Perhaps Sidney was awed by Magdalen's timeless beauty. Past the chapel are fifteenth-century cloisters. To the right of the cloisters flows the river Cherwell, leading to the Fellows' garden. The river floods in January, preparing for carpets of purple and white fritillaries in the spring. At the back of the cloisters is the New Building, so called in 1733, when it was built, and around which graze the college deer. Behind Magdalen's stone walls, where its fellows and scholars passed their days, 'the elms of the deer-park were massed against the thin sky and the deer moved in leisurely files about the spare sunlight' – days lost in a 'dusk of fading spires and towers'.<sup>16</sup>

College accommodation consisted of large, long buildings in which student rooms were arranged around numerous staircases. During his first two years, from October 1892 to June 1894, Sidney occupied the ground room left, staircase two in New Building. It was a high-ceilinged room with two large windows overlooking the college deer park; deer used to stare through his window. Students were required to pay a refundable deposit of about £40 – known as 'Caution Money' – to be used in the event of outstanding 'battels' or bills at the end of their stay, and they were expected to provide their own sheets, pillow-cases, table-linen, towels, dusters, glass cloths, glass, plate, kettle, tea and

breakfast service and cutlery; the college provided other necessities.<sup>17</sup> The college had just installed electric lighting but ‘was afraid of it and afraid also of paraffin lamps’. Instead, it used ‘colza oil lamps which gave a pleasant, gentle but rather dim light and went out making obscene noises’. For toilets, there was a row of outdoor ‘water-closets’ with ‘prodigal rolls of toilet-paper’.<sup>18</sup>

During his first few days, Sidney, like other undergraduates, ordered his cap and gown at one of the shops on Cornmarket or High Street, where ‘hansoms and four-wheelers plied for hire’ and horse-trams went ‘clinking up and down’.<sup>19</sup> From then on, the routine was unchanging. Students were woken at 7 a.m. by their scouts, so that they could dash off for roll by 8 a.m., before breakfast. The scouts’ own working day began an hour earlier, emptying slops, bringing coal, lighting fires and tidying up, and only ended after 9 p.m., when they had carried heated water up the staircases for the evening hipbaths in front of the fire.<sup>20</sup> Their endless services were duly acknowledged with studied nonchalance: ‘My faithful scout! I do not doubt that you’re a highly useful minion’, ran a ditty in the student magazine *Isis*. ‘Your work’s well done; you never run me up unnecessary battels; And yet, and yet, you *will* upset and muddle up my goods and chattels!’<sup>21</sup>

When Sidney first arrived, students still breakfasted in their rooms. But in the mid-1890s the leaders of the junior common room or JCR – a smoking lounge where undergraduates relaxed and from where they also ordered food and supplies – insisted that students take breakfast in the JCR in an attempt to break up cliques. Students were expected to dine in Hall at least three times a week, where the dons could observe them from high table. On Sundays dining in Hall was compulsory; afterwards, students climbed the steep stairs to the JCR for dessert. The JCR was an elegant room, its dark walls full of pictures and accented by ornate moulding along the ceiling. On those occasions, the long curved table, polished to a sheen, was set with decanters of port, sherry or burgundy and dishes of ‘grapes richly bloomed, of apples and walnuts and salted almonds and devilled biscuits’, punctuated by small potted palms.<sup>22</sup> Dessert was followed by a ritual known as ‘after’, in which students moved to one of the large student rooms off the cloisters where senior men provided whiskey, lemon squash and cigarettes.<sup>23</sup>

On many evenings second- and third-year students would throng after dinner into the small ground-floor office off the cloisters of the JCR steward, Richard Gunstone, a third-generation Magdalen servant, affectionately known as ‘Gunner’. There they would drink coffee and port while Gunner recited spicy college stories and, through his careful admonitions, mediated the social divisions amongst the students.<sup>24</sup>

And divisions there were. On the one hand was the long-standing friction between the ‘aesthetes’, of whom Oscar Wilde, a Magdalen student from 1874

to 1878, was a notable example, and the 'hearties,' who preferred athletics.<sup>25</sup> Sidney was familiar with such tensions from his St Paul's days, but they were much sharper here. The JCR accounts showed striking contrasts in student expenditures in the 1890s. But by the mid-1890s more than £20 a term was considered high, presumably due to college pressure to cap ostentatious expenditures, and the more provident spent less than £10. Thus, despite Gunner's accessibility, the gatherings in his office, as well as the 'afters,' presumed a social ease and a conviviality predicated on drinking – and lots of it. With Sidney's Nonconformist background, he was probably one of those whom Gunner called 'the quiet men,' the scholars who 'kept to themselves mostly' and who spent significantly less than other students on dining and drinking.<sup>26</sup>

Even apart from Sidney's religion, as a demy he was no ordinary student. The university and its colleges functioned according to a strict hierarchy regulated by elaborate social codes and conventions. Magdalen was governed by a President. Its membership included between thirty and forty Fellows; thirty scholars or demies; eight senior demyships, reserved for those who fulfilled all examination requirements for the Bachelor of Arts degree; a small number of exhibitioners and academical clerks (positions determined by annual competitive scholarship examinations in Classics, History, Natural Sciences and Mathematics); and, finally, commoners (students who did not qualify on academic merit for a scholarship and who paid their own way) – an ironic name for those drawn from the social elite. It also had a Schoolmaster, an Usher, four Chaplains, a Steward, an Organist, eight Clerks, Sixteen Choristers, and a normally invisible efficiently-functioning array of butlers, porters, cleaners, cooks, handymen, gardeners and various servants.<sup>27</sup> When Sidney began, Magdalen had close to 140 undergraduates, forty of whom were freshmen. Of those, ten were demies, two were exhibitioners, one was an academical clerk and the remaining twenty-seven, commoners.<sup>28</sup>

Demies, who received an income of £80, were given their first choice of rooms, in order of their election to the college. They had their own table at dinner, 'and it was the privilege of the man sitting at the head of the table on any evening that he could order the dinner for the next night.'<sup>29</sup> While commoners typically came from the top public schools – in Sidney's year of entry eleven were from Eton, eight from Winchester and four from Harrow – the demies came from a broader range of institutions. Of the ten demies entering in October 1892, two were from Eton and one from Harrow, while the remainder came from a mixture of other public and grammar schools. The demy in some respects closest to Sidney's social background was George Lambert, who came from Kingswood School, a Methodist school near Bath founded by John Wesley. But Sidney also knew Laurie Magnus from St Paul's. Demies typically spent less in the JCR than commoners – often less than £10 a term. During his three years in

college Sidney's expenditures averaged about £8 per term, which was very close to that spent by George Lambert, although Sidney was not quite as thrifty.<sup>30</sup>

Despite their academic and social distinctions, demies and commoners of different years shared the same staircases and the same scouts. Sidney was the only demy on his staircase in New Building; the others were all commoners.<sup>31</sup> Magdalen's President, Herbert Warren, spared no effort to build a corporate college identity. He made gentlemen of the sons of the ambitious middle class and the rising bourgeoisie so that they could serve their country and their empire. This was a lesson drummed into the students from their first days. A fictional portrait of Warren underlined his expectations of Magdalen men: 'You have come to Oxford', he lectured them, 'some of you to hunt foxes, some of you to wear very large and very unusual overcoats, some of you to row for your college, and a few of you to work'. But above all, they were there 'to remain English gentlemen'. In later life, he continued, 'when you are ambassadors and proconsuls and members of Parliament you will never remember this little address which I have the honour now of delivering to you'. That would not matter, he concluded, as long as they remembered they were Magdalen men.<sup>32</sup>

Warren, very much a 'modern man' of his time, had himself won many academic honours and excelled at football. Born near Bristol in 1853 into a Non-conformist family – although he later joined the Church of England – he studied Greek and Latin at Clifton College before going up to Balliol as a scholar. Benjamin Jowett was then Master of Balliol; Alfred Milner – who in 1897 would become High Commissioner for South Africa and Governor-General of Cape Colony – was Warren's contemporary and his closest friend. Warren exemplified Jowett's ideal of a college headship, combining leadership and teaching. He promoted the college's public profile by appealing to aristocratic patronage, by building up its athletic reputation, especially in rowing, and by emphasizing intellectual achievement.<sup>33</sup>

Warren was a staunch advocate of Classics, which was exceptional in being a four-year degree course. During their first five terms students prepared for the Honours Moderations or 'Mods', their first public examination. The final seven terms were concerned with history and philosophy – *Literae Humaniores* or 'Greats'. The four 'necessary books' – Homer, Virgil, Demosthenes and Cicero's speeches – were set in their entirety. Candidates were also expected to develop a broader understanding of Latin and Greek, including knowledge of style, literary history and criticism, and antiquities.<sup>34</sup> While Cambridge emphasized linguistic precision, Classics at Oxford, influenced by Hegel and shaped by Jowett and T. H. Green, was interpretive. Classical works were studied as 'guides to the present and future'; the aim was 'the conscious creation of Platonic guardians for Britain and its empire'.

By the late nineteenth century, this approach was under threat. Along with the shift from ‘gentlemanly amateur scholars’ to ‘professional researchers’ went a change in the approach to teaching Classics. The text, seen as the source of timeless values to be applied to modern society, came under threat from new disciplines, such as archaeology, which necessarily put the Classical period into historical and material perspective – ‘the pen versus the spade.’<sup>35</sup> These changes were reflected in the demise of the gentleman fellow who had no teaching obligations and the growing predominance of teaching fellows.<sup>36</sup>

Life at Magdalen was not without humour; the college had its wits. Alfred Godley – with ‘the wrinkled eye and unhappy countenance of a true humourist’ and ‘an inimitably lugubrious pronunciation’<sup>37</sup> – has left us the views of a rather jaundiced Classics tutor: ‘Lecture to be delivered at ten o’clock to Honours men, on point of ancient custom: very interesting: Time of Roman Dinner, whether at 2:30 or 2.45 ... Notes can’t be found ... Oh, here they are: illegible.’ Entering the lecture room, he finds ‘two or three scholars ... Wish that scholar No. 1 wouldn’t check my remarks by reference to the authority from whom my notes are copied ... Second scholar has last number of the “Classical Review” open before him. Why? ... the “Review” contains final and satisfying *reductio ad absurdum* of my theory.’ Those going only for a pass degree distinguished themselves in other ways: ‘Eleven o’clock: lecture for Passmen. Twelve or fifteen young gentlemen all irreproachably dressed in latest style of undergraduate fashion ... and all inclined to be cheerfully tolerant of the lecturer’s presence *quand même*, regarding him as a necessary nuisance and part of college system.’

Back in his rooms, the Classics tutor prepares himself for a 9 p.m. appointment with a student: ‘Know nothing about the subject: thought he was going to write on something else’, acknowledges our candid don. ‘Essay finished: must say something: try to find fault with his facts. Man confronts me with array of statistics, apparently genuine ... Criticise his grammar: man offended.’ This uninspiring tutorial is followed at 9:30 by a student of Latin prose. ‘Rather superior young man, who considers himself a scholar. Suggest that part of his vocabulary is not according to classical usage: proves me wrong by reference to dictionary. Is not surprised to find me mistaken.’<sup>38</sup>

This might have been Sidney. He was an exceptionally good student. In his first five terms he studied Aeschylus’ *Agamemnon*, Sophocles’ *Oedipus Tyrannus*, the writings of Theocritus, Juvenal and Persius and other works. He attended Alfred Godley’s lectures on Cicero, Herbert Greene’s lectures on Demosthenes, Arthur Sidgwick’s lectures on *Oedipus Tyrannus* and had tutorials with Greene. For tutorials he was expected to translate selected literary passages from English – Shakespeare’s *Cymbeline* and *Troilus and Cressida* and pieces by Omar Khayyam, John Keats and John Stuart Mill – into Greek and Latin prose and verse.<sup>39</sup>

Sidney's efforts yielded results. He went in for the Hertford scholarship for Latin, awarded by examination to candidates who had not yet completed two years towards matriculation. It was worth about £37 and tenable for one year. In December 1893 he was announced as the *proxime accessit* or runner-up; the college meeting of 13 December awarded him 'a prize of £5 in books' for this distinction.<sup>40</sup> The following term, in March 1894, Sidney sat the Honours Mods in *Literis Graecis and Latinis*. He and three other demies were awarded first class. Of the other Magdalen candidates, five received seconds, five received thirds and one failed. University-wide there were forty-eight firsts, 106 seconds and sixty-one thirds in *Literis Graecis and Latinis* that Hilary Term.<sup>41</sup> Over the years Sidney and a few other demies won various college prizes or exhibitions, with modest stipends. Sidney won more than most, although he did not secure the Dean Ireland scholarship that he went in for in December 1894.<sup>42</sup>

But Sidney was not just a swot. Magdalen undergraduates were reputed for their limited involvement with university societies.<sup>43</sup> Sidney was more typical of Oxford's undergraduate norm than of Magdalen's: he was involved in a number of pursuits, including, in the Warren mould, college athletics – a marked departure from his school days. The striking absence was any involvement in Liberal politics at the university; he was clearly not following in his father's footsteps.<sup>44</sup> He did, though, make contact with the university's Wesleyan community.

In the 1890s Oxford's undergraduates came from a very narrow social range. 'Outsiders', notes Mark Curthoys 'whether non-Anglicans, overseas students, or former pupils of elementary schools – were never sufficiently numerous to threaten the majority'.<sup>45</sup> Only in 1871 had Parliament abolished religious tests for non-theological degrees at Oxford, Cambridge and Durham, meaning that Nonconformists could take degrees at Oxford. But when Sidney was there they were still a very small minority. In 1882 there were probably no more than 200 Nonconformist undergraduates and a handful of dons, although times were changing and by the end of the century the number had risen to about 500.<sup>46</sup> Magdalen was particularly 'high Anglican'. There were very, very few Nonconformists at Magdalen; they may have been resented – but presumably this was manifested by a polite distance rather than overt hostility.<sup>47</sup> Coming into this environment must have been hard for Sidney, especially after the secular ethos of University College School and St Paul's religious tolerance.

Perhaps to compensate for this, in his first term Sidney joined the Wesley Guild, formed 'to afford Nonconformist Members of the University an opportunity of mutual intercourse'. Oxford was a historic site for Methodists. The brothers John and Charles Wesley had been educated there, and Charles Wesley had launched the study and prayer club that began the social welfare work for which Methodists became known and to which the name 'Methodist' was first applied. The Guild met three times a term to discuss social issues – 'democ-

racy and the imagination' and 'confidence in His Majesty's Liberal government' – were representative topics, and it held services at the Wesley Memorial Church on New Inn Hall Street. In Michaelmas term 1892 there were 38 members. Non-collegiate students and those from Merton College were best represented; Magdalen had only one member at the start of the term, George Lambert. Sidney was elected later that term, on 9 December.<sup>48</sup>

His cousin the Reverend John Scott Lidgett came up regularly from London to speak at the Guild; the two must have met up. By then the Reverend was developing a national profile. He had spearheaded the launch of the Bermondsey Settlement in South London, a mission dedicated to the regeneration and education of the poor. This opened in 1892; soon thereafter Lidgett was elected as a Poor Law Guardian on the ticket of the Progressive Party. Three members of the Guild – but not Sidney – were on the Settlement committee, and the Settlement's progress was regularly discussed at the Guild's meetings. But the Reverend's influence was not strong enough to keep Sidney in the Guild. By his second year he had dropped out.<sup>49</sup>

Sidney was more faithful to his music than to his religion. Magdalen was renowned for its choir and chapel music, and music was flourishing throughout the university in the late nineteenth century.<sup>50</sup> The Oxford University Musical Club was launched in 1872, followed by the Oxford University Musical Union (OUMU) in 1884, led by the Reverend John Henry Mee. The Musical Union was founded to remedy Oxford's lack of chamber music, which, originally performed only in private, had begun to enter the public arena in the nineteenth century. 'The idea of establishing a University Club for the study of and practice of chamber music ... was "in the air"', the union's official history states.<sup>51</sup> Despite tension between the club and the union – the *Isis* termed it the 'Great Musical Disunion' – the Musical Union thrived. With a low subscription rate and a dedicated club room in Magdalen Street, it held weekly smoking concerts by members and a weekly class for practice under professional training.<sup>52</sup>

It had a lively atmosphere: 'from the very first the best traditions of artistic and student life have been carefully cherished and preserved'; its leading figures noted, making particular mention of the friendships that developed amongst its members – although reflecting Oxford's male ethos, ladies were not allowed.<sup>53</sup> The OUMU's ambience is glimpsed in the pages of its *Suggestions* book. Amidst frequent calls for resin and blotting paper, followed by appeals that the 'time-honoured suggestions' for such provisions be acted upon, came an evocative suggestion 'that a cushion or cushions (of as soft a material as may conveniently be obtained) be provided for the use of such instrumentalists as are also rowing men'. And there is one by 'S. B.': 'that the time-honoured suggestion that some pens which will write be provided, should be acted upon.'<sup>54</sup>



Sidney's love of chamber music led him to the Musical Union. By then, he had switched to the viola, which, as a result of his large fingers, he found easier than the smaller violin. Adept at Mendelssohn, Schumann, Hadyn, Mozart, Dvořák, Schubert, Brahms and Beethoven, he began performing in his first term, forming quartets that included his school chum R. C. Davis, now at Worcester College.<sup>55</sup> The OUMU's photograph album allowed 'any regularly formed Quartett [*sic*] that has played more than once at the weekly music meetings ... to place its photograph in this Album'. Sidney's first quartet, a short-lived group, was photographed around February or March 1893. Sidney, clean-shaven, his dark hair parted on the left, was an attractive young man, immensely earnest-looking, with intense eyes staring straight at the camera. He was very active that spring, representing the OUMU at Cambridge on 10 March 1893. He did not play during Michaelmas Term 1893, when he was preparing for the Hertford scholarship examination, but he performed at the Union's first Invitation Concert at Balliol College Hall on 14 June 1894. He was elected to the OUMU's committee as Magdalen College secretary for 1894–5 and played frequently throughout the year and at the Musical Club Festival on 29 April – 1 May 1895. Another photo shows the quartet for the 1895 Cambridge programme. Sidney still has that same intense stare, but he now sports a moustache grown to cover a scar from falling against a piano.<sup>56</sup>

Sidney was not only involved in high culture. He had picked up a love of walking on family jaunts over the Yorkshire moors and across Europe, and he found an ideal activity – following the beagles. This was a form of hunting in which the hunters followed their hounds on foot rather than horseback. It was a sport of the landed gentry and one of Oxford's older leisure activities; it attracted the university's upwardly socially mobile.<sup>57</sup> Magdalen did not have its own pack, but Sidney and a few chums formed their own impromptu group; they didn't even have an official hunting costume. Perhaps Sidney was trying to fit in as an Oxford gentleman, but he clearly enjoyed the sport. A photo of Sidney and his group in the Oxfordshire countryside, surrounded by their hounds, reflects a quiet happiness, with Sidney looking every bit the country squire in his *de rigueur* jacket and boots.<sup>58</sup>

He was game to try new things. He had not rowed at school, but in Hilary Term 1894 he began rowing in the Torpids, along with J. M. Steward, a commoner who occupied the room across from his in New Building during 1893–4. The Torpids were boat races that started in 1838 as colleges began entering more boats with less experienced men in the annual races. Boat races became very popular in the mid-1890s. By then about thirty boats took part in the Torpids, and between 200 and 250 men rowed in the Torpids and the Eights – the big races that took place in May. Under Warren, Magdalen developed a reputation for rowing; the Magdalen Eights won first place in 1893, 1894 and 1895. The



Figure 2: Quartet for Cambridge Programme, 1895. First violin, R. C. Davis, Worcester College; second violin, H. W. Simpson, Keble College; viola, S. P. Bunting, Magdalen College; cello, A. C. Ralli, New College. Sidney is rear, left. Courtesy of Bodleian Library.

sport demanded patience, self-denial and team work. Eton men predominated; Sidney would have had to fit in.<sup>59</sup>

Practice for the Torpids normally began in mid-January, and the races began in mid-February; they were seen as preparation for the Eights. Sidney was not a brilliant athlete. A brief note by the club's secretary that term indicated that he got 'very short + [did] not keep his body swinging' but nonetheless worked well.<sup>60</sup> He must have enjoyed it: he rowed again in Hilary Term 1895, as did Steward, although that year's race was cancelled due to the 'great frost', which froze the river. One of Sidney's tutors, Clement Webb, took an interest in the Torpids – by the 1890s tutors saw the encouragement of team sports as intrinsic to the college spirit. Webb used to watch them practice and would entertain them for dinner each February. But even he could get a bit fed up: 'A tedious affair', he noted after the dinner in February 1895, at which Gunner assisted: 'I did not know what to do with them ... they did not move till 10'. Sidney continued to enjoy the activity and even came up a few days before Summer Term 1895 to get in some practice.<sup>61</sup>

The son of ecclesiologist Benjamin Webb and then in his late 20s, Clement Webb was himself a religious man who regularly attended Communion in the College Chapel and Dean's prayers. His speciality was philosophy of religion. He read voraciously, worked busily at transcribing, translating and writing, and was a regular visitor to the Bodleian and, during the spring and summer vacations, the British Museum.<sup>62</sup> He also had quite a following amongst the undergraduates. 'Of all the men I ever met', recalled Thomas Loveday, a Classics demy who arrived in October 1894, 'he had the greatest influence on me'. Loveday often went to him in the evening with a long essay and stayed till midnight.<sup>63</sup> Many students – not least Sidney – called on him. During Trinity Term – May and June – 1894 Sidney began having regular tutorials with Webb on Socrates and other subjects.

In October 1894 Sidney moved into St Swithun's Quad, a Victorian Gothic structure built between 1880 and 1884. By now in his third year, he had moved up the student hierarchy and had the two centre rooms at the top of staircase four. Furnished in the overcrowded Victorian style of the day, the large sitting room had a high sloping ceiling, a bay window overlooking the High Street and another small, high lead-panelled window. The small bedroom looked directly across at what was then the Magdalen College School. Once again, he was the only demy on his staircase.<sup>64</sup>

During Sidney's last two years, he saw quite a bit of Webb, who was then senior Dean of Arts; Sidney clearly looked up to him. They met regularly during Michaelmas Term 1894 and continued in Hilary and Trinity Terms – January to June – 1895, discussing Kant and Kantian ethics and John Stuart Mill; Sidney had particular difficulties with Mill's inductive logic.<sup>65</sup> Webb wrote to Sidney

during the long summer vacation about a 'coach'. Coaching was not at all uncommon at Oxford, and Warren encouraged it. Sidney replied; he had been spending three weeks in London reading with F. H. B. Dale, a Classics fellow at Merton College who had studied at St Paul's.<sup>66</sup>

There was another link to St Paul's. Christopher Cookson – Sidney's former tutor – was appointed as a Classics tutorial fellow at Magdalen in October 1894. His appointment came at the end of a period of academic mobility between schools and universities. The rise of professionalism meant a growing gap between those who taught Classics at school and those who taught it at universities – the beaks versus the dons.<sup>67</sup> An active researcher and writer, Cookson had strong views about how Classics should be taught and was 'much vexed about disorganization of "Mods." teaching in Oxford'. Hoping to make the subject more accessible to students, he proposed 'a scheme for supplying colleges + the university with an illustrative collection of maps, pictures of the Roman Forum ... costumed dolls, busts, etc., for help of classical lectures'.<sup>68</sup> Cookson thought highly of Sidney's abilities.

Sidney moved into 'digs' in town in his final year, as was the custom of most Oxford students. He was preparing for his finals and cocooned himself against the outside world, even putting aside his music performances.<sup>69</sup> At the very start of the new year in 1896 events in South Africa penetrated even Magdalen's walls. One Dr Jameson had led an abortive raid on Johannesburg, hoping to launch a revolt against the Boer republic of the Transvaal. The plot had been conceived by Cecil Rhodes and fellow mining magnate Alfred Beit. As Prime Minister of the Cape, Rhodes had changed the colony's laws to benefit the mining industry. But the Boer government was not so accommodating. Rhodes and Beit hoped that a revolt in Johannesburg would allow them to remake the gold-bearing Transvaal in their own image. The raid backfired, and Jameson, humiliated, was imprisoned. Webb was much distressed about the 'alarming news' of Jameson's invasion and of his disregard of the Queen's order 'to retire'. But Sidney, cloistered in his digs, probably gave the matter little attention, aside from brief chats with Webb or with fellow students on the way to college.<sup>70</sup>

Sidney had many long meetings with Webb during Hilary Term 1896. He rowed once more that term, for the last time. Coincidentally, over the Easter break Sidney and Webb bumped into each other strolling through Ashwood Dale near Buxton – an area that 'must have been a most lovely glen, with only the river ... and road along it' but that was now 'spoiled by the addition of a railway'. In May Sidney resumed his tutorials with Webb. But Sidney was not too busy to take off a weekend to visit the select spa town of Malvern. Walking helped him to clear his mind so that, refreshed, he could concentrate with renewed vigour.<sup>71</sup>

Sidney sat the second public examination in *Literis Humanioribus* in June 1896 and was awarded a first.<sup>72</sup> His was Magdalen's only first in Classics; across the university there were twenty-one firsts, forty seconds, forty-seven thirds and twenty-four fourth-class degrees in *Literis Humanioribus*. Clement Webb learned the results that August: 'Bunting 1<sup>st</sup> (wrote to him) Lambert, Nunn, Samuel 2<sup>nd</sup> ... Fairly satisfactory: of Bunting's class I am very glad.'<sup>73</sup>

Sidney was due to take his degree that October – the month of William Morris's death. Morris's body was brought back home through Oxford early that month. Morris's old comrade Cunninghame Graham noted bitterly the lack of people to pay their respects: 'True it was Long Vacation; but had the body of some Bulawayo Burglar [Cecil Rhodes] happened to pass, they all had been there'. Oxford, he wrote, was 'quite out of touch with all mankind.'<sup>74</sup> But like most students, Sidney was preoccupied with his future, unsure of his plans after graduation. 'Conversation with Bunting about his plans for the future', Webb jotted in his diary on 9 October 1896.<sup>75</sup> The year 1896 was a record year for Magdalen on the newly combined Indian and Home Civil Service Examinations. Of the ninety-four prizes offered, Oxford students had gained fifty-six, compared to Cambridge's twenty-six. Of the Oxford colleges, Magdalen had the highest number of successful candidates with seven, and one of these had won the top place. Four of the demies who had entered Magdalen along with Sidney, including George Lambert, were offered places in the Indian Civil Service. This option was evidently not of interest to Sidney, who had other plans.<sup>76</sup>

He had put in for a fellowship at Magdalen, one of sixteen candidates, thirteen of whom were from Oxford colleges. It was a rigorous competition. Examination papers were set in English essay; philosophy; history and political philosophy; literature and criticism; philosophical translation; literary translation of Latin prose; Greek prose; Latin and Greek verse; and, as an alternative paper for candidates not offering Latin and Greek verse, translation from French and German. 'Fellowship examiners' meeting', Webb noted in his diary of 12 October. 'Case absent. Conacher, Drewitt + Bunting came out best. Case had consistently marked Drewitt down: taking an utterly wrong view of him.' The choice boiled down to the two Magdalen graduates, both former demies, Sidney and J. A. J. Drewitt, who had received a second class on his Honours Mods but graduated in 1895 with a first class degree. The examiners felt that both candidates were 'distinctly in advance of' the other competitors and had 'considerable difficulty in deciding between their merits which [were] of somewhat different order', recorded the President in his Note Book. A 'majority ... were finally in favour of pronouncing the results of their performance ... to be practically equal. A minority would have preferred the course of placing Mr Drewitt first', the President continued.<sup>77</sup> 'Report put Bunting + Drewitt before college, a majority of examiners calling them equal, a minority putting Drewitt first', wrote Webb.

‘The majority were Pres<sup>t</sup>, Case, Underhill + Cookson (of whom Underhill preferred Drewitt, the others ... Bunting). The minority, Greene, Benecke and I.’ The next day the college met. ‘After much discussion’, Webb noted, ‘we voted on the selected candidates ... and Drewitt was elected 17–5. The President, Case + Cookson voted for Bunting: and one other, probably Baker. Elliot went out.’<sup>78</sup>

Clearly, Warren did not have the influence to sway a vote in which a significant majority of fellows took an opposing view. Webb had particular reason to be satisfied with the outcome. ‘Drewitt was a pupil of mine of whom I thought a great deal, at a time when not every one believed in him’, he explained to his mother. ‘I am especially glad at his success.’<sup>79</sup> But it was a very disappointing result for Sidney. The sixteen degree candidates, amongst them Sidney, were presented at graduation the next week, on Thursday 22 October. Later that evening – after 10 p.m. – Webb received a ‘long call from Bunting’, and the next day he had Sidney over to the senior common room.<sup>80</sup>

But Sidney did receive a final honour. The annual competition for the Chancellor’s prizes had been announced in May. The deadline was 1 March 1897. Over the next months Sidney threw himself into intense study – as if compelled to show the world that he could do better, and in December Magdalen awarded him a Jenner Prize of £30 to enable him to continue his studies. In May 1897 Sidney won the Chancellor’s prize for the best Latin essay – the first Magdalen man to do so since 1869 – on *Res Nautica apud Antiquos* [Naval Matters amongst the Ancients].<sup>81</sup> The college fellows learned the news at Sunday dinner on 2 May. ‘Bunting has got the Latin essay’, Webb noted in his diary. ‘The English essay has gone to one Sargent ... Drewitt ... [was] in for it.’<sup>82</sup> The university prize winners were to have the honour of reading their essays at the annual *Encaenia* or commencement.

The 22 June was the Queen’s Diamond Jubilee. Webb had gone down to London – ‘very gay ... red-cloaked little girls stationed opposite Volunteers lining street’, he wrote in his diary. He was captivated by the panoply. ‘Colonial procession, most impressive as representing varieties of our Empire; troops of all sorts, bronzed colonists, black Haussas [*sic*], etc, Chinese [from] Hong Kong, etc; premiers in carriages with their wives ... a vast number of troops + most magnificent military display, far bigger than in ‘87.’<sup>83</sup> The spirit of empire swept across Oxford the following week at the *Encaenia* on 30 June. Six Premiers of the Legislative Assemblies of the Colonies were to receive honorary degrees. The recipients included the Premier of the Dominion [of Canada], the Premier of New South Wales, the Premier of Queensland, the Right Hon. Sir John Gordon Sprigg, KCMG, Premier of the Cape Colony, the Premier of South Australia, the Premier of Newfoundland and Sir George Dashwood Taubman Goldie, KCMG, Governor of the Royal Niger Company.<sup>84</sup> As the young Sidney Percival Bunting, BA, formerly Demy of Magdalen College, paid homage to the naval

might of the classical empires – ‘*commune est, mercaturam raro sine classe, classem sine mercatura nunquam diu florere*’ [commerce has rarely flourished without a fleet, and a fleet never without commerce]<sup>85</sup> – the University of Oxford was honouring its own.

## 5 FIGHTING FOR EMPIRE

Now twenty-four years old, Sidney was back in London, once again living with his family at 11 Endsleigh Gardens. It was 1897, the year of the Imperial Victorian Exhibition, one of the 'brilliantly vulgar' exhibitions that helped to popularize Great Britain's imperial mission. The house at Endsleigh Gardens was, as always, full of people. Sidney's siblings were still there. His older sister Evelyn, twenty-seven, was helping her father with the *Contemporary*. His younger sister Dora, twenty, had decided to take up medicine. She had matriculated at University College in 1893, sat her science and maths exams in July 1896 and was planning to start at the London School of Medicine for Women on Henrietta Street that autumn of 1897. Sidney's brother Sheldon, just fifteen, had been at University College School since 1893. There were the usual array of guests and servants.<sup>1</sup>

Sidney's father persuaded him to follow one of the family traditions and pursue a career in law, but to train as a solicitor rather than a barrister. Sidney was articled to Freshfields, a firm of solicitors in the City of London. It was a suitable post in a wealthy and prestigious firm. By the 1890s the City of London had recovered from the depression of the previous decade, largely as a result of the so-called 'kaffir boom' – the boom in South African mining shares. British overseas investment was thriving. Freshfields, 'second to none in the legal world', could afford to pick and choose its clients; 'no new client was accepted unless he had a letter of introduction from the Bank of England or a prominent client'. Its clients included the Anglo-Californian Bank, National Bank of New Zealand, Land Mortgage Bank of India and African Steam Ship Company – to name a few. It also handled the affairs of prominent individuals, not least those of the Grand Old Man himself – Gladstone.<sup>2</sup>

The City of London, bustling from the boom, was slowly changing its ways. Horses still plodded the streets pulling hansom carriages and double-decker omnibuses. But around the time that Sidney joined Freshfields, 'the licensed houses started to put out sandwiches and biscuits on the counter'. Prior to that there had been 'little opportunity in the City for a light meal at midday'. There were also coffee shops around Moorfields, ham and beef shops in Honey Lane



Market, Old Charley's fish shop on Coleman Street, Sweetings and Lightfoot's Oyster Bars and Wilkinson's 'famous a la mode beef shops'.

When Sidney began, the firm's premises were at 5 New Bank Buildings, a stolid, curved-front and multi-columned structure at the intersection of Lothbury, Princes Street and Old Jewry. The premises were very old-fashioned. 'There was no electric light ever installed ... although by this time it was coming into common use', complained one employee. 'There were gas brackets in most rooms, but those not so provided had candles served out to them in the dark days.' One entered the firm's premises through 'a door which opened into a large office where the general staff occupied a long desk along one side of the room'.

The firm was run in a rigidly hierarchical manner by its four partners; the senior partners – who were also the Bank of England's solicitors – were the brothers Mr William D. Freshfield and Dr Edwin Freshfield, a prominent Churchman who lived not far from the Buntings at 35 Russell Square. Beneath them were 'two distinct classes of clerks'. First, were 'the managing staff, who were almost to a man solicitors, most of them from Public schools'. As none of these had ever been taken on as a partner – 'it was just not done' – they were assumed to be temporary. Sidney, presumably, was one of those who were 'passing through', destined to become partners in other firms. Beneath the managing staff was the 'second class or rank and file' – copying clerks and shorthand writers. Most of them were quite elderly and had been at the firm for decades. Sidney must have found it quite stultifying and even more set in its ways than Magdalen.<sup>3</sup>

Law, moreover, was not Classics, and Sidney could never feel the same way about his new profession. Nonetheless, the position at Freshfields allowed him to travel. His training took him to Leyden, where he picked up some knowledge of Dutch and of Roman-Dutch law. On another occasion, he and a colleague travelled to Spain for business concerning the Rio Tinto Company. This controlled the world's oldest surviving copper mine in Huelva Province, purchased by Matheson & Company from the Spanish government in 1873. The Rio Tinto Company reputedly suffered from financial mismanagement, of which Sidney and his colleague got a whiff. They quickly learned the importance of the bribe, an item listed on their expense account as 'expenses incidental to the passage of the action through the Royal Courts of Spain.'<sup>4</sup> Working at Freshfields had its high points.

Imperial London allowed Sidney the life of a toff. A swirl of social activities engulfed him, even including the fair sex – a marked change after Oxford. Sidney saw much of his cousins, Maurice and Bonté Amos, who were back in London. In 1895 Maurice had finished his degree at Cambridge with a first in the moral sciences tripos and the Cobden prize in hand. Like his own father and his uncle Percy, Maurice turned to law. In the summer of 1896 he entered the office of a solicitor named Mr Slack, a friend of his mother's, and in early 1897

he went as a pupil to the chambers of Mr Gregory, a leading conveyancer at Lincoln's Inn. That same year he was called to the bar by the Inner Temple.<sup>5</sup> Bonté, still studying medicine, had matriculated in January 1892 via University College and private tuition. She entered the London School of Medicine for Women in winter session 1894, passing her intermediate exams in January 1897. Now she was at the Royal Free Hospital, where women medical students received their clinical training, bicycling to and from the hospital on Grey's Inn Road; cycling was by this time a major fad for both sexes.<sup>6</sup>

The Amoses now lived at 11 Grosvenor Road, 'an agreeably situated slum, within two minutes of the House of Lords'. Their house 'looked out over Mowlem's wharf on to the river', directly across from Lambeth Palace.<sup>7</sup> Maurice, 'an attractive youth, tall, enthusiastic and awkward', was also 'a brilliant talker', always 'full of vitality, enthusiasm and wit'. But Bonté's 'tremendous charm' made her the focal point of any gathering. A slender young woman with wavy hair, she was, according to a friend, 'never conventionally pretty', but nonetheless 'fascinating to look at'; her face shone with enthusiasm for life.<sup>8</sup> Someone snapped a photo of her standing beside a fountain in a park, luminous in a white lace mutton-sleeved frock and summer hat.

Brother and sister, by one account, 'made a splendid couple'. They joined the Fabian Society, evidently at Bonté's instigation; she thought it would provide an agreeable circle of acquaintances. It was a sparkling set. At Cambridge Maurice had become friends with Bertrand Russell, whose mother-in-law, Mrs Pearsall Smith, was friends with Sarah Amos. Russell had read mathematics at university and had influenced Maurice to read for the moral sciences tripos. Maurice and Bonté were now friends with both Russell and his wife Alys Pearsall Smith and saw them often. Bonté had a sitting room at the back of the Amos house where 'many agreeable little impromptu parties took place'. Sidney, lured by Bonté's charm and his friendship with Maurice, used to drop by, as did A. G. Tansley, a botanist who was a year older than Sidney. There were dances and hockey at Fulham Palace when they wanted to get out.<sup>9</sup>

But quite soon after Sidney got back to London, Maurice was preparing to leave. Early in 1897 he applied for a post of inspector in the Egyptian Ministry of Justice. Before doing so he called on Sir Alfred Milner; due to take over as High Commissioner of South Africa and Governor of the Cape Colony that May, Milner had served as Director-General of Accounts in Egypt before his appointment as Chairman of the Board at Inland Revenue.<sup>10</sup> Maurice was offered the position in Egypt at a salary of £360 a year on condition of learning Arabic and passing the exams for the French law degree. So in September 1897, just a few months after Sidney's return from Oxford, he went to Paris for six months to study French law. The next year he left for Egypt.

The Bunting home was still the centre of a cosmopolitan and ethically committed intelligentsia. By 1898 South Africa was always in the news, the prospect of war growing greater every day. Sidney followed politics, but his chief interest was imperial Russia, and his thirst was for scholarly research rather than political activism. He was writing a study of Russia's role in international relations. It turned out to be a massive treatise of over 300 handwritten pages called 'The Dominion of the Tsars: A Sketch of the Rise of Russian Power'. Its chapters treated a range of themes and topics: 'The Spirit of Russian History'; 'Muscovy' – its history from medieval times; 'Russia in Europe'; 'Liberation, Repression, and the Eastern Question'; and 'Russia in Asia'. China had just ceded Port Arthur to Russia on 27 March 1898 and granted a concession to construct a railway; Sidney saw this as but one example of the Russian expansionism that threatened international stability. The project occupied much of his free time; no doubt his lights burned late into the night.<sup>11</sup>

London, of course, provided never-ending excitement. That year saw yet another hugely popular exhibition celebrating Britain's imperial greatness, ambitiously known as the Universal Exhibition. And there was always music. The years around the turn of the century saw 'perhaps the richest blossoming ever of English musical composition'; Elgar, Delius and Holst were 'at the peak of their powers'.<sup>12</sup> Yet despite all this, to return to his parent's home after university was stifling. The endless litany of twice-daily prayers must have grated on Sidney, who presumably thought that he had left all that behind once he went up to Oxford.

That year, 1898, Sidney's law firm moved across the street to 31 Old Jewry, evidently 'a considerable improvement'; the main 'office remained clean and sweet compared with the old building'.<sup>13</sup> Sidney studied for the solicitors examinations, passing the intermediate exam on 25 November 1898. This gave him some breathing space. He turned more of his energies to music, a passion that allowed him to escape both from his legal studies and from his parents. On many an evening he played music with his family. But he needed to get out from under his parents' shadow.

With his involvement in the Oxford University Musical Union obviously limited, Sidney and a few other Oxford and Cambridge graduates began discussing the idea of a musical club to promote chamber music. His friends R. C. Davis, P. J. Hansell and E. H. Fellowes, all of whom he had performed with at university, were keen. In late March 1899 a group of them met to plan the new venture, to be called the Oxford and Cambridge Musical Club. In May they circulated a letter to members of those universities. By then the club already had more than eighty members, including the composer and conductor Ralph Vaughan Williams who, just Sidney's age, had already established a musical reputation. The

renowned violinist Josef Joachim was president, the Lord Bishop of London, an honorary member.<sup>14</sup>

Maurice came back for three months' leave around 10 June. His interest in Egyptian politics was growing, even though his work, while 'not wholly revolting – translating French law into English', was not particularly political. He had become a staunch believer in Britain's greatness: 'the true character of the present time in England is that of a Great Age', he wrote to his friend Bertrand Russell. England – with its 'perfect political system, administered by a liberal, respected + unenvied aristocracy', where 'teeming millions of a prosperous working class vie with the cultured + affluent orders of the middle rank in Imperial enthusiasm, loyalty to the Throne, and respect for learning'. This 'generous + stimulating atmosphere' lay behind Britain's trading success and flourishing intellectual life.<sup>15</sup>

Sidney very likely heard Maurice wax lyrical about the empire during the summer of 1899. He no doubt concurred with his cousin – such views had been fundamental to his classical training at Oxford. By then, his three-volume tome was probably finished. Sidney had an eye for comparative detail, and Russia provided a marked contrast with Britain. The thriving civil society that had so impressed Maurice in his musings on England was absent in Russia, where, thought Sidney, the state was all. 'The history of the Russian government is little more than the history of the Tsars themselves', he argued. 'The modern mode of writing history, by which reigns and deeds of monarchs and individuals are merged in the growth and movement of peoples, is inapplicable to the story of Russia. "Russia" is not a people but a government, not a nation but a man.' This, he believed, stunted Russia's revolutionary potential. 'Russia, in many ways like India, has had no Indian mutiny: if the few and insignificant revolutions in her history were revolutions of dissenters, that only shows how completely Orthodoxy was bound up with blind loyalty. Even the Cossacks', he observed, 'the most independent element in the Russian population, preferred to owe allegiance to the Tsar rather than to be the allies of Catholic Poland'.<sup>16</sup>

Much of Sidney's free time outside work was taken up by music and scholarship. Still, he must have thrived on the dinner table discussions and the comings and goings of the political activists who visited the family home. He had grown up in a political family; although he showed no inclination for a political career, politics had nonetheless seeped under his skin. More news of South Africa; more talk about South Africa. There was growing tension between the British and the Boers, or Afrikaners – descendants of the Dutch colonizers. The British settlers on the Rand – *uitlanders*, as the Boers called them – had been trying to win voting rights from the Boer republics but negotiations broke down. Milner had been in London since November 1898 but had returned to South Africa at the end of January 1899.<sup>17</sup>

Closer to the Bunting home, was the London visit of Booker T. Washington, the American champion of black rights and self-advancement. Washington travelled across the continent that spring, reaching London in early July 1899. The Unitarian Minister Reverend Dr Brooke Herford and his wife held a reception for Washington on 3 July. On that occasion or another, Sidney's mother met Washington; so, presumably, did her husband. The meeting left its imprint on the family. Percy and Mary Bunting had already had some contact with the struggle for black rights in the United States. Five years earlier, in 1894, the American civil rights activist Ida B. Wells had visited England to publicize her anti-lynching campaign; Percy had presided at one of her talks, and he and Mary became founding members of the London Anti-Lynching Committee. Sidney became acquainted with the problem of colour prejudice through his parents' activities.<sup>18</sup>

But his main political interest concerned the impact of imperial rivalries on international stability and peace. His views reflected a cynical pragmatism. 'The great questions of the time ... are to be decided not by speeches and votes of majorities but by blood and iron', Sidney quoted Prince Bismarck. But so strong was the fear of war, he continued, that those great issues remain unresolved. 'To threaten war is the only argument left to diplomacy: to avert it is its only triumph', he argued. 'The most civilised state must in self-protection be the most prepared for war.' And when war is avoided, and 'the weapons of steel are held in reserve, all the resources of the nations are devoted to a war of trade, markets, and colonial rivalry'.

The carving up of the world between rival imperial powers could only stifle regional diversity and local initiatives, he forecast. 'The whole earth with its rich variety must according to them be crushed into the rigid mould of four spheres of influence, the British or Anglo-Saxon, the French, the German, and the Russian, a levelling process far more melancholy than that foreshadowed by socialism' – his liberal beliefs inevitably led him to see socialism as antithetical to individual initiative. 'To this scramble', he emphasized, 'must be sacrificed all the chances of a more plastic civilization, the formation of local life and the encouragement of racial differentiation and national independence and growth, the intelligent activity in the arts of peace of the individual and the free state: for this, and not mere geographical provinces, is the end of the British Empire'.<sup>19</sup>

He was still busy with the Oxford and Cambridge Musical Club, which was formally launched in August 1899. Located at 47 Leicester Square, the former home of Sir Joshua Reynolds, it 'established itself as a gentlemen's club with music-making facilities in addition to residential and catering services'. The annual membership subscription was £3.3.0; membership was limited to past and present members of Oxford and Cambridge Universities – with the exception of a special rule allowing the induction of well-known musicians – and male

only. Ladies were allowed by invitation only during restricted hours. By now, Sidney felt very much at ease in these gentlemen's social clubs, and the musical club allowed him to mingle with other men of his class outside his parents' circle.<sup>20</sup>

Developments in South Africa continued to thrust themselves on the British consciousness and undoubtedly on the family dinner table conversation. A conference between Britons and Boers at Bloemfontein between 31 May and 5 June failed to resolve the problems. Tensions mounted over the summer. By the start of October it was clear to both Britons and Boers that war was inevitable. For Britain, the key issue was its hegemony over the Southern African region and mineral-rich South Africa; at stake for the Boer republics was their political independence.<sup>21</sup>

War finally broke out on 11 October 1899. Britain was sanguine about its prospects for victory. The British government could scarcely believe the Boers to be a credible opposition and anticipated that 75,000 troops would be needed in a war lasting three or four months and costing about £10 or £11 million. The British press dubbed the Boers 'a rough mob of good marksmen' and 'stock breeders of the lowest type'. But Boer soldiers decisively outnumbered British troops as the war began, and they seized the initiative with dual incursions into Natal and Cape Colony. By the end of October, Ladysmith, Mafeking and Kimberley – with Cecil Rhodes, no less, trapped inside – were all under siege. The Boers, with their eyes on the rail network, kept a tight grip. By the time General Sir Redvers Buller landed in Cape Town on 31 October, he had cause for grave concern.<sup>22</sup>

Although British society was overwhelmingly in favour of empire, a vocal minority opposed the war. C. P. Scott's *Manchester Guardian* was staunchly anti-war. Many British progressives and socialists gave their sympathies to the Afrikaners, seeing in them a beleaguered but intrepid rural people fighting to preserve their independence from British imperial greed. The Liberal Party was split down the middle, a division starkly apparent by late October 1899. However, its leader, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, managed to hold the party together. Nonconformism was split just like the Liberal Party; a majority of Nonconformists supported the war, but a minority were staunchly anti-war, and some even pro-Boer.<sup>23</sup>

Sidney still had his head in his books – he passed the final solicitors examination on 24 November 1899. But he could hardly ignore the war, which was not the quick and easy victory that the British public had expected. Britain's army, hampered by 'theory and rigid drills', had little experience of large-scale manoeuvres with large numbers of troops. The ordinary soldiers, drawn frequently from the urban poor and unemployed, were often in poor shape, with limited military skills and experience.<sup>24</sup>

Sunday 10 December marked the beginning of 'Black Week' for British troops with crushing, humiliating defeats at Stormberg, Magersfontein and Colenso; their attempts to relieve Kimberley and to lift the siege of Ladysmith failed.<sup>25</sup> The British public, accustomed to victory, reeled from the shock. 'We don't want to fight', began one of the most popular songs of the period, 'But by Jingo, if we do, We've got the ships, We've got the guns, We've got the money too'. Their industrial revolution had fuelled an armaments industry. How could weaponry representing the height of human technological achievements possibly fail? Few sections of British society were immune from an unwavering belief in British superiority.

Perhaps the problem lay with the leadership. At the end of Black Week Field-Marshal Lord Roberts replaced Buller as Commander-in-Chief in South Africa. Lord Kitchener, the British army's viciously victorious hero of Egypt and Sudan – Kitchener of Khartoum – came to South Africa as Chief of Staff to Roberts. The appeal went out for volunteers; they came not only from Britain but from colonies of white settlement around the empire. At the very end of December the Lord Mayor of London called for a regiment of volunteer marksmen – bachelors aged twenty to thirty years. The first detachment of the City Imperial Volunteers sailed from Southampton in January 1900.<sup>26</sup>

Percy Bunting, judicious as always and desirous of looking at all sides of a problem, published articles both for and against the war. J. A. Hobson's article, 'Capitalism and Imperialism in South Africa', appeared that January, together with an article by 'An Officer' on the state of the war – as the government was trying to raise more troops. In February a piece by 'Miles' drew the 'Lessons of the War' that arose from the two colliding systems of military methods: the formal regiments of Aldershot versus the guerrilla tactics used by Afrikaners on the *veld*. That same month Lord Roberts set off from Cape Town to relieve Kimberley. Soon after, the *Contemporary* published more material from Hobson.

The long-hoped for relief of Ladysmith at the start of March, followed by the British capture of Bloemfontein, signalled that the tide had turned in Britain's favour. By then the supply of regular troops was exhausted, and the army was increasingly dependent on auxiliaries. There was, no doubt, an endless discussion of the war around the Bunting family dinner table. It was a war that engendered intense political passions.<sup>27</sup>

It divided the family. Percy was a liberal proponent of empire, as was his wife Mary and her nephew, the Reverend John Scott Lidgett, who 'was staunchly patriotic and royalist'.<sup>29</sup> After all, missionaries were part and parcel of empire's civilizing agenda, and Nonconformist missions had certainly rivalled those of the established Church of England in South Africa. But Sidney's aunt Sarah, true to her support for the underdog, was anti-war and pro-Boer, like her friend W. T. Stead, who had been publishing the weekly *War against War in South*

*Africa* since October 1899 and had launched the Stop the War Committee in January.<sup>28</sup>

Like his parents, Sidney supported British imperialism, although for his own carefully argued reasons. The ‘modern gospel of Imperialism’ aimed not to glorify ‘England, right or wrong’, but to prevent the ‘melancholy result’ of an imperial force that mowed down all in its path. ‘The British Empire is justified in extending its possessions and in resisting to the uttermost all other extensions only if it adopts a universal Monroe doctrine.’ That meant, Sidney explained, ‘not that England is to monopolise the world, but that she will do all in her power to prevent it from being monopolised by others, or that if she occupies any country, it is for the benefit of that country ... And it is only because this policy is menaced by the warlike powers that the tightening and consolidating of the British Empire can be defended’. Russia, he underlined, pursued just such a warlike imperial policy.<sup>29</sup>

A rash of jingoism swept the country. Photographs and new moving pictures – bioscopes – captured the war for the home audience.<sup>30</sup> At first glance, Sidney did not seem impressed. He had not enlisted at the start of the war, nor was he caught up in the throes of patriotism as so many other young men were: he made no rush to enrol. No – he planned, he calculated, he waited. With his examinations under his belt, he applied for admission as a solicitor of the supreme court. Bonté was due to complete her medical studies at the end of the academic year. It seemed that they wanted to marry.

In the meantime, Sidney was busy with his musical club. Early in 1900 this launched a series of chamber music concerts performed by members and invited guests; some of the leading and emerging musicians of the day were amongst the first performers. Sidney was studiously practising his viola and performed at the club’s fifth concert on 19 April 1900 – Mendelssohn’s String Quartet, op. 44 no. 1 and Schumann’s Piano Quartet with his Oxford mates Davis, Hansell and Fellowes – and at its sixth concert on 3 May 1900 – Mendelssohn’s String Quintet, op. 87, and Gerard F. Cobb’s Piano Quintet, op. 22.<sup>31</sup> Just the day before he had been admitted as a solicitor of the Supreme Court. His future seemed assured.<sup>32</sup>

But any hopes that he and Bonté might marry were dashed. Marriage between cousins was unacceptable; their parents ruled it out. Bonté was apparently put under much pressure by her mother. While she was studying for her finals, ‘her mother developed the habit of waking her up in the night to pray for her’. She confided in her friends Alys and Bertrand Russell, and they sent her some money so that she could move out. Determined, she pulled herself together, passed her exams and received the Bachelor of Medicine, L. S. A. from the University of London in May 1900. This was no mean feat. That year, Britain could claim only 434 women as licensed doctors; one-third of those were working abroad. Soon



after Bonté received her degree, she left for Egypt to join her brother Maurice and to take up a position as medical officer.<sup>33</sup>

The relief of Mafeking on 17 May was met the next day with a frenzy of celebration in London – crowds thronged in the streets, stretching as far as the eye could see. Could Sidney have remained unmoved by the crowds on Mafeking night? And then at the very end of May, at long last, Lord Roberts and his troops captured Johannesburg. Lord Roberts graciously allowed the Boer army to withdraw without a fight; he wanted to safeguard the gold mines. After all, fourteen thousand African mine workers – ‘the worker bees of the gold hive’ – were still there. Hard at work, ‘they had kept the gold vaults full in enough of the commandeered goldmines to pay for the whole Boer war effort’ – with a surplus no less.<sup>34</sup>

Roberts put Johannesburg and the surrounding area under military administration. But, signalling the centrality of gold to the British conquerors, he included two top civilian commissioners from the mining industry, both *uitlanders*. Sam Evans of Wernher-Beit became the Commissioner of Finance. And one Wilfred Wybergh, a mining engineer who had worked at Cecil Rhodes’s consortium, Consolidated Gold Fields – and been sacked by Rhodes for his politics – became Commissioner of Mines. Wybergh’s name had been touted at the very start of the war as one of those *uitlanders* who would head the post-war ministries in the Transvaal once the Boers were swept aside.<sup>35</sup>

The Boers retreated to Pretoria. But Roberts pressed on. The capture of Pretoria on 5 June was once again a bloodless affair. A young *Morning Post* reporter named Winston Churchill watched ‘the extraordinary spectacle of a Boer troop-train gliding unopposed out of the main railway station’, its carriages ‘crammed with Boers, whose rifles bristled from every window’.<sup>36</sup> The President of the Transvaal, Paul Kruger, slipped out of Pretoria with his principal ministers as the British prepared their triumphant march on the town. The war was nearing its end.

Or so Roberts thought. But the Boers would not surrender. They still had their guns. Marthinus Steyn, President of the Orange Free State, convinced other Boer leaders that the war could be won from the countryside – the *veld* would inspire the *volk*. They launched a guerrilla war.<sup>37</sup>

By then, Sidney had probably made up his mind to go to South Africa. Rash patriotism did not motivate him: the British Empire, he argued, ‘is not a glorious instrument of power, it is a sheer necessity of strategy and defence. Even “prestige” thus becomes no more than a means. To make it an end can only lead to universal war.’<sup>38</sup> Perhaps he felt uneasy that so many other men were risking their lives while he stayed behind with the privileges of his profession and in the comfort of his club. Or perhaps he desired to carve a new life away from his parents and their moral sanctions. After all, his two closest friends, Maurice and Bonté,

had gone to Egypt. One thing seems certain: he intended leaving England for good. Sidney went out to South Africa, his cousin Maurice remarked, 'with the intention of settling ... when the War was over'.<sup>39</sup>

Sidney did not choose the route taken by his Oxford peers. Those Magdalen men who fought in the South African War generally enlisted in the imperial forces; many had done so by February 1900. Their names were listed in the *Oxford Magazine* and carefully noted by Magdalen's President.<sup>40</sup> Sidney may have enlisted in the 14th battalion of the Middlesex regiment, known as the Inns of Court. His cousin Maurice thought he had; this drilled at Lincoln's Inn, where his father had offices, and most of its officers came from the legal profession. Or, perhaps he chose to enlist in the Artists' Rifles, the 20th battalion of the Rifle Brigade (the Prince Consort's Own) in Middlesex. This had been calling for gentlemen who were fit and willing to undergo training to accept an officer's commission. Its headquarters were at Duke's Road, off Euston Road, not far from Sidney's home. Volunteers in the Inns of Court and Artists' Rifles formed part of the City Imperial Volunteers. Or perhaps he simply went off to South Africa on his own steam and enlisted after his arrival. He was, as it turned out, among the less than 1 per cent of British men of military age who volunteered to fight.<sup>41</sup>

On 8 June 1900 – two days before Lord Roberts realized that the Boers would not surrender – the Castle Line's steamship *Carisbrooke Castle* set off for South Africa with a crew of 210 and 230 statute adults, disproportionately male and all cabin passengers. The passenger list contained the names of numerous 'merchants' in their late 20s and 30s, mostly bound for Cape Town. One S. P. Bunting – an Irishman, aged 27 – was amongst them. Perhaps this was Sidney, curiously listed as Irish. In fact, when the ship pulled out of London, Sidney was a few weeks short of his 27th birthday.<sup>42</sup>

When Sidney arrived in Cape Town at the very end of June or early July 1900, the town was teeming with men seeking to fight and with refugees fleeing the fighting. Lord Roberts had authorized three new regiments of mounted riflemen, South African irregular forces to be known as Roberts' Horse, Kitchener's Horse and Brabant's Horse. Once news got out that they would be sent to the front, recruits had streamed in from all parts of South Africa and all corners of the empire.<sup>43</sup>

Over the next several months, Sidney probably underwent a course of intense training, learning army drill and routine and horse-riding manoeuvres – if he had not already trained in one of the volunteer brigades back home. His linguistic abilities caught the ear of his commanders – his German was fluent enough, and he had picked up some Dutch in Leyden – and he was asked to work as a spy behind enemy lines: 'it was thought that he could pass for a Dutch or German "adviser"'. But that he declined. Perhaps he sensed that the Boers would not find

his Dutch convincing enough to allow him to pass for a Dutchman. After all, he was not one of those who underestimated the intelligence of the Boers. His sharp eyes and ears soon picked up how inadequate British military preparations were against the Boer guerrillas fighting for their soil and way of life.<sup>44</sup>

Back in Britain, Conservatives taunted Liberals as ‘pro-Boers’. In disarray and on the defensive, the Liberal Party was unable to benefit electorally from the government’s poor management of the war. Lord Roberts kept insisting that the war was ‘practically’ over. The Conservative government was re-elected that October – in the Khaki election – with precisely that in mind: it was painfully clear that the guerrilla war was not over. Although Roberts had launched a scorched earth policy in the countryside, his desire to avoid bloodshed in towns was deemed too genteel by the British public. At the end of November 1900 he handed the command to Kitchener, who had one aim: to end the war. His challenge was to figure out how the British army could conquer a people who never stood still in a straight line but flitted surreptitiously across the *veld*.

Queen Victoria died early the next year. Her death on 19 January 1901 signalled the end of an era that had marked British society with its odd combination of puritanism and imperial grandeur. Now her fifty-nine-year-old son, Edward VII, was to give his own lead to the country and its empire. But in South Africa Kitchener ran the show. To cut the links between the guerrillas and their civilian supporters was paramount.

Kitchener carried on Roberts’s scorched earth policy, burning farms as his army marched relentlessly across the *veld*, rounding up Afrikaner and African civilians and herding them into camps. Disease and death swept across the camps – some forty concentration camps in all. British troops built a series of block-houses stretching across 4,000 miles, linked by barbed wire and protected by electric lights, their silhouettes looming menacingly in the still of the nights.<sup>45</sup>

Sidney presumably completed his officer’s training as Kitchener’s policy was gathering force and causing dissension back in Britain. Emily Hobhouse came to South Africa that February to tour the concentration camps; on her return to Britain, she raised an outcry. By April 1901 Sidney was a Lieutenant in the South African Mounted Irregular Forces under the command of Major C. A. C. Tremeer. That same year Bonté became the first woman doctor appointed in the service of the Egyptian government, but it is unlikely that Sidney learned of this at the time.<sup>46</sup>

Later he was posted to Brabant’s Horse. This consisted of two battalions, about 1,500 strong, raised in Queenstown in November 1899 and January 1900. Sidney began in the second battalion. The two battalions were amalgamated on 31 May 1901; Sidney was transferred to the amalgamated first battalion on 1 June 1901.<sup>47</sup> Around that time Brabant’s Horse was ‘heavily engaged near Richmond’. Sometime thereafter the corps traversed ‘almost every part’ of the Cape

Colony. Sidney fought in battles in Cape Colony and the Orange Free State. At some point he was in a company of 'cycle-borne troops' who moved about rapidly on the rough terrain.<sup>48</sup>

By October 1901 – the month that Sidney's father published Emily Hobhouse's exposé of the concentration camps she had seen earlier that year – Sidney was transferred to the Johannesburg Mounted Rifles, or JMR as they were called.<sup>49</sup> This had been established in December 1900 and comprised two battalions. When Sidney joined in late 1901 he was placed in the second battalion under Lieutenant-Colonel H. A. Warren. Not long after, the two battalions merged under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel H. K. Stewart. By January 1902 Sidney was in the amalgamated battalion, which was headquartered in the Ermelo district of the Transvaal.<sup>50</sup> Kitchener's final phase had begun, and the tide began to turn in the guerrilla struggle.

The JMR were sent out from Ermelo on night marches with orders of 'Silence in the ranks and no lights to be struck' so that they could surprise the Boer laagers at dawn. 'Like the great sea serpent trailing over the bare veldt phantom-like we marched', wrote one gentleman serving under Stewart. Wheeled transport was not allowed; officers and men alike carried everything on their horses. The strategy worked. Their dawn raids resounded with 'the shouts of the Tommies ... the shrieks [*sic*] of the women in the laager, and the popping of Mausers ... a veritable Bedlam: Boers flying in all directions, some trouserless and bootless, and none with saddles on their horses.'<sup>51</sup> Heading towards Johannesburg, they skirmished in the Frankford district of the Orange Free State. By then – on 26 March 1902 – Cecil Rhodes had died; he did not live to see the end of the war that his own ambitions and designs had helped to launch.<sup>52</sup>

On 31 May 1902, after two months of negotiations, the leaders of the British and Boer armies met at Kitchener's headquarters in Vereeniging and signed a treaty to end the war. General Lord Kitchener, Commander-in-Chief of the British Army, and Lord Milner, High Commissioner, represented Britain. Schalk Burgher, Acting President of the Transvaal, and Christiaan De Wet of the Orange Free State signed for the Boers. The terms of surrender were signed at Pretoria.<sup>53</sup> The settlement provided for the end of hostilities and for the eventual self-government of the Transvaal and the Orange Free State as colonies of the British Empire. Britain agreed to pay a £3 million indemnity for Boer war debts and to grant amnesty and repatriation to all those Afrikaner soldiers who pledged their loyalty to the British monarch. The question of African rights was swept aside. For the British and the Boers, that Africans should have the franchise was not worth considering.

The war cost Britain £210 million. The human cost was impossible to calculate. Perhaps 70,000 people lost their lives in the war. More than 20,000 of these were Afrikaner civilians who had died from disease in concentration

camps. Roughly 107,000 Africans had been interned in concentration camps, and unknown thousands of Africans, very likely well over 21,000, died as a result of the war. The British were estimated to have lost 400,346 horses, mules and donkeys; the number of farm animals – cattle, horses and sheep – lost by Boers and Africans could not be ascertained.<sup>54</sup>

But victory brought its celebrations and commemorations. Those who fought in the war were awarded the Queen's South African Medal. Sidney's medal recognized his participation in the JMR and Brabant's Horse and bore clasps for battles in the Cape Colony, Orange Free State and the Transvaal.<sup>55</sup> On 17 June Kitchener, now Viscount and full General, was honoured in Johannesburg. The JMR and other irregular regiments assembled and marched past for inspection. The Johannesburg Town Council, the Chamber of Mines, Commerce and Trade and the Stock Exchange feted Kitchener at a dinner that evening; the new administration was working hand in hand with the mining magnates. The dinner menu bore a map of Africa with a red line stretching south from Alexandria in Egypt and north from the Cape in South Africa; tellingly, the two lines did not meet.<sup>56</sup>

The end of the war marked the birth of a new order in South Africa. 'No one doubts that the conclusion of hostilities will be the occasion for a great rush to South Africa,' wrote one journalist in the Cape Town publication, *Greater Britain*. Presumably, speculated the writer, 'many of the troops who have seen service in South Africa will eventually decide to make their home here and furnish good colonising material'. He hoped that 'every encouragement should be given to make them cast in their lot with us and contribute to the building up and development of the country'.<sup>57</sup> Sidney, of course, had planned on staying, and now he had to decide what to do in life after war. With a Queen's Medal in his pocket, a first-class degree from Oxford and a solicitor's training, a white man might go far in the new South Africa.

## 6 AN ENGLISH GENTLEMAN IN JOHANNESBURG

Peace found Sidney in Johannesburg. This city of gold was also a city of dust, its untarred roads and those who traversed them draped in a coppery film. Johannesburg had grown out of a gold mining camp, its inhabitants intent on one aim. ‘Money making and money grabbing is the alpha and omega of those resident on these fields’, wrote one of them around 1893.<sup>1</sup> By the early 1900s it was still ‘no better than a mining camp, many of the buildings being of wood and iron, including the Municipal Offices’, recalled Albert West, a British businessman and associate of Indian lawyer Mohandas Gandhi.

The Market Square, bounded by Sauer and Rissik Streets on its west and east and Market and President Streets on the south and north, was the town’s heart, where produce and cattle were traded. Surrounded by ornate Victorian buildings with turrets and gables, the square itself was ‘a huge sandy area large enough for a span of sixteen oxen to swing around with its long wagon load of farm produce. Even the main streets were rough tracks which would often become impassable during a dust storm.’ White pedestrians bustled along on sidewalks protected from the sun by cast-iron verandas; black people walked in the streets, where cyclists jostled with horse-drawn carriages. Public transport was rudimentary. Rickshaws for hire could be found at Market Square. Commissioner Street, the main east-west thoroughfare that lay just south of Market Street, had a horse-drawn tramway nick-named the ‘toast-rack’ that ran between Jeppe and Fordsburg.<sup>2</sup>

Johannesburg’s location, like that of other towns on the Witwatersrand, was determined not by a source of water but by a supply of gold. Water was a perennial problem, its importance highlighted by the incorporation of the word *fontein* or spring in the names of many of the sites claimed by the Afrikaner trekkers, including the farms that later became Johannesburg’s small townships or suburbs.<sup>3</sup> In Johannesburg’s first years private companies under government license supplied water, gas and electricity. But the supply of water was erratic. ‘When it rained’, recollected Louis Cohen – cousin of mining magnate Barney Barnato – ‘the blessed village was submerged by fearful floods’. At other times,

‘it was hidden by the most terrible dust storms ... that were ever invoked by the devil. Sometimes the town had enough water ‘to float a ship’, but at other times there was not enough ‘to drown a flea – except at prohibitive prices – and a good wholesome bath was generally out of the question’.<sup>4</sup> The municipality took over the supply of gas and electricity in 1895. Plans to develop the water supply were aborted by the war. But by September 1901 Johannesburg was at peace under Field Marshall Lord Roberts’s military occupation – war raged all around – and the Municipal Council took steps to stabilize the water supply under public control. By 1903, the municipality was in charge of water, and the following year saw the installation of a waterborne sewerage system. It was then, claims G. A. Leyds, that Johannesburg ‘really became civilised’.<sup>5</sup>

Sidney settled at 1 Ockerse Street in Braamfontein. He began work for a firm of solicitors, sent for copies of his legal qualifications from London, and on 27 November 1902 was admitted as an attorney in the Supreme Court of the Transvaal. He also joined all the right clubs. Johannesburg had no shortage of clubs for its gentlemen – who were, by definition, white and, with rare exception, English-speaking.<sup>6</sup>

The Rand Club, situated at Loveday and Commissioner Streets – its site selected by Cecil Rhodes on his first trip to the town – was, of course, paramount. That its members thought highly of themselves and had many admirers is not in doubt. Cape Cabinet Minister J. W. Leonard is said to have exclaimed that the club had ‘more brains to the square inch than anywhere else in the world’.<sup>7</sup> During the war the club had curtailed its activities, but in January 1902 membership ballots were reinstated, and by September there were 172 new members. Sidney joined that year, which saw membership totalling 1,051. During 1903 and 1904, the club premises were temporarily relocated to the North Western Hotel so that a new building could be constructed. The new premises, a monument to empire boasting marble dados, pillars and staircases and a bronze statue of Rhodes in the entrance hall – all at a cost of more than £111,000 – were finally occupied in December 1904.<sup>8</sup> Members lounged about, read the papers, dined and discussed, and there were even rooms for lodgers. In tone it was redolent of the Oxbridge clubs with which Sidney was so familiar. He also had his eye on the Pretoria Club, joining in September 1903. Founded in 1885, this boasted tennis and squash-racquet courts, and its members could enjoy billiards, cards, chess, draughts and dominoes; it was a pleasant oasis during Sidney’s business trips to Pretoria.<sup>9</sup>

Music remained Sidney’s passion and consumed much of his free time during his first years in Johannesburg. He played several instruments and wrote as a music critic for local newspapers. In April 1902 he had been ‘one of the prime movers’ in the launch of the Johannesburg Musical Society, whose object was to encourage musicians, especially amateurs, to practice their art. But he still

kept up his £0.10.6 overseas subscription to the Oxford and Cambridge Musical Society in London.<sup>10</sup>

The Johannesburg Musical Society was founded at the home of Mrs Caldecott, 'a well-known Johannesburg hostess'. Sidney quickly made his mark. He was, reminisced the society's historian many years later, 'an active young lawyer of forceful character' who already had a reputation locally as 'an excellent viola player and an ardent lover of chamber music'. He, along with Misses Caldecott and Pistorious, and Messrs Short, Sander, Lennard and Beckmann, formed a provisional management committee; at the society's first meeting on 10 May 1902, attended by twenty-seven 'ladies and gentlemen', Sidney was 'at once' elected as chairperson. Amongst its first members were Lord Basil Blackwood, Hon. Hugh Wyndham, Mrs Theodore Reunert and Miss Muriel Alexander.

The society began holding meetings at local homes, where members performed; concerts were held in the German School. It sought out local luminaries as well as foreign talent. The violinist Otto von Booth composed a piece for the society that was featured at its second concert. The next year Sidney organized a concert to celebrate the society's first year of existence and to honour von Booth's contributions. In 1903 the well-known young violinist and pianist Beatrice Stuart, a home-grown musician born in Greytown, Natal, arrived in Johannesburg to begin married life. An enthusiast for both orchestral and chamber music, she began frequenting the society and playing string quartets with von Booth. A slim and attractive brunette, Beatrice Stuart's marriage was not a happy one; she and Sidney became friends.<sup>11</sup>

In no small part due to Sidney's efforts, the society got off to a good start. Sidney was an efficient organizer and administrator. The report for the year ending 30 June 1903 lauded not only the fact that the society had organized twelve concerts over the past year but that 'the atmosphere of a "Ladies' and Gentlemen's Club" had been retained' despite the increase in membership to 85. The society's books showed a credit of £471.14.9 in addition to its Steinway piano, and a turnover of £754.17.0, as well as 'an extensive catering plant' with crockery, cutlery and a stock of wines and spirits, including twenty bottles of Dewar's and Walker's whisky. By the second year it counted almost 300 members. Sidney's cousin Jack Lidgett – the son of Sidney's mother's brother George – was in Johannesburg, having settled there after the war to make his fortune. A music enthusiast like Sidney, Jack attended the society's concerts. News of another far-away cousin that year: Maurice Amos was made judge on the Cairo Native Court in Egypt.

But the musical society was not immune to tensions and controversies. That year differences arose over whether the society should focus on chamber music or undertake to organize an orchestra and chorus – Sidney was a passionate and persuasive advocate of chamber music, and the majority sided with him.



Despite this victory, he fell out with some of the members and resigned from the committee. However, the committee still hoped to use Sidney's 'musical and administrative ability' by hiring him as the society's Musical Director and Secretary at a salary of £20 per year. This was not, however, a straightforward matter. Sidney had a rival: the Italian singer and singing teacher Cav. L. Margottini, who wished to organize choral and orchestral sections, offered his services for the post. After a 'stormy' meeting, in which Sidney 'steadfastly refused' to share the post with Cav. Margottini, the committee voted to appoint Sidney as Musical Director, Secretary and Treasurer for that year. Sidney, accordingly, kept the society on its original orientation of chamber music.<sup>12</sup>

Johannesburg, for all its excitement, was wearying. Law was merely a way to earn his living. He was fed up with the musical society's politics. He needed a change. In late December 1903 he took a trip to Mauritius to clear his head, occupying himself with copious research on the island's history – both political and physical – and with writing a travelogue – a lengthy handwritten booklet written in laconic Oxford style with spaces at the end for photos and postcards.<sup>13</sup> His reading matter included Alfred Russell Wallace's *Island Life* and *The Geographical Distribution of Animals*, George Clark's *Fauna of Mauritius* and C. E. Meinicke's *Die Inseln des Stillen Oceans: Eine Geographische Monographie* – not to mention Mark Twain's *More Tramps Abroad*. Sidney was nothing if not thorough.<sup>14</sup>

'The South African, and particularly the Johannesburger, with a few weeks to amuse himself in, but not enough for a trip home', Sidney began his travelogue, 'is often exercised by the question where to go for a holiday'. After all, he lamented, 'he cannot get a real change in his own sub-continent'. Sidney was coming to see himself as a South African; this meant being part of the British empire, centred in London, and entailed the imperial right of possession. 'For the worn-out brainworker of Johannesburg', Sidney continued, tongue in cheek, 'weary of the driving dust, the waterless air, the too tonic altitude, the restless routine, the nervous activity, the pitiless struggle for existence, in the midst of which his lot is cast ... a fortnight's voyage on the Indian Ocean, and a fortnight's loafing in that warm and watered land ... Mauritius' provided an ideal respite. This was a land that was 'half French, half Oriental in all but flag'.

He left South Africa on the Union Castle Company's 'SS *Greek*', which sailed from Durban on 19 December. It was a splendid voyage: the temperature was 'uniformly perfect', and the food was 'irreproachable', even boasting a Christmas dinner 'which the writer [had] not seen equalled outside Europe' – an oblique criticism of Johannesburg's cuisine. And all this for a return fare that was 'low enough to tempt the most economical', he observed. 'Twenty guineas first-class for the return voyage ... and second-class fares accordingly – where can better

value be found in South Africa or indeed in the world?' Sailing past Madagascar and Bourbon, Mauritius was sighted on Christmas morning.

The ship anchored in Port Louis. 'A more unsavoury and weather-beaten capital will not perhaps be found in the British Empire or out of it,' thought Sidney.<sup>15</sup> A decade earlier Mark Twain had been impressed by this 'little town ... with the largest variety of nationalities and complexions ... and great varieties in costumes and colours'.<sup>16</sup> Sidney was struck by the population's 'variegated types' and 'innumerable cross-breeds between the principal stocks', his choice of words illustrating the extent both to which genetics was shaping contemporary views of human society and to which he had imbibed this. 'The regular inhabitants can hardly boast a white skin among them', he wrote, presumably with his prospective readership in mind; 'a motley crew of Coloured Creoles in every shade, Indians, Arabs, Parsees, Chinese, Lascars, Japanese, Malays, Malagasys, Mozambiques, and negroes of all sorts have made the town their own ... The Anglo Indian will recall the back quarters of Bombay: the visitor new to the East will search in vain for his notion of a shop, office, or hotel. Instead, the tourist would 'find places like South African Kaffir stores, with whimsical titles – "Au petit Fashionable", "Au pauvre diable" – doing duty as shops'.

Sidney's first impression was 'one of decay, architectural, ethnological, commercial, and organic'. The ship's quarters – four guineas for on-board accommodation while the ship was anchored off Port Louis – were far preferable to the local hotels, he advised his hoped-for readers. The expectations of British gentlemen would be dashed by the local facilities: 'There is no club', he moaned, 'no place (except the Station) to wash, and none to see the papers except the Town and Police libraries, which are indifferently supplied, and the latter is not strictly open to the public'. The 'respectable buildings', moreover, were disappointingly few in number: 'Government House, the Museum, the Town Hall, one or two banks, the offices of Messrs Ireland, Fraser & Co: (the Union Castle Company's agents), the Roman Catholic Church and the Mosque (neither a remarkable specimen, and the latter not too sanitary), the Theatre, which might be worse, and one or two private houses near the Champ de Mars'. Port Louis, in short, was no place to linger. 'With a shudder, and a strong cigar', Sidney predicted, the visitor 'will retreat hastily to the Railway Station, resolved to judge Mauritius by its country, not by its town – nor by its railways'.

Sidney indeed took the obligatory train ride, but he was really in his element on a bicycle, riding and camping along the North Coast – he had had much experience of this during the war.<sup>17</sup> Mark Twain had been charmed by the island's 'ragged luxuriance of tropic vegetation of vivid greens of varying shades', its 'graceful tall palms lifting their crippled plumes high', its 'stretches of shady dense forest, with limpid streams frolicking through them' and, in the distance,

‘tiny mountains, some quaint and picturesque groups of toy-peaks, and a dainty little vest-pocket Matterhorn.’<sup>18</sup> Sidney, too, was captivated.

But his political views were never far removed and invariably couched in a cynical irony. Réduit, the seat of the colonial governors, should definitely be on the sightseeing agenda, he advised. ‘The spacious house, the park, with its broad grass land, where golf is played, surrounded by woods, the gardens ... the long grass drive, above all the magnificent gorges on each side of the estate, meeting at the point called “le bout du Monde”, and the fine view of the sea and the mountains to the North, combine’ – he could not help adding – ‘with a salary of £5000, to make the lot of the Mauritian Governor no despicable one’. He also recommended a tour of one of the island’s many sugar estates. Sugar, the island’s principal export, was to Mauritius what gold was to Johannesburg, and ‘old fashioned and decrepit’ as Mauritius was, its sugar industry was run in a ‘business-like’ manner.

It was the country’s social structure and the relationship of class and colour that intrigued him more than anything else. For him, its marked difference from South African society underlined ‘the great gulf fixed between the prejudices of one British colony and another on matters of colour’. In Mauritius, ‘the white man’s assertion of superiority, which elsewhere from being a reasoned principle becomes like loyalty, a passion’ – an oblique reference to the extreme degree of white supremacy that already marked South Africa – ‘has except among a small class, broken down. The mixture of races is almost complete. Politically, it is a coloured man’s country, and, except possibly as regards Asiatics, can never become anything but more so.’

But this was a recent development, Sidney maintained. Mauritius ‘was originally a white man’s country’, first inhabited by whites from overseas. They ‘found few living creatures besides the *Didus ineptus* or Dodo and other birds similarly unable to fly’. These, he noted caustically, ‘having survived here alone in the world for want of enemies, quickly became extinct at the hands of man’. The white settlers imported ‘the black element, which, pure-blooded, is now as scarce as the pure white ... from Madagascar or Africa’, he explained. ‘There were no aborigines: the Europeans landed on a desert island. But the white settlers in the past, who had, and might have retained, their full discoverer’s rights to a no-man’s land, have gradually surrendered them to an alien and hybrid population sprung from their slaves. And the process of white effacement, or coloured advancement, is continuing.’

The relative absence of colour discrimination was in marked contrast to South Africa. On the railways, for instance, although whites were disproportionately present in first-class carriages, they also travelled by second and third class, ‘mixing with half-breeds and Asiatics apparently without losing caste among their own people’. But, he noted, white Mauritians still try ‘to preserve

themselves as a social upper class, and the coloured people do not wholly ignore it.' Thus, white Creoles, comprising about three or four thousand descendants of the original French settlers, 'have kept their blood uncontaminated, often at the price of intermarrying within a comparatively small circle, occasionally with the inevitable effects'. These comprised 'most of the sugar-estate owners, who ... with a very few exceptions, hold aloof from the English no less than from the coloured element'. English society, prominent despite its small numbers, was dominated by the military. The local English show 'many of the characteristics of an Indian hill station, not excluding a capacity for quiet scandal-mongering inseparable from a class insufficiently occupied'.

Yet Sidney felt that most coloured Creoles had internalized a belief in white superiority. They 'often pose, where possible, as whites, or speak of other Creoles darker than themselves with a patronage almost amounting to contempt', he observed. But 'this only shows that they cannot or will not fully realise their own position ... Their own class is superior to the white in numbers, power, and even prestige. They, the real middle class, are also the really dominant one, which gives to the island many of its most prominent, and some of its ablest men. It would be easy in Mauritius to defend the view that the slightly dark are as good as the white, and indeed to find plenty of Creoles superior to some given white.' His fluent French meant that he could get many coloured Creoles to speak frankly. Rebuffed by the Francophone white Creoles, he observed, coloured Creoles 'turn more readily to the English, and especially to Englishmen not belonging to the island, who may be less punctilious on matters of skin: a fact which again widens the distance between the two pure races'.

His views on Asians reflected the stereotypes of imperial Britain, no doubt intensified by the heated discussions taking place in South Africa about the importation of Chinese contract labourers to work on the gold mines. As was the case in South Africa, Indians had been imported into Mauritius for many years, mainly as workers in the sugar fields, and a large proportion of the Indian population had been born on the island. Sidney had his own preconceptions about them. Hindu labourers, he noted, were 'the most harmless section of the population – If less muscular than the Creoles, they are generally more industrious; they are of a better sort than are found in South Africa, less ugly and more serviceable'. Because of this, he suggested, 'no one regrets their presence, and ... notwithstanding the danger of over-population, the colony is always ready to receive more of them – provided the quality is good – as agricultural labourers and servants at least, if not as tradesmen or clerks, which great numbers of the Indians are'. In contrast, the small retail trade was dominated by 'Arabs (so-called that is, Mahomedan Indians, a very different class from the Malabaro) Parsees, or Chinese'. One found Chinese stores 'all over the country parts, even in the most remote spots, where they do a trade among the Hindoos like that of the

Russian Jews in South Africa with the Kaffirs or Cape boys: and indeed an Arab is not below owning a sugar estate.

His evident concern at the seeming ability of Muslim Indians to climb the social and economic hierarchy was typical of British settlers. 'Mauritius supplies a clear instance of how the Asiatic, if he is allowed, will secure a monopoly of retail trade', Sidney wrote; 'the white man has no chance against the Yellow Peril. These trading Asiatics give the impression of aliens as against the quasi-indigenous Creoles: in every way they strike the visitor as being the least agreeable element in the population, more especially as they own a large proportion of the land, and assume social equality with men entirely or practically white, dine with them at banquets, and call them "Mon ami".'

Sidney concluded that in Mauritius colour as a social demarcator had an elasticity that was absent in South Africa, and that it operated in a manner equivalent to class in Britain. 'The essential difference between Creole and South African notions of colour', he argued, was 'that in Mauritius differences of skin operate in virtually the same way as the older European distinctions of class: like these, they can be and are being obliterated; the whites are to the coloured at best no more than as Lords (with their House abolished) to Commons'. Unlike South Africa, in Mauritius 'a coloured man, like a British workman, may rise by ability or money to almost the highest [level] socially, and to the highest politically'. This was certainly an idealized view of class relations in Edwardian Britain, where there was little mobility across class lines; it signalled Sidney's privileged and limited experience. He recognized that members of a disadvantaged group might internalize these social divisions. 'Viewing a colour distinction then as no more than a class distinction, 'the darker or lower classes of Mauritius seem to accept this position', Sidney continued; 'some may be ambitious, but they are not socially aggressive; like the European bred to feudal traditions, or the Hindoo ground by centuries of conquest – and possibly owing to some similar cause, either the French or the slave blood in him – the Creole seems to know his place, and to acknowledge both superiors and inferiors'. He found South African society to be more rigid about colour, and individual mobility to be more difficult than in Mauritius or Britain.

These issues of identity were reflected in local party politics, marked by the absence both of a movement to return Mauritius to the French – 'no one envies Madagascar' – and of a demand for independence: the island 'depends too closely on British financial support, and British Indian markets, to warrant any ambition to secede'. Unlike South Africa, where influential British and Boers were striving to mend the ruptures created by the war – there was no nation-in-the-making here, even amongst local whites. White Creoles might dream of Europe, but for most of them, Sidney felt, 'the French connection is only a reminiscence, sometimes an affectation, pushed in the case of a few young bloods to an enthusiastic

sentiment'. By contrast, the Englishman's 'eyes are constantly turned homeward ... His chief event is the arrival of the English mail and English papers. At heart he is little better than an exile, a sojourner in a strange land'. South Africa's 'dual race position' – Sidney was speaking here of the British and the Boers – 'has a little counterpart in Mauritius as the native question ... The most that the malcontents want ... is complete representative Government'. There was no doubt in Sidney's mind that Mauritius was 'governed, even to the extent of minute details, from Downing Street'.

After two weeks of respite, it was time to return to South Africa. The ship sailed past Laurenço Marquez – 'dull and unsightly' and illustrative, once again, of the permutations of class and colour. 'It is something of the Mauritian mixture of races, with the black man out of his place, and something of the rough vulgarity, and more than the expensiveness, of the earlier Johannesburg ... It is half Anglicised, and its retail trade seems to live by plundering strangers'. As for its harbour – the British were, after all, so much more efficient than the Portuguese – it would be superb 'if its channel were deepened and the Port placed under British control'. Back again in Durban, Sidney was 'struck by the plentiful supply of white men – almost a waste it seems after that other Colony where whites are so scarce and each has such a value'.<sup>19</sup>

Those were Sidney's thoughts on class and colour as the year 1904 opened. They were, in crucial respects, typical of his era and social background, but atypical in their acuity. He had a very keen eye for empirical observation that was sharpened by cynicism about the dominant structures around him. Indisputably a proponent of British imperial might, he nonetheless recognized that each part of the empire had its own distinctive features. He was certainly dismissive of the efforts by so many British settlers to turn South Africa into a little England. Reviewing F. J. Finch Smith's *Training of Gun-Dogs for South Africa* – a review penned under the pseudonym of 'Kynikos' or cynical – Sidney noted approvingly that the book was written 'for South Africa' and that its author recognized that the country's distinctive features demanded that the sport be adapted to the local conditions. 'The too mechanical, half circus-like performance suited to English fields and hedgerows', argued Sidney, 'is as foreign to our open veld as the well-drilled Tommy from Aldershot was nonplussed by the Boer on his pony'. He could only be thankful 'that champagne lunches with powdered footmen and Sphere photograph[y] have not yet corrupted our South African shooting parties'. And he was ever the sarcastic social critic. The attraction of sport for some men, he noted, is 'that it brings them nearer to the heart of country things, mysterious, solitary, wild, yet unsophisticated, simple, childlike, providing always [of] course, that they can persuade some live wild thing to give them a run for their money. Even Turffontein has to be feted up to look truly rural'.<sup>20</sup>

He was very much an outsider, an observer of peoples, rather than an interpreter between peoples.

Back in Johannesburg, Sidney turned his attention once more to the musical society. By 1904 the society's management committee was consumed by arguments about its direction – arguments in which Sidney was a key participant. Sidney wanted to run a tight ship. He felt that the society was drifting from its original aim of fostering the musical talent of its own members. Over the past year most of the performers had been non-members; moreover, many members had been lax in paying their subscriptions. At the annual general meeting on 21 July 1904 Sidney argued that the committee should 'be more of an executive than a merely advisory body'. He was asked to stay on as director for another year, but when it became clear that the society would be able to offer him only half of his first year's fee, he refused.<sup>21</sup> He had many other ways to occupy his time.

He began a programme of private study to develop his knowledge of South African law. That year he was admitted to the South African College as a candidate for the degree of Bachelor of Laws and completed the preliminary LLB examination administered by the Cape of Good Hope University.<sup>22</sup> He also began looking for a partner in order to set up a law practice. He made the acquaintance of a South African-born lawyer named George Melvill Bennett. Born at George, Cape Province, and Sidney's junior by five years, Bennett had been educated at Birkenhead School and Trinity Hall, Cambridge, and had served as part of the Intelligence Staff during the war. The two set up the partnership of Bennett & Bunting, Solicitors, Attorneys, Notaries and Conveyancers, with effect from 1 January 1905 and with offices centrally located in the Old Exchange Buildings on Commissioner Street. Bennett supplied the partnership's capital – £800 sterling to cover expenses that could not be met out of the profits. Half of that was a loan to Sidney at 10 per cent per year.<sup>23</sup>

But after the pressures of work, Sidney turned to his clubs and to culture to relax. An Athenaeum Club was built in 1903–4 on Smit Street near the General Hospital at Hospital Hill; Sidney joined. The Athenaeum was a local branch of the London-based club founded in 1824 as an association of persons of literary, scientific, and artistic attainments. The South African branch, however, with Lord Milner as club patron and honorary member, was patronized mainly by military men.<sup>24</sup> Although no longer on the musical society's management committee, music was, as ever, a passion. He joined the Liederkrantz Club, the local branch of a German musical club, which opened in 1905 at the corner of Plein and Claim Streets.

Inevitably, he was drawn to those with similar cultural tastes, becoming quite friendly with Wilfred Wybergh. He spent a great deal of time with Wybergh and his wife, 'cultured people, interested in music and ideas'.<sup>25</sup> Wybergh had been

appointed Commissioner of Mines in the Transvaal after the British secured Johannesburg; with Sidney's experience at Rio Tinto, the two had much in common beyond culture.

Wybergh was very political. Concerned to protect mining jobs for white workers, he amended the mining regulations accordingly. Together with mining engineer Frederic Creswell, Wybergh experimented with the use of white labour for various tasks at the Village Main Reef Mine. This stance put Wybergh and Creswell in conflict with mine owners, who faced the twin problems of securing an adequate labour supply and lowering costs. The atrocious working conditions were hardly an inducement: most Africans still retained access to land and came to the mines on short-term contracts. Yet the relatively high wages paid to white workers made them economically unattractive to mine owners. In any case, Lord Milner, the High Commissioner, felt that whites should not perform unskilled labour. In 1903 the Chamber of Mines tried to redress the problem by importing indentured Chinese on three-year contracts. Wybergh and Creswell were dismissed from their posts.

This fuelled the two men's political interests, and in 1905 they helped to form the Responsible Government Association. This sought to promote British interests while forging an electoral alliance with the Afrikaner nationalist *Het Volk*, an organization from which labour interests were distant.<sup>26</sup> Wybergh supported female suffrage for white women, opposed the use of Chinese labour and condemned the £30,000,000 war debt imposed on South Africa that coincided with the importation of Chinese workers. Sidney's friendship with Wilfred Wybergh was important; they discussed the politics of the day – both the labour and colour questions – and Sidney encouraged Wybergh to write for his father's *Contemporary Review*.

A proponent of the 'purified and widened Liberalism' of the day, Wybergh staunchly condemned 'the blatant financial type' of imperialism 'which regards the colonies ... as a mere field for exploitation and money making'. Imperialism should 'not seek to mould the various colonies and races of the Empire upon the British model', he argued, but rather 'to develop all that is best and most characteristic in each colony on the lines most suitable to its own advance'. Wybergh hoped that the new Liberal government would see the Transvaal 'not as a gold or a dividend producing centre, but as a home within the Empire ... which is neither Dutch nor British, but South African' and, moreover, that it would recognize 'the impossibility of building up a nation upon the labour of an alien and inferior race ... The responsibility of our future development', he insisted, 'must rest upon ourselves'. There was certainly an affinity between Wybergh's thinking and Sidney's recognition of the distinctiveness of each part of the empire.<sup>27</sup>

Sidney's tour of the Mauritian sugar estate and his observations on sugar production were not wasted. After setting up his law practice, his next challenge was



to help develop the family estate at Lidgetton, in Natal. In this project he worked closely with his cousin Jack. Born in 1871, Jack had studied at the Leys School in Cambridge, matriculating in 1887. Family financial problems led him to join the merchant navy, and for several years he travelled the world as a sailor. After his discharge from the navy in 1891 he returned to London. But continued financial difficulties led George Lidgett to send Jack and his sister Hilda to Natal to see if the family estate at Lidgetton could be put to greater profit – the family had taken no further initiatives to develop the land since the emigration scheme four decades earlier. Jack collected the rents; the estate had earned £40.3.2. However, he was concerned about their local agent, whom he suspected of mismanaging the property, and wrote to his father proposing that the land be used for farming and running a hotel.<sup>28</sup>

Jack was particularly taken with the idea of wattle cultivation. Black wattle – *Acacia Mollissima* – was indigenous to Australia; the first seeds had been brought to Natal in 1864. Only gradually, however, was wattle's value for leather tanning realized. In 1884 tests at Lyle's Tannery in Pietermaritzburg demonstrated that the plant's tannin could be used to produce high quality leather. Two years later, the first wattle shipment left Natal bound for the Colonial and Indian Exhibition in London; the following year saw the first shipment of bark. From that time, local farmers began setting up wattle plantations to produce bark for export.<sup>29</sup> Jack pushed the idea on his family, even succeeding in arranging for local wattle authority J. A. Pope-Ellis to call on his family during a visit to London in 1896. But the Lidgetts did not pursue the idea.

Jack returned to England in March 1897. Later that year he went out to Rhodesia to work as accountant and secretary on the mines. This did not last; during the war years he was back in England. The year 1902 saw him once again in South Africa, now living in a boarding house in Germiston, near Johannesburg, part of the flood of young British men who left the limited prospects of their own country to seek their fortune in post-war South Africa. For two years Jack worked as a partner in an estate agency before it was dissolved in 1904, leaving him financially 'seriously crippled'. By then he was married, his wife, Mollie Barnes of Bromley, having arrived from England the year before. But like so many of Johannesburg's new immigrants, they found life there very hard. '[N]either Sidney nor I have learnt the secret of doing work and living on air', he wrote of these years to his aunt Elizabeth Lidgett in London; 'we come pretty close to it but we are not perfect yet'.<sup>30</sup> So he and Sidney put their heads together on the wattle initiative.<sup>31</sup>

One of Sidney's first tasks after the war had been to visit Lidgetton and report back to the family. The slow steam train between Johannesburg and Lidgetton had to make its way up and down steep gradients. Sidney went to Lidgetton and returned convinced of the viability of a wattle plantation. Between 1904 and

1906 the two cousins spent many hours liaising with the family's Natal agents, Messrs Bale & Mortimer, whom both felt to be 'most unsatisfactory'. They sent numerous letters to their families in England, which made the rounds of the relatives, in the hopes of enticing them on the wattle venture, proposing that a syndicate be formed to develop a wattle farm on the land, as this 'promises a much better return than is being received from it at present'.<sup>32</sup> Their aunt Elizabeth and their cousin Alfred Lidgett were keen on the project and took it forward from their side. Sidney sent his father 'a great tome' to sell him on the idea. He completed the final LLB examination in 1906 and felt fully qualified to represent the family's legal interests in the venture.<sup>33</sup>

Labour was the muted backdrop against which these negotiations took place. From the point of view of the colonizers, it was a perennial and consuming problem.<sup>34</sup> The use of Chinese labour was staunchly condemned by white labour advocates, notably Frederic Creswell, whom Sidney used to run into at the Rand and Athenaeum Clubs.<sup>35</sup> In Britain, Liberals denounced the policy on various grounds, including humanitarian concerns about the treatment of Chinese workers, pragmatic appeals for more British settlers to counterbalance the Boers and racist fears of a 'yellow peril'. The Labour Representation Committee – precursor to the Labour Party – and the trade unions opposed the policy on the grounds that it threatened achieved labour standards. The agitation was a key theme in the electoral campaign of many of the thirty Liberal MPs and contributed to the scale of the Liberal victory in the January 1906 general election, with promises for an immediate end to the policy. Recruitment finally ceased in November 1906.<sup>36</sup>

In South Africa, much of the opposition was overtly racist: 'A Greeting from Chowburg' read one postcard from Johannesburg. Small socialist groups like the Social Democratic Federation in Cape Town and the Independent Labour Party in Johannesburg, modelled on their British counterparts, called for the repeal of the Chinese Labour Ordinance, the voiding of Chinese labour contracts, the repatriation of Chinese workers and the collective ownership of the mines. From other arenas came proposals to deport Africans north of the Zambesi River or force them into reserves in order to create space for white labour – following the Australian and Argentine models.<sup>37</sup> Modernization fed into these debates. The year 1906 saw the opening of the first electric tram system in Johannesburg, running east from Market Square along Market Street to Siemert Road in Doornfontein. Double-decker trams quickly became a familiar sight. For white labour advocates, such developments offered new employment possibilities for white men.

Sidney and Jack, prospective plantation managers, took a more cautious line. Sidney's concern was to 'save South Africa for the white man'.<sup>38</sup> This meant keeping out cheap Chinese labour and undoubtedly reflected the influence of

Wybergh and Creswell. Jack took a somewhat different line. ‘The I.L.P. are making a loud noise to make people think they represent the working people here,’ wrote Jack to his father in October 1906. ‘They are all for repatriation of the Chinese and the seizing by Government of all mines which are kept closed down as a result. They are a lot of silly asses ... but they will doubtless get some followers. No party which may be successful will cut off the Chinese by the boots but will enquire again into the possibility of increasing the native supply first.’<sup>39</sup>

Although more Africans were coming to the mines after ‘locusts ate up all the late crops,’ the mining companies were still worried about labour shortages, Jack observed several months later. ‘The general opinion is that having got the home Govt. to guarantee a five million loan for the Transvaal, Botha will possibly save his face by letting say 10000 Chinese whose contracts first expire go home and retain the rest and then, if there is still a shortage of unskilled labour, grant permission to import again.’ Moreover, he added, ‘Winston Churchill, Undersecretary at the Colonial Office, has shown much deference to Botha during the Colonial Conference and has since harangued the House on the wisdom of ceasing to worry themselves about the Chinese question now that we have responsible [*sic*] government here.’ No doubt, speculated Jack, ‘he would have to eat his words if Botha decided to import more Chinese and the rank Liberals wished to interfere.’<sup>40</sup>

The relationship between mining companies and skilled craft workers – white English-speaking workers – was tense. Mechanization lessened the earlier skill differential between black workers and the higher-paid white workers who had been lured from overseas; management was now trying to reduce the number of costly white workers. In 1907 white craft workers struck against the mining companies’ efforts to increase their supervisory workloads. But deskilling reduced the need for craft workers; black workers, classified and paid as unskilled labour, could take over many of the functions performed by skilled whites. Hundreds of whites showed up, arriving by foot or by bicycle, for a mass meeting at Market Square that May, holding their banners aloft. But management broke the strike by replacing the skilled white workers with cheaper, unskilled Afrikaners, who were hired to supervise blacks – until then Afrikaners had been used on a short-term, experimental basis.<sup>41</sup>

Sidney and Jack were unsympathetic. ‘As though the state of uncertainty about the unskilled labour was not bad enough, the white miners have seen fit to try the question as to who is top dog, themselves or the mine-owners,’ complained Jack. ‘Hosts of young Dutchmen are applying to be taken ... the Government is not altogether displeased at the strike as it may provide a means of employing a large number of Dutch who would otherwise have had to be fed during the winter.’ The local economy depended on the mines, and business was suffering, so Jack hoped that the strikers get ‘the drubbing they deserve’. With all the troops

that had been brought in, Johannesburg 'was more like an armed camp along the mines than a place of business'.<sup>42</sup> As for Sidney, hopes of saving South Africa for the white man notwithstanding, the interests of white mine owners took precedence over those of white workers. Frederic Creswell, outraged by the use of Chinese labour, had tried without success to convince mine owners to use white workers at both skilled and unskilled jobs. Fed up, he turned to politics, running as an independent in the first elections for the Transvaal Parliament in March 1907. When he lost, Sidney was heard remarking at the Athenaeum Club that this was 'one good thing'.<sup>43</sup>

Not until 1907, when George Lidgett died, did the extended family actively pursue the idea of wattle cultivation; it was a particularly good year for wattle exports – the amount shipped valued more than £130,000. Discussion continued to and fro, with Sidney and Jack proposing a scheme that would include non-family members as shareholders.<sup>44</sup> That idea was shelved. But that year the family drew up an agreement to transfer the land – '9000 acres more or less' – to various relatives to establish the Lidgett Land Company, registered in England and limited by shares – 9,020 in all – which would remain in the family. The inaugural meeting took place at Elizabeth Lidgett's home at 40 Gordon Square, not far from the sisters Virginia and Vanessa Stephen, who in 1905 had moved into number 46, and just around the corner from Sidney's family home at Endsleigh Gardens.

Family lore has it that while Sidney and Jack were still both living in Johannesburg they tossed a coin to decide who would manage the plantation. Jack got the job. In any event, Sidney had his legal partnership in Johannesburg; he was to provide legal advice and make regular trips to the plantation, and he and Jack were to consult on all matters. Jack moved down to Natal around 1906 or 1907, working at the Durban County Wattle Syndicate in Hillcrest for about a year to learn wattle farming before moving to Lidgettton. Over the next two years, he began laying out the plantation and planting the wattle trees.<sup>45</sup>

Finding labour was a huge problem. Natal's labour relations were as tense and unstable as those on the Rand. The last Zulu uprising against the British, catalysed by the imposition of a poll tax and led by Chief Bambatha, had just been suppressed in 1906. Most Africans in the region survived as small cultivators and could not be easily induced to work on farms. In order to address the labour shortage, Indians, mainly Hindu, had been imported to work as indentured labour on Natal sugar plantations since 1860. They were cruelly treated, forbidden from moving more than two miles beyond their place of work. Their experiences differed markedly from those of the predominantly Muslim and Gujarati 'passenger Indians' from western India, who came to Natal between the 1870s and 1890s to become shopkeepers, traders and merchants.<sup>46</sup>

Jack relied mainly on indentured Indians, who came by train from their barracks in Durban. It was arduous work. The rocky soil was broken up by oxen-drawn ploughs; the wattle seed was planted in rows, which were later thinned several times and weeded by hand and hand-hoe. Mealies were planted between the rows for rations. It took about ten years for the trees to mature; trees were planted to mature by rotation. During those ten years, the trees had to be protected from pests like bagworm and frog-hopper and from drought or fire. The trees were harvested in the summer, also by hand, using axes. The bark was stripped from the tree and tied in bundles, the trees were felled, the timber was cut into lengths for mine props or into logs for fire wood. The bark was either used locally for leather tanning or exported, where it would be processed in an extract factory.<sup>47</sup>

In these first two years Sidney came down several times a year and sent numerous missives giving his views and legal advice.<sup>48</sup> Important links with his past were broken during those years. Bonté Amos, by now a successful medical practitioner who had been transferred to Cairo in 1906 to start a system for the education of Egyptian girls, married the conventional Major Percy Elgood. When she wrote to her mother Sarah about the marriage, she received a terse one-word telegraph: 'Astounded'. Sarah nonetheless went out to visit Bonté, but died in Cairo on 21 January 1908. Sidney himself was by then well-established in his new country, featuring as a man of note in the *South African Who's Who*.<sup>49</sup>

In June 1908 he learned that his father had done even better. That month the *Times* announced that his father would be among those awarded a knighthood. The Liberal Herbert Asquith had become Prime Minister in April 1908. Percy Bunting was knighted for his work on the executive of the National Liberal Federation and for his many philanthropic works. 'You will no doubt have seen, long ere this reaches you, that father is receiving a knighthood', Sidney's sister Evelyn wrote to Jack on 26 June. 'We are highly amused and much gratified at the delightful letters people are writing us. We have done nothing but open telegrams + look for ourselves in the newspaper all today.' But Sidney did not get back in time for the ceremony, which took place on 21 July.<sup>50</sup>

He did go to England later in the year, though. After a brief stop at Lidgeton on 28–9 August, he boarded the White Star steamship *Suevic* at Durban, en route from Australia to London and Plymouth. He was listed as British colonial, another sign that he identified himself as South African, not English. Sidney had company on board. Professor H. E. S. Freemantle and his wife and child boarded at Cape Town; he and Sidney knew each other from Oxford. Sidney was not shy, and he no doubt amused himself conversing with other passengers as the ship crossed the seas.

The ship landed in London on 26 September.<sup>51</sup> Much had changed since Sidney's departure in 1900. The South African War had left British society

profoundly shaken, its politicians and intellectuals anxious about the empire's future. The war had shown in sharp relief the poor health of Britain's working class, its seemingly insatiable hunger for young men thwarted by the fact that so many potential recruits had to be rejected as physically unfit – in 1899 close to one third. Britain's declining birth rate – it had been falling since the 1881 census – coupled with a rising infant mortality rate, led to an intellectual backlash against neo-Malthusian concerns about overpopulation. Instead, a thriving population became seen as a source of power and, influenced by Darwinian notions of fitness, a means to ensure the survival of the English race. In 1858 Charles Kingsley had argued 'that overpopulation was impossible "in a country that has the greatest colonial empire that the world has ever seen"'. Several decades later, in 1883, J. R. Seeley's *Expansion of England* – a book that strongly impressed Sidney – argued for the need to fill the allegedly empty spaces colonized by Britain as a means of ensuring its primacy as an imperial power. Still later, in 1905, the journalist J. L. Garvin took up this theme, arguing that the empire's survival 'would be best based upon the power of a white population, proportionate in numbers, vigour and cohesion to the vast territories which the British democracies in the Mother Country and the Colonies control'. The *Contemporary Review* published numerous articles on this and related themes.<sup>52</sup>

The ideas struck a social chord. Voluntary societies to promote public health and hygiene sprang up. Social reforms were couched with reference to race, nation and empire. Saving infant life became 'a matter of Imperial importance'. Motherhood became the pivotal link between children and national and imperial needs. Training women to be effective mothers seemed a far easier remedy for poor health than addressing poverty, poor housing and pollution. The Fabians called for the 'Endowment of motherhood', arguing that the state should recognize the social value of child-rearing. Others condemned 'faulty maternal hygiene', maternal ignorance and maternal neglect. Mothers were put in the spotlight as those bearing prime responsibility for producing healthy children – especially sons – for the empire.<sup>53</sup>

Sidney's family was at the centre of this activity through their work at the Babies' Welfare and School for Mothers, located at Chalton Street in Somers Town, behind St Pancras Station. Launched in June 1907 and supported by influential local people, the School for Mothers became a highly respected project that combined an intellectual vision with a recognition of local conditions. Sir Percy sat on the board, Eleanor handled publicity, and Dora, who had finished her medical training, was the school's medical officer. The nutrition of mothers was top of her agenda. Well-fed mothers, she argued, were necessary to ensure well-fed and healthy children. The emancipation of woman, she expanded, depends on 'a crusade on the part of man calling upon her to eat. And there never can be a really strong race of Britons until she does.' At times pater-

nalistic towards the working-class women it served, the school was nonetheless a hit: it offered practical advice during mealtime discussions, which gave ‘the greatest opportunities for unobtrusive teaching’.<sup>54</sup>

Perhaps Sidney went back to England to honour his father’s achievement; perhaps he went to tie up loose ends for the Lidgetton Land Company. His visit was brief; by 10 November he was back in Natal, yet another indication that South Africa was home. The next month, December 1908, the Lidgetton Land Company held its first annual meeting at Sidney’s parents’ house at Endsleigh Gardens; his older sister Evelyn was the company secretary.<sup>55</sup>

On his return to South Africa, Sidney preoccupied himself with his legal practice and the estate’s affairs. He made two trips to inspect the estate in 1909, on 5–10 April and 5–11 September. But he was also becoming more directly involved with local politics. During his stay in London he must have picked up some of the ideas impassioning his sisters. But the aim of populating the empire, which his sisters approached from the point of view of child-bearing and child-rearing, for Sidney took a different form. On his trip back to South Africa he had evidently been swayed by a group of Australians discussing the white labour policy in that country. In October 1909 he helped found and became honorary secretary of the ‘White Expansion Society’. Led by Patrick Duncan, the society’s aim was ‘to promote the improvement of present conditions and the rapid expansion of a permanent European population, both agricultural and industrial, in South Africa.’ Captain C. A. Madge, veteran of the South African War, prepared a paper on ‘White Expansion of the Land’ for a meeting at the Johannesburg Public Library the next month. It set the tone of the discussion. Sidney was presumably present; a week earlier he had been pressuring Jack for the manager’s report on the estate; but this was now typed and in the post to the directors in London. White expansion was ‘of far more urgent and vital importance to South Africa than any present displacement by whites of native unskilled labourers in industrial centres’, Madge argued. Africans should be free to compete in the country’s labour markets, but they should be segregated from whites insofar as occupation and ownership of land were concerned.<sup>56</sup>

An ephemeral body, the White Expansion Society nonetheless marked a turning point for Sidney. This was the first time he had been actively involved in any association with distinctly political overtones; he was stepping out from under his father’s political shadow. The idea of settlement was now linked in his mind with support for white labour. This was a transition in his outlook that had grown slowly out of discussions with those in his social networks. ‘There may be something in this white labour policy of yours’, he conceded to Frederic Creswell.<sup>57</sup>

The death of King Edward VII on 6 May 1910 marked the end of the Edwardian era. This brought to power the conservative and unimaginative King George

V to face Britain's fears of obsolescence, fears to which the empire seemed to offer a solution. Sidney's cousin Maurice Amos always believed that Sidney had gone out to South Africa as an 'Imperialist conservative'.<sup>58</sup> As the first decade of the new century in the new South Africa drew to a close, along with Sidney's first decade in his new country, he was very much a colonialist and a champion of empire.



## 7 A NEW GOSPEL

On 31 May 1910, eight years after the Treaty of Vereeniging had signalled the end of the South African War, the Union of South Africa was formed as a self-governing dominion of the British empire. The new union, an amalgamation of two British colonies and two Boer republics, was presided over by former Boer General Louis Botha, its new Prime Minister. Botha's position was seen as a gesture of British conciliation to Afrikaner interests; in a similar spirit, the new cabinet included men of both nationalities.<sup>1</sup> Sweeping political changes followed the country's unification. African leaders had held a convention at Bloemfontein in 1909 to discuss the implications of the new dispensation for their people. Over the next few years Africans would find their political rights and their access to land slashed, despite their appeals and petitions, while white workers intensified their demands for job protection and racial privileges.

Sidney was now moving in Labour Party circles. His friends Wilfred Wybergh and Frederic Creswell had joined the Party late in the day, but already Wybergh was a leading figure. In anticipation of national unity, plans for a unified Labour Party had been laid in 1908 and 1909; the South African Labour Party was launched as the first national-level political party on 10 January 1910. Affiliated to the Second International, it called for 'socialisation of the means of production, distribution and exchange, to be controlled by a Democratic State in the interests of the whole community' and 'extension of the field of employment for white persons in South Africa' – community meant white community. It opposed the importation of contract labour, and its 'Native Policy' was premised on separating the 'native and white races as far as possible' – Africans were to remain in the reserves.<sup>2</sup> For many leading Labourites, the chief concern was that discord between Afrikaners and British would impede the unity of white workers.

The Labour Party was not the only political party to espouse socialism in these years. A handful of tiny socialist groups had been formed over the past decade as branches of overseas organizations: the De Leonite Socialist Labour Party was formed in 1902; the Social Democratic Federation in 1905; and the Independent Labour Party (ILP) in 1906. Archie Crawford, a Glasgow-born fitter

who came to South Africa in 1902 and worked on the railways until dismissed in 1906 for labour agitation, was a leading ILP member. A self-styled 'red-hot socialist', Crawford worked closely with the Irish-born Mary Fitzgerald, who had been radicalized through her work as a shorthand-typist in the Transvaal Miners Association, where she witnessed the devastating impact of the deadly miners' disease phthisis. In October 1908 Crawford and Fitzgerald launched the *Voice of Labour* to provide a national forum for socialists.<sup>3</sup>

But the Labour Party was certainly the most vocal in defending the position of white workers. It counted amongst its leading members, the charismatic and good-looking W. H. Andrews. Born in Leiston, Suffolk in 1870, and a fitter and turner by trade, Bill Andrews came to South Africa in 1893. He built his reputation in the Amalgamated Society of Engineers and the Trades and Labour Council, which he helped form in 1902. A staunch labour activist, Andrews was a strong counterpoint within the Labour Party to the professional men like Wybergh and Creswell with whom Sidney associated.<sup>4</sup>

That year, 1910, Sidney threw himself into politics. This was on top of his legal work. He was still in partnership with Bennett; their office was now in the Royal Chambers. But Sidney made time for a trip to Lidgetton in late June. He and Jack went over the books and rode around the estate. It had suffered its share of setbacks over the previous two years. Much of the first year's planting had been damaged by the exceptionally heavy frosts of 1908 and 1909. But by mid-1910 close to 1,300 acres had been planted, and Sidney was very impressed by the growth of trees since his last visit.<sup>5</sup>

Back in Johannesburg Sidney set to the task of helping Frederic Creswell, who was campaigning as a Labour candidate in the Union's first Parliamentary elections, scheduled for September. Creswell, who had rapidly risen to the top of the Labour Party, was contesting the seat in Jeppestown, an area east of central Johannesburg where both black and white workers could live cheaply. The campaign took off in August, and even though Sidney was not a Labour Party member, he closed his law office for a month to help Creswell. The experience of his father's campaign, although eighteen years earlier, stood him in good stead. Overall, the Labour Party suffered a crushing defeat; Creswell later acknowledged that without Sidney's help, he would 'probably have lost the fight'.<sup>6</sup>

This burst of political activity meant that he had less time to deal with the work of the estate, although Jack was pressing him for advice. When Jack first began laying out the wattle plantations he had used indentured Indians. But their numbers were declining: they resisted re-indenture once their original contracts expired and fewer were arriving from India. By early 1910 the estate was employing free Indian workers, although in April Jack had obtained ten indentured Indians. That year, though, the Indian government announced that the emigra-

tion of indentured workers to Natal would cease the next year.<sup>7</sup> African labour was hard to attract, and Jack relied on the few Africans living on the farm.

Over the past year, Jack reported to the directors in August, the estate had employed an average of thirteen Indians and ten Africans. 'I am not having a gay time so far as labour is concerned', he wrote to Sidney that same month; 'three coolies in hospital and a case in Court today against two natives who have been called up for work and have not come, so that I have had the utmost difficulty in keeping even the little that is going on the move'. Three days later Jack was reporting that the influenza epidemic meant that his workers were out ill and complaining that he had heard nothing from Sidney in 'so long'.<sup>8</sup> But Sidney joined the Labour Party in September, and politics consumed his free time. He finally went down to Lidgetton in late January 1911, but the next several months found the cousins bickering over business matters, with mutual recriminations winging their way through the post. Despite the stresses, wattle's prospects were improving: in 1910–11 the value of wattle shipments from Natal rose to £213,000, up £83,000 since 1907.<sup>9</sup>

Sir Percy died unexpectedly on 22 July 1911, following a short illness and a decade of flagging health. He was seventy-five years old. He left his wife an estate that, with a net value of £7,963.16.4, would certainly enable her to live comfortably for the remainder of her life. But Percy and his wife had been married for forty-two years, and his death was a crushing blow for her. Sidney was obviously unable to get to London in time for the funeral. His mother was accompanied by her two daughters; Sidney's brother Sheldon was by then a civil engineer in India.<sup>10</sup>

Perhaps his father's death left Sidney feeling freer to pursue his political interests; he was increasingly consumed with politics. In October Jack, just returned from a trip to England, berated Sidney for neglecting his responsibilities at Lidgetton. It had been a good nine months since Sidney's last visit, he chided, pointing out that 'if you knew that you were tied up over the elections, I thought you would at least have paid a flying visit the moment Bennett was back to relieve you in the office'. They were finalizing a contract; Jack would have been willing to come up to Johannesburg 'for discussion and agreement', but by then he was too busy. Sidney finally came down for a few days at the end of the month.<sup>11</sup>

With his deepening interest in politics, his friendship with his cousin was taking a back seat; Jack reproached him for the 'cynical indifference to which, so far, I have been quite unused in my relations with you'.<sup>12</sup> Jack was in the process of building a house at Lidgetton; Sidney had to approve the housing specs, as the house was company business, and Jack felt that Sidney was unsympathetic and unjustly critical. Jack expected the house to be completed – after much delay – by late January or mid-February 1912. Mollie and their young son Geoff were

in England in the meantime, which was very costly. He was disappointed that Sidney kept postponing his visit, as he had hoped to explain all this in person, he wrote. But Sidney could only insist that he had not been indifferent to Jack's problems. Their relationship became so tense that Sidney went so far as to wonder whether he would have the 'right' to stay with Jack, who in turn, could only reply: 'as long as I have room, I should treat you in a hostile manner if you went elsewhere'.<sup>13</sup>

Labour scarcity was a continuing problem. Added to that, some of their cattle had died from the East Coast fever that had ravaged Natal's herds. The estate had 'been entirely dependent on the natives who live on the farm', Jack informed the directors that November 1911. Since the Chinese contract workers were repatriated, he explained, 'their places have been taken by an ever-increasing number of natives who are recruited from all over South Africa and the reports of scarcity of labour for farm work are becoming general in all provinces of the Union'. Overall, the year had 'been one of very hard work and considerable anxiety', he acknowledged, 'and the results in added acreage are, owing to the cattle sickness, entirely disappointing'.<sup>14</sup>

The house at Lidgetton was finally completed in late February 1912, and the family moved in. It was a one-storey colonial style brick building with a low sloping roof. A veranda with a wooden picket fence ran along the front of the house; a few sparse shrubs dotted the front yard.<sup>15</sup> Sidney saw it in early April. By then, aside from his legal practice, which he saw as a rather unedifying means to earn a living, politics was his main activity.

The year 1912 was an auspicious one for the Labour Party. Bill Andrews became a Labour MP, while Sidney became secretary of the Labour Party's Witwatersrand district committee and was elected to its national executive. He also became manager and editorial board member of the Party's organ, *Worker*; this interest was hardly surprising given his father's long editorial career.<sup>16</sup>

Despite these new commitments, in 1912 Sidney made several trips to Lidgetton: a few days in April, a day on 11 July, and again in late September and in late December, when he rode with Jack to inspect the estate. Jack was still worried about labour. 'The scarcity of both Indian and native labour continues and seems to get worse month by month', he informed the directors, proposing to use indentured labour where possible. 'The demand for labour is going to increase every year and there is no sign of the supply being any greater than at present'. This meant that throughout the local wattle industry there was not even enough labour to make effective use of new wood-working machinery, and it raised the possibility that higher wages might be necessary.<sup>17</sup>

In 1913 Sidney became even more caught up in politics. But he went to Lidgetton during the third week in March.<sup>18</sup> Despite the ongoing problem of labour scarcity, things were looking up. Their estate was now using an oil-engine, two

stamp-packers and a bark chopper. They had built a railway siding to link up with the main railway line, which was continually being upgraded. The siding had opened for traffic on 6 January, allowing them to dispatch 76 tons of bark, 115 tons of poles and 396 tons of firewood – 587 tons in total, and they had been lucky to find buyers for all of their wood, ‘either as small mining props or as firewood’. They had begun planting another Australian import, quick-growing Eucalyptus or gum trees, which were expected to be ‘very profitable’. They were hoping to increase the number of their permanent Indian workers, and it was to their benefit, Jack reported, that the Indian Immigration Trust Board had just reduced the yearly premium for indentured men from £5.10.0 to £3.10.0. In the meantime, they were employing African men as day-labourers and African women to hoe grass. These new workers borrowed the English terms for the trees and adapted them into their own tongue, isiZulu, calling them *uwatela* and *ugamthilini*.<sup>19</sup>

About a month after Sidney’s visit to Lidgetton, the Minister of Native Affairs, J. W. Sauer, introduced a new bill in Parliament. It went through rapidly. Less than two months later, in June 1913, Parliament approved the Natives Land Act. The Act represented the culmination of a wave of anti-black agitation, and its impact on Africans was massive. African land ownership was now restricted to so-called scheduled or reserved areas – about 7.3 per cent of the country’s total land area. The act outlawed sharecropping and squatting, thus increasing the control and exploitation of African labour tenants. It led to massive evictions of Africans from white-owned farms. But Sidney’s eyes were elsewhere.<sup>20</sup>

Following his trip to Lidgetton, labour tensions on the Rand consumed all his spare time. Relations between white workers and mine owners had been simmering for several years. White miners were privileged by comparison with black mine workers. Nonetheless, they faced dangerous working conditions, especially the threat of phthisis, and job insecurity. Fearful that industrial changes in the mining process would allow them to be replaced by cheaper black labour, white workers relied on a colour bar to protect their privileges. The Chamber of Mines was now trying to modify the colour bar. This finally led to a general strike amongst white workers. The strike began following a dispute over wage cuts at New Kleinfontein Mine. By 4 July every mine and power station on the Witwatersrand was on strike; the government proclaimed martial law.<sup>21</sup> It was a strike that shook the Rand and transformed Sidney’s life.

The strikers sought to defend the ‘white standard’. Behind this lay a notion of the ‘respectable working class’ that English-speaking workers had carried with them from Britain. Imported into a racially-divided society, this idea came to mean white privileges and power over black labour. Notwithstanding their own racism, the strikers were sorely victimized by the Chamber of Mines and the state. When mounted police armed with pick-handles broke up a mass meet-

ing of more than 10,000 people at Market Square on Friday 4 July, their horses lunging at the assembled crowds, many of those present became radicalized and began attacking symbols of authority. Thus, despite the strike's racist character, many white socialists, notably Archie Crawford and Mary Fitzgerald, felt that the strike contained the seeds of a syndicalist revolution.<sup>22</sup> Sidney edited a secret strike bulletin issued daily by a group of five within the Labour Party. As each issue rolled off the press, the members of the group grabbed a bundle, rode off on motorcycles and 'threw the copies, rolled into balls, into the gardens of houses.'<sup>23</sup>

Events spiralled out of control. That same day crowds set the train station alight. The next day, 5 July, a rush was made on the Rand Club – a symbol of the mining magnates – where Sidney was a member. Windows were smashed; the porter's lodge and vestibule damaged; club members barricaded the stairs. Police, soldiers and dragoons fired on the crowd, killing and wounding a number of people. Official accounts exonerated the troops and downplayed the incidents, yet unofficial reports told a different story. There were uncorroborated reports of twenty killed and several hundred injured.<sup>24</sup>

Outside the Rand Club, onlookers were stunned. One bystander recounted that 'crowds were running, and as they ran the shots were pouring into them. I saw the firing, saw the people drop.' He had served in the war, he added, but had 'never seen such a sight as the indiscriminate shooting of men, women and children.'<sup>25</sup> Sidney concurred. He was the author of an unsigned piece entitled 'The revolution of July' that appeared in the *Worker*.<sup>26</sup> 'To be calm is not possible so soon after the events', he began, 'but we regard these events as so grave, so unspeakable some of them, that the man who could regard them calmly ... would in our view be no man at all'. A small band, he reported, 'entered the Club, seized some odds and ends from the vestibule, and made off with them'. Imperial forces were called in, and at the first-floor windows 'armed civilians soon appeared, purporting ... to defend their premises ... or else their persons'.

Then, what Sidney called 'the most indescribable scene of cold-blooded brutality ever perpetrated in an industrial conflict' took place. When troops stationed themselves across the street from the Rand Club, people in the street, 'unable to believe that killing was really intended, nevertheless retreated in alarm in every direction; but several were hit by the first fusillade before they had all managed to get out of the way'. For the next two hours, the streets around the Rand Club 'were kept clear, not of a surging mob ... but of single, sometimes unsuspecting, defenceless individuals, including women and children'. It was, he concluded, 'a calculated, long-drawn murder, the impression [*sic*] of which on witnesses only deepens with lapse of time: an outrage more callous than anything done in war time ... which ... has already begun to alter the course of this

country's social and political history; a diabolical horror which the working class of the Rand will NEVER FORGET and NEVER FORGIVE.<sup>27</sup>

According to family history, Sidney was at the Rand Club that day – this may well have been the case, as it was a Saturday. He clearly believed that shots had been fired from the club's balcony – the episode led to his resignation – and he was sickened by the wanton violence of the troops. The sheer brutality of the events of that day shattered his belief in the moral legitimacy of the state and those who upheld it. This, coupled with a new belief in direct action and collective defiance, led to a profound change in his political orientation.<sup>28</sup> Not surprisingly, there are no official records of the shooting from the Rand Club balcony.<sup>29</sup>

Back in Lidgetton, Jack heard of the events in Johannesburg on 5 July. On Sunday 6 July he went to the station: 'no news'. On Monday 7 July, he jotted in his diary: 'At station wire from Sidney – all well'. The next day he wrote to his cousin: 'glad to find that you have come through the riotous times in Johburg all right'.<sup>30</sup>

The strike ended that Monday; it had remained restricted to the Witwatersrand. Nonetheless, labour unrest remained high. Railway workers were so discontent that the *Illustrated Star* likened the situation to 'standing on the edge of a volcano'.<sup>31</sup> The strikers drew up a *Workers' Charter* with their grievances; but while their calls for workers' rights and safe working conditions resonated with demands being voiced by workers in other countries, they also insisted on the protection of white jobs from black competition.<sup>32</sup> Unsurprisingly, black organizations kept their distance from the strike. The South African Native National Congress had been launched the year before in January 1912 to unite African leaders across ethnic and regional lines and to fight for African political rights. Its leaders were still reeling from shock of the Natives Land Act. Now, alarmed at the racist character of the strike and the violence of the protests, they passed a resolution 'dissociating the natives from the strike movement'.<sup>33</sup> But the state's wanton violence against the strikers shook many: Olive Schreiner, for one, condemned 'the shooting of unarmed men, women, and children in the streets of Johannesburg on the 5<sup>th</sup>', hoping that the events 'have served to show the mass of our people in this country the true conditions under which we are living', a view echoed by her husband S. C. Cronwright-Schreiner.<sup>34</sup>

It was quite evident that Sidney couldn't leave Johannesburg, so Jack decided to come up and 'bring the books' with him. They needed to discuss forecasts for the upcoming quarter and other matters that would be better discussed 'orally than by writing'. He took the night train to Johannesburg on the evening of 13 July, stayed with friends in Florida, met with Sidney at his office and returned to Lidgetton on the 19 July.<sup>35</sup>

But labour unrest on the Rand was far from over. One repercussion of the white miners' strike was the immediate outbreak of a strike of black mineworkers, causing 'rumours ... as to a reported "rising" among the natives'. The *Illustrated Star* squashed the speculations, but not without noting that these 'would-be strikers contended that the white men had succeeded in their demands, and they considered it right that they should be treated in a similar fashion'.<sup>36</sup> The government was gravely concerned. Herbert Gladstone, who some twenty-five years earlier had helped Sidney's father make contact with his own father William, was now Governor General. 'The native peril', he wrote, 'hangs like a pall over the white dispute'.<sup>37</sup> There was 'no better illustration of the dangerous effect a strike may have on the native mind', he stressed, than their own argument: 'You tell us that we must always listen to the white man; the white man comes and tells us to strike for more pay and now you say we must not listen to the white man when he tell us these things'.<sup>38</sup> The government put a vicious end to the strike. The Native National Congress angrily retorted that the 'strike leaders were being punished for "doing what their white overseers told them to do"'; the African People's Organisation denounced the government's 'brutal savagery'.<sup>39</sup>

Although whites were overwhelmingly antipathetic to black workers' attempts to improve their lot, a tiny number of white labourites and socialists, including Sidney, were moved by the actions of the black strikers.<sup>40</sup> Nonetheless, the Labour Party's chief priority at this time – and presumably Sidney's – was the recruitment of Afrikaners. 'The spread of Trade Unionism and of Labour politics among the Dutch in the towns has ... brought new possibilities within the range of vision of their country cousins', opined an editorial in the *Worker* that August, while 'the shooting down of Dutch and English workers side by side, has driven the lesson home and at last roused them to action'. What the Labour Party really needed, concluded the editorial, was a supply of competent Afrikaans speakers.<sup>41</sup>

But, significantly, some weeks later another piece argued that 'the right to combine, the right to cease work, the right to meet, and the right to speak are ... fundamental to all men, whatever their colour ... We hope the day will come, and we believe it is rapidly drawing near, when the coloured man, and the Kafirs, too, will organise and demand that they be treated as human beings and no longer as beasts of burden ... Until their status can be raised they must constantly threaten the status of those above them.' The rapid pace of events was catalysing changes in the thinking of a few Labour Party members at least. Two months later, in November, the *Worker* was sympathizing with Indian strikers in Natal, who had been protesting the £3 tax imposed on ex-indentured Indians and the restrictions on immigration and movement. In Natal, wrote the *Worker*, developments showed 'a most sinister resemblance to that of July 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> on the Rand'.<sup>42</sup>



In late July 1913 Sidney had taken over as secretary of the Johannesburg Trades Hall Society at the new Trades Hall on Rissik Street. He was swept up in a wave of political activity as the frustrations of white workers mounted. By December he was campaigning in a new township to the east of Johannesburg called Bezuidenhout Valley – Bez Valley for short – as Labour candidate for the provincial council elections to be held the next year.

He went down to Lidgetton for a couple of days at the start of January 1914.<sup>43</sup> Over the past year their output had improved significantly. They had sent out 199 tons of chopped bark, 1,032 tons of firewood and 301 tons of poles, with some still on the ground. This totalled 1,532 tons of wood or about eleven tons per acre. They now had twenty-two indentured and eight free Indians and were expecting more indentured labourers soon. Since they had recently built new barracks for the Indian workers, they could now accommodate about thirty-six Indians. African labour was more plentiful: the mealie crop had been poor, and more African men were applying for day work. Over the year the estate had employed an average of six to eight African men on daily wages and twelve Africans on monthly wages.

As a result of the improved conditions, they were discussing whether to diversify into tannin extraction. Currently they were shipping the unprocessed bark to England where the extraction process took place. Sidney was very keen on the idea of setting up a local plant. He had cabled London and had written to Jack that if the company's board 'put the L.L.Co's £5000 into it I rather like the idea'. Jack, though, worried about the risk of losing such a large sum of money and wondered if Sidney was merely 'flying a kite' to see what the London directors were thinking. Moreover, at the end of 1913 Jack was worrying about the poor crops produced by the latest drought and concerned that work on the nearby rail line would make it hard to get labour. The issues, understandably, were not resolved by the time of Sidney's January trip.<sup>44</sup>

On Sidney's return to Johannesburg he was again caught up in the spiralling events. Galvanized by the government's decision to retrench railway workers on Christmas Eve, a general strike of railway workers was called on 12 January 1914.<sup>45</sup> Martial law was imposed on 13 January. A manifesto entitled *Under Martial Law*, dated 21 January 1914 and signed by six members of the South African Labour Executive – W. H. Andrews, H. W. Sampson, D. Dingwall, W. Wybergh, F. A. W. Lucas and, not least, Sidney P. Bunting – implored the British public for its support. This was no syndicalist revolution, they insisted. Instead, 'the crisis was deliberately sought and prepared for by the Government in order, once and for all, to kill the Labour movement by a *coup de main*'. Since the events had begun as a peaceful industrial dispute, 'this could only be effected by suspending the law'. Although many of the strikers were Afrikaners and members of the Labour Party, the government was reviving Afrikaner–English enmity by

allowing 'burghers', many of whom were in the urban centres, 'to retain their arms and accoutrements permanently'.<sup>46</sup>

The government rounded up hundreds of trade unionists and strike supporters, including Creswell and other Labour Party leaders. On 30 January the government seized nine alleged strike leaders – Archie Crawford amongst them – and deported them without trial to Britain. British trade unionists and British Labour Party leaders gave an enthusiastic welcome to the deported nine when they landed in England. Not many years earlier white South African labour leaders had received a cold shoulder to their pleas to British labour for racial solidarity.<sup>47</sup> This time, the British labour movement was agitated over the issue of state repression. The radical English trade unionist Tom Mann went to South Africa in March and spent several months there 'as the Ambassador of the Rank and File of Great Britain and Ireland', preaching syndicalism and revolution.<sup>48</sup> The strike leaders were repatriated back to South Africa later that year. The ferment attracted widespread sympathy amongst the white electorate; popular opinion swung towards Labour.

Throughout this period Sidney acted as legal adviser to the Labour Party. By now he had set up his own practice as attorney, notary and conveyancer in the Jooste & Barnato Buildings at 106 Commissioner Street and was living at 21 Van der Merwe Street in Hillbrow. He worked closely with the young Pietermaritzburg-born and Oxford-educated advocate F. A. W. Lucas, another Labour sympathizer; the two had become acquainted in the Rand Club, and Lucas had been on the committee of the White Expansion Society.<sup>49</sup>

The day after the manifesto appeared Sidney had sent Jack a postcard saying he was no longer afraid of being arrested. After that he was silent for several weeks. But he eventually sent Jack a batch of signed cheques; this was at least a sign, Jack wrote back in February, that Sidney was 'still in the land of the living'.<sup>50</sup>

While Sidney was dealing with labour struggles on the Rand, Jack was dealing with labour shortages on the estate. The railway was being extended; a deviation was being built. The construction, he complained, 'is taking all the kaffirs who are working away from their farms'. As a result, casual day labour was hard to find: 'we have only one *togt* at work whereas last year we had as many as seven or eight at one time', he explained. The cousins discussed politics. 'With some of your remarks re labour (which you term platitudes) I quite agree', Jack told Sidney. But he had no sympathy with Sidney's support for white labour, and certainly not for the estate. 'If you could invent a labour-saving appliance for stripping trees, hanging bark, &c. there might be something in favour of it', Jack conceded. But he doubted 'that a white man could strip more in the day than our men can and he would certainly want from five to six times as much pay as the

highest of them gets. So that, without adding to the efficiency, we should merely be dividing the profit by “x”<sup>51</sup>

Jack wrote to his cousin Alfred in London that same month that finding labour was still a problem. ‘There is no agreement, tacit or otherwise, with any of our neighbours as to keeping down wages’, he informed Alfred. His neighbours did not employ many Indian labourers, he noted, but every so often one of the labourers would come and work for him, presumably because he offered higher wages – although he could not be certain. Jack was paying £2 per month for indentured workers and £2.5.0 per month for ‘free men who are good strippers’. The difference was due to the fact that he had ‘to pay about 5/- per month to the Immigration Dept. for each indentured labourer and each free man has to pay for himself about 5/- per month for his license to remain here out of indenture.’<sup>52</sup>

Sidney was indeed a proponent of white labour. In March 1914 he won the Bezuidenhout seat on the Transvaal Provincial Council. In South Africa, stated his election manifesto, where ‘every white man has tasted more or less the sweets of masterhood himself’, the capitalist class wished to rid itself of white workers, retaining only white overseers and “‘cheap”, unenfranchised, unorganized Kaf-firs’. Africans were ‘allies, or rather tools, of Capitalism against the white workers’. However, he added, this was ‘merely a temporary obstacle’, since ‘native workers’ were ‘bound to organize soon.’<sup>53</sup>

The Labour Party obtained an overall majority of one; Sidney, however, won by a significant majority. He was not a particularly compelling speaker – although earnest, he was too intellectual – but he was an enthusiastic campaigner. It was the first time anyone had ever held political meetings in the southern part of Bez Valley, and Sidney campaigned in the rural parts of the constituency, coming into contact with rural Afrikaners. He decided to learn Afrikaans – he may well have been the author of the *Worker’s* August 1913 editorial highlighting that issue – spending several weeks living at the home of Reverend Brandt of the Dutch Reformed Church. After that, with his gift for languages, he was able to address a meeting in Afrikaans and, according to one account, ‘only made one mistake.’<sup>54</sup>

During the campaign Sidney became friendly with South African-born Philip Roux, an anglicized Afrikaner who had been raised at Aliwal North and who was Sidney’s junior by two years. As a boy Philip Roux had developed an interest in science and rationalist thought, finally becoming an atheist. He trained as a pharmacist, and by the time Sidney was campaigning, owned his own chemist shop and home on Kitchener Avenue in Bez Valley. By then he was an earnest follower of the socialist purist Daniel de Leon, but nonetheless worked within the Labour Party. His shop and home, conveniently located next to a trolley tram line, became a natural meeting ground for local radicals, and from time to

time Sidney dropped by. Philip Roux took his young son Eddie, who was then ten years old, to the first political meeting in the area. 'A crowd of a hundred or so gathered in the dark on an empty plot and listened to the speakers who spoke from an empty box lighted with a solitary lantern', recalled Eddie Roux. Sidney was described 'as a coming man in the Labour movement and one whom his listeners should get to know'.<sup>55</sup>

The Provincial Council kept him busy – he resigned from the Labour Party executive to keep up with his council responsibilities.<sup>56</sup> He was too preoccupied to pay adequate attention to the estate's affairs. Jack went up to Johannesburg to see him in late April. In June Jack wrote complaining about his silence and reminding him that he was waiting for the two cheques sent for signature to be returned. He was fed up with Sidney's lack of involvement: 'If there is to be a dissolution of Parliament and a general election,' he wrote with some irony, 'I trust you will come down here for at least [*sic*] a day before you get tied up with electioneering'.<sup>57</sup>

Rumours of war accelerated Sidney's political journey. In January 1913 the Labour Party had committed itself to the Second International's resolution against war. With war looming, on 2 August 1914 the Labour Party's Administrative Council blasted 'the Capitalist governments of Europe in fermenting a war which can only benefit the international armament manufacturers' ring and other enemies of the working class'. It called on 'workers of the world to organize and refrain from participating in this unjust war'.<sup>58</sup> Two days later, on 4 August, Britain declared war on Germany. Once this happened, a number of prominent Labourites – notably Wybergh and Creswell – gave their support. On 6 August the *Worker* called on South Africans to support the war: 'Once a strike has been declared,' wrote Wybergh, 'it is the duty of every man, whether he approves or not, to take his share in the work and the risks involved'. On 10 August the South African government proposed to invade the German colony of South West Africa.<sup>59</sup>

Jack was worried about the war's impact on business. The estate was a perennial struggle. One thousand gum trees planted the previous March had all died as a result of drought. Frost had killed all the Methley plums and peaches planted as an experiment to test the market. They had sold a net total of 2,674 tons of wood or an average of about eight tons per acre and had been hurt by the fall in demand for firewood. Nonetheless, their railway siding had been extended, thus giving them more space for stacking firewood and poles for dispatch, an important advantage for the future. There were continuing headaches about labour supply. They now had nineteen indentured and fifteen free Indian workers. They had hoped for more, Jack told the directors, 'but this unfortunate state of war has precluded me from taking on some additional Indians who offered themselves'. In response to the Indian strike wave the previous year, Parliament had passed

the Indian Relief Act, which abolished the £3 tax on ex-indentured Indians. The repeal of the tax meant that free Indians would not become re-indentured, Jack continued, and that from then on Indian workers would be subject to a month's notice. All talk of the extraction factory was on hold due to the war, 'but great interest has been aroused and we all hope to be able to get a plant started very soon after hostilities are finished with.'<sup>60</sup>

Sidney may have had his views about the war's impact on the estate's prospects. But he did not make up his mind about the rights and wrongs of the war as readily. Back in London, his mother, widowed and elderly, supported Britain even while defending German women in London faced with anti-German hostility and, under the auspices of the local Women's Liberal Association, launching a club to sew clothes for war victims.<sup>61</sup> Sidney had come out to Africa a defender of empire and fought in a colonial war for that belief. But he had been raised to believe in European culture, his father had devoted himself to the cause of Anglo-German friendship and Sidney was fluent in German. He could not be swayed by anti-German patriotism. Moreover, his stance towards the state had shifted fundamentally since July 1913.

At the start of the war, Sidney was undecided. Philip Roux, recalled 'a meeting between himself, Bunting and some other members of the Party which took place in his shop a few days after the war was declared'. At that time, Sidney 'did not know where he stood. He was looking for advice.' According to Philip Roux, Sidney 'was not au fait with socialist philosophy. In order to orientate his attitude he consulted people whom he thought could assist him ... I told him there was only one attitude to assume: to point out to the workers that they are only pawns in the game the capitalists call war.'<sup>62</sup>

In mid-August Creswell returned from Cape Town once Parliament was no longer in session. He visited Sidney, who had recently moved in with the Wyberghs. They all lived in a rambling wooden house known as 'the Bungalow' that overlooked Orange Grove and the Magaliesberg – it had been built as officers' quarters during the South African War. The two men sat on Sidney's veranda and argued: by then, convinced by Philip Roux and others, Sidney had come out against the war.<sup>63</sup> But a seemingly simple and non-political act may well have signalled a more subtle shift in Sidney's political – and national – identity. During his first decade in South Africa he had faithfully paid his annual subscription to the Oxford and Cambridge Musical Society back in London. His payments lapsed in 1913; he finally resigned in 1914.<sup>64</sup>

Sidney, Philip Roux, Colin Wade and David Ivon Jones tried in vain to convince other Labour Party members to stand by their 1913 resolution against war; Wade was a London-born dentist who now lived in Germiston, and Jones, a Welshman who had come to South Africa in November 1910, working first in the office of the Victoria Falls power company and later in the white miners'

union.<sup>65</sup> On 8 September Botha announced South Africa's entry into the war; on 14 September South African troops left to invade South West Africa. That same month Sidney and other opponents of war formed the War on War League within the Labour Party; Colin Wade was chair, Philip Roux, secretary and Sidney, treasurer. The League's constitution was simple: 'The members "pledge themselves to oppose this or any other war at all times and at all costs"'. It began publishing the *War on War Gazette*. Sidney threw himself into the cause, once again pounding on his typewriter, this time to attack the Labour Party's ambivalence on the war.<sup>66</sup> 'I have never known anyone', reminisced Frederic Creswell, 'who believed so firmly in doing what he thought was right regardless of consequences'. Sidney's friend Philip Roux put the matter somewhat differently: once Sidney had decided on an idea, 'his hold on it was as *tenacious* as the hold of a British bulldog'.<sup>67</sup>

## 8 'THE STAR IN THE EAST'

'Comrades of the Labour movement', Sidney beseeched the readers of the *War on War Gazette* in September 1914. 'Has your internationalism, your fraternity ... been all cant and humbug ... Are you racialists first, and Socialists second?' His politics were secular, his discourse biblical: 'Remember the voice crying in the wilderness ... Think of the grain of mustard seed.' The power of their collective will could effect change. 'War, the greatest specific crime of modern times, is preventible, even after it has broken out: a determined people on either side can stop it'. Once they joined the crusade against war, they would soon find, Sidney echoed his favourite poet, Robert Browning, 'That rage was right i th'main, That acquiescence vain.'<sup>1</sup>

Before the outbreak of war the Labour Party had been growing. Labourites still hoped, optimistically, for a victory in the national elections set for 14 October, the next year. Eddie Roux, for one, was convinced that 'there seemed no doubt at all that socialism would soon be established'.<sup>2</sup> But the anti-war section were worried that support for the war would alienate potential Afrikaner members and deepen ethnic tensions amongst white workers. 'Do you think you are going to win [Afrikaners] by flaunting the Union Jack?', Sidney asked his English-speaking readers. 'Or will you not rather alienate them? And you know what that means to the future hope of the Party ... Remember the once despised pro-Boers', he reminded them; 'we are all pro-Boers today.'<sup>3</sup>

The declaration of war had already inspired an abortive Afrikaner coup, still-born with the death of its leader, the Afrikaner war hero Koos de la Rey, on 15 September. Sidney remained acutely worried about further Afrikaner backlash, a concern that did not surprise Jack. 'Your fear of a state of war making some local people foolish enough to dream of a republic would seem to have been realised', he acknowledged, 'but I should hope that they are very few in number tho' in positions where they ought to know better'. Jack was very uneasy about Sidney's growing propensity to swim against the political current and was relieved to learn that Sidney was thinking of going overseas.<sup>4</sup>

News of Sidney's activities and those of his political cohorts percolated down to Lidgetton. 'I decline to be charged with stying you seditious till I know what

you say but I presume that you are working with the gent who was had up and said he belonged to the war-on-war party and was behaving accordingly', Jack wrote in November. 'I am inclined to think that this war will prove to be the last great war and if so you may find that you have suffered as a prophet born out of due time', he chided Sidney. Wait until the war is over, he advised him, 'and then educate as swiftly as you like all public opinion against any recurrence of such a state of things. I take it you are not anxious to stop the war now and let Germany do the same again after a breathing space?' Despite his cousin's sermonizing, Sidney went down to Lidgetton for the Christmas holidays. Jack's young son Geoff was fond of his uncle, whose surname was a source of amusement: in his childish handwriting he had pencilled 'Sydney' above the word 'baby' in the rhyme 'Baby Bunting' of his nursery song book.<sup>5</sup>

Anti-war elements still dominated the Labour Party leadership. Eleven out of the fifteen executive members opposed the war, as did most of the delegates at the Party's annual conference in January 1915. Nonetheless, the conference adopted a neutrality clause allowing each member to follow his own conscience. But anti-German feeling was running high across the country and boiled over after the Germans sunk the British liner *Lusitania* in May. So in due course, like its counterparts overseas, the Labour Party changed its stance. Frederic Creswell, who became a Colonel in the army, played a critical role in the shift; on 22 August 1915 a special Labour Party conference voted – eighty-two to thirty – its whole-hearted support for the war effort and for Creswell's 'See the war through' policy. In turn, the eleven anti-war members of the executive resigned from the leadership, and a group of about twenty dissenters, Sidney amongst them, formed the International League of the South African Labour Party. Their aim, stated the League's paper, the *International*, was to 'propagate principles of International Socialism and anti-militarism and promote international socialist unity and activity'.<sup>6</sup> But finding the climate within the party too chilly, in late September they broke away and formed the International Socialist League (ISL), with an office at 6 Trades Hall on Rissik Street. They were joined by members of the Socialist Labour Party and the Industrial Workers of the World. Composed mainly of immigrants from Britain and Australia, from the outset the ISL reflected several distinctive socialist and syndicalist strands united by their common opposition to the war.<sup>7</sup>

Sidney now believed that socialism offered the only means of preventing war: 'the only "war-on-warites" who have proved worth taking into account are Socialists', he declared in September 1915. He became a member of the ISL's management committee, and in October, when the Commissioner Street branch of the Labour Party dissolved and reformed as the Johannesburg Central branch of the ISL, he was elected as its chair.<sup>8</sup> That same month Parliamentary elections took place. The Labour Party suffered significant losses. The ISL had put up five



candidates in Johannesburg, with Sidney and Jones running for Ward II. They lost decisively.<sup>9</sup>

Socialists who opposed the war faced the government's ire as well as the hostility of patriotic whites. Sidney campaigned closely with two other anti-war socialists, the idealist David Ivon Jones and the fiery Andrew Dunbar. Jones had been born to a Methodist family in Aberystwyth – 'a stronghold of Welsh Non-conformity'. Orphaned as a child, he was befriended by a kind Unitarian and became drawn to those ideas. After a bout of tuberculosis he journeyed to New Zealand and South Africa. He gradually moved from Unitarianism to socialism, which offered an 'entirely spiritual enthusiasm for a new Heaven and a new Earth ... with which Labour's awakening fires us'.<sup>10</sup> Dunbar was a Scottish blacksmith who promoted direct action and had led the South African branch of the Industrial Workers of the World. Sidney admired Dunbar, praising him as an 'industrial Cincinnatus at his forge' and 'the most cheery of comrades, loyal of friends, reasonable of counsellors, good tempered and broadminded [*sic*] of collaborators, dogged and imperturbable of fighters'.<sup>11</sup>

The trio's Cape Town counterpart was English-born Wilfred Harrison of the Social Democratic Federation. Harrison had served as an artificer in the Coldstream Guards for ten years, three of them in the South African War. Following his discharge, he returned to South Africa in August 1903 when he was thirty-two and converted to socialism. Tall, with a long, thin face and an impressive handlebar moustache, he was utterly sincere in his convictions, 'the most "ethereal" of our anti-militarists', according to one comrade, probably Sidney. He had 'a fervour and an exaltation in his Socialism which cannot fail to impress'. To another admirer, he was 'more of a visionary and a speaker than a doer', an evangelist rather than a reformer. He became one of Cape Town's most compelling soap-box orators and found himself thrown in jail for his anti-war speeches.<sup>12</sup>

The Johannesburg three, likewise, were arrested for anti-war speeches that led to a brawl.<sup>13</sup> Ultimately, though, the Attorney General requested that the case against the three be withdrawn, as it was not a crime to oppose war. While the government's harassment no doubt intensified Sidney's antipathy towards state authority, he clearly enjoyed his battles with – and victories over – the authorities. When the government's case collapsed in November, public prosecutor Archibald Cramer expressed deep regret that he could not impose a fine: 'Mr Bunting may smile (as I see he is doing) as much as he likes, but I shall assure him that next time I shall press for a substantial penalty'.<sup>14</sup>

Sidney was worn out by the end of the year and spent a fortnight in the Cape on holiday. At the start of the new year he went to Lidgetton. The estate was doing reasonably. The trees had recovered from an attack of bag worm, they were experimenting with fruit production for the South African market, the

machinery had been upgraded, and Sidney and Jack were now thinking about constructing a tramway.<sup>15</sup>

Sidney got back to Johannesburg in time for the ISL's first national conference on 9 January 1916. He played a prominent role at the proceedings: he and Colin Wade were elected as vice-chairs, David Ivon Jones as secretary and Bill Andrews – now known as the 'Liebknecht of South Africa', presumably for his unwavering stance against war – as chair.<sup>16</sup>

Over the previous year Sidney and a few other ISL members, notably Jones, had come to believe that any truly international socialism had to embrace the needs of all workers, including and especially those of black workers. Sidney's lack of ties to the white labour movement left him free to promote the cause of black workers. But his sympathy for this cause undoubtedly reflected the memory of his parents' long-ago support for Booker T. Washington and Ida B. Wells. Now, he put forward a 'Petition of Rights' for Africans and asked the League to 'affirm that the emancipation of the working class requires the abolition of all forms of native indenture, compound and passport systems; and the lifting of the native worker to the political and industrial status of the white'.

The reception was mixed. Colin Wade 'adduced biological evidence on the intellectual development of the native as compared with the white', while Andrew Dunbar argued that 'there was no Native problem, only a worker's problem'. After heated discussion the conference agreed to an amendment proposed by Wade that read: 'And the lifting of the native wage worker to the political and industrial status of the white; meanwhile endeavouring to prevent the increase of the native wage workers, and to assist the existing native wage workers to free themselves from the wage system'. The *International* described the debate as 'Bunting's achievement', although some had misgivings, it reported, about 'the inclusion of "political rights" in the status which native wage workers should aim at'.<sup>17</sup>

Sidney lambasted the compromise motion in the *International*. By preventing Africans from owning or occupying land, the 1913 Native Land Act was pushing them – 'cheap, helpless, and unorganised' – into the wage system. The capitalist class was divided between mining or industrial and agrarian sections, he observed. The former, 'British, cosmopolitan, more up-to-date at exploitation, will not long demur to the education and political enfranchisement of the Kaffir, experience having proved that neither schooling nor voting really impairs the usefulness of the wage-slave' – he was presumably thinking of the British experience. Nonetheless, the two groups were united 'in essentials, and especially in an appeal to military force ... Unless the white workers take the big view, they will have to manoeuvre [*sic*] for a position like that of the privileged Trade Unions which in the "Iron Heel" helped to break up the Labour movement' – a reference to Jack London's renowned novel, *The Iron Heel*, first published in 1908.

Marx's methodology was instructive here, Sidney suggested. Marx 'studied eagerly and minutely everything that happened in his time', even events 'which did'nt [*sic*] obviously fit into his own abstract system'. If Marx were living in Johannesburg today, Sidney speculated, he might have founded the International Association of Working Men 'not on the well paid Craft Unionists who themselves batten on native labour ... but rather on such class conscious elements as he could find among the black workers, who groan under a hundred special and serious disabilities ... in addition to those attaching to all workers' – the very disabilities that prevented workers from uniting across the colour bar.<sup>18</sup>

Early in 1916 Sidney became acquainted with an ISL member named Rebecca Notlowitz. She had been born Mikhla Rivka Tsykovna Notelevich to Jewish parents in the village of Malyati, governorship of Vilni on 9 January 1888; her father was registered as a petit bourgeois. She attended a Jewish school, was a diligent student and graduated at the age of twelve in 1900 with excellent marks. Later she trained at the private midwifery school of Dr Ignatius Reis, graduating on 8 January 1907, just short of her nineteenth birthday, as a 'midwife second class with outstanding marks'.<sup>19</sup> But her family fled Tsarist Russia, fearful of pogroms against Jews. They went first to London, staying in Leman Street in the east end, before moving to South Africa in 1914. There, they settled in a semi-detached cottage at 13 Upper Page Street in the Johannesburg suburb of Doornfontein, and Mikhla Rivka Tsykovna Notelevich became Rebecca Notlowitz.

It was a typically immigrant Yiddish-speaking Jewish home, like that of so many other Jews who had fled Tsarist Russia. The house on Upper Page was full of 'ancient faded photographs of aged ancestors', carefully secured 'in oval wooden frames on the wall'. Its kitchen, where Rebecca's mother prepared chopped chicken liver, taiglach, gefilte fish, helzel and stuffed neck, had its requisite samovar and tin-lined polished copper passover utensils. Meals were digested in 'dining-table seats with gently reclined backs'. Rebecca's father sold 'chickens from a cart', perhaps a hand cart or one pulled by a horse, and sometimes slaughtered them to make a living. The back yard 'was full of the wire mesh crates which contained the chickens'.<sup>20</sup> Sidney had not met such a family before.

The ISL had a number of women members, and they had formed a group, promoting speakers and organizing social activities – including a dance at Professor West's Academy on 16 February. The *International* raved about the dance and 'all the nice girl comrades at the ice cream buffet, and the devoted women comrades'. There were, in short, opportunities for romantic entanglements for those so inclined. Sidney and Becky, as he called her, began to 'walk out' together in March or April. He was then almost forty-three years old. She was twenty-eight, pretty, very petite, fervent in her political views and committed to organizing women.<sup>21</sup>



Figure 3: Rebecca Notlewitz, c. 1908. Courtesy of Brian Bunting.

The budding romance did not distract Sidney from his political work; to the contrary, Becky reinforced his political commitment. He and a few other socialists were trying to interest black workers in their message; they were clearly at odds with the majority of their comrades on this issue. Many of the ISL's founding members – English-speaking whites who had been in the Labour Party – had dropped out, and although the proportion of Eastern European members had grown, they were more concerned with events in Russia than in South Africa.

Sidney was full of ideas, often drawn from social experiments overseas, and used the pages of the *International* to promote them. The local Workers Educational Association was 'busyng itself with this middle class squabble for a "University" of Johannesburg.' What the workers wanted, he countered, was 'a Marxian college "absolutely independent of the universities and orthodox education"', along lines proposed by socialist John Maclean of Glasgow. Couldn't the League do something take up that challenge, he asked his readers? 'The natives get educated with next to no public funds; why can't we?'<sup>22</sup> Yet the logic could conceal barbs against those deemed to be not sufficiently revolutionary. James Bain, one of the 1914 deported nine who had drifted from the ISL to the Workers Educational Association came under attack in the *International's* pages.<sup>23</sup>

The League, in the meantime, began inviting black workers to their public meetings. In March it organized a meeting to protest the Native Affairs Administration Bill. George Mason spoke on 'Trade Unions and the Native Question', urging his audience 'that time should not be wasted in arguing against the prejudice of white workers' – they were not rational on that issue. 'What was needed was to get the native workers to train and organise themselves so that they could compel respect.' In May Sidney 'broke the ice on the soap box', enthusing for socialism across the colour bar outside the Johannesburg City Hall, a monumental Beaux Arts structure on the eastern side of Market Square that had been completed just two years earlier; socialists found the City Hall steps offered a prime spot for their orations.<sup>24</sup> In June Robert Grendon, editor of the Native National Congress newspaper *Abantu Batho* (*The People*), became the first African to address a meeting at the Trades Hall under ISL auspices – on 'The Link between Black and White'. During the discussion, Saul 'Msane, the 'veteran spokesman of the industrialized native', argued for the need to educate whites – it was, reported the *International*, a 'truly exhilarating' discussion.<sup>25</sup>

Sidney carried on with his legal practice, but increasingly his legal work was for the movement. Having his own practice made it very hard to take a holiday. The combination of intense political activity and pressured legal work was stressful, and he went down to Lidgetton in mid-July for a brief break. 'Sidney was for some time suffering from headaches', Jack wrote to Alfred on 1 August, 'but he seemed better when he was here a fortnight ago'. Sidney had been doing too much reading and writing in poor light, Jack thought, and he attributed Sid-

ney's headaches to his adjustment to his new spectacles. But most importantly, his cousin needed 'a thoroughly good holiday away from Johburg'. He wished Sidney would go to England, 'both for his health's sake and for that of his views on the war'. In Johannesburg Sidney had committed himself as anti-war. In a different environment, Jack was sure, he 'would very greatly alter his views'. But as long as he stayed in Johannesburg, 'he won't admit himself wrong tho' he has hedged on his view that he would as soon be under the German Emperor as under George'.<sup>26</sup>

The two items on Sidney and Jack's agenda concerned the impact of a proposed railway deviation on their own siding and tram connection and the prospects for a local extraction plant. War had not diminished the needs for mechanization and modernization. The estate's output was satisfactory. The price of wood remained stable, and they had dispatched 3,524 tons, but the price for bark was unstable, depending on the ups-and-downs of the London market and uncertainties about shipping facilities. It had been a good year for gum and fruit trees, although in consequence the fruit market became glutted. They had employed an average of thirty-two Indians and sixteen Africans that year.<sup>27</sup>

Back in Johannesburg, Sidney began the defence of David Ivon Jones, arrested in August for distributing an anti-war pamphlet entitled *Let Saints on Earth in Concert Sing* and written in a sinners-be-damned style: 'The Church has long ago succumbed to the worship of Moloch. Its parsons have every one gone helter skelter to the side of the capitalist prostitutes of humanity ... Dance, ye sanctimonious ones, at the cannibal feast of the blood of the workers.'<sup>28</sup> Sidney took on the case, only to find himself arrested and charged with Jones for contravening public welfare by disseminating material 'calculated to create alarm or incite public feeling' – *Re Bunting against the King*. Sidney was sentenced to six weeks hard labour or to £25, but he appealed to the Supreme Court.<sup>29</sup> Was he concerned about the government's harassment? 'Fear Death?', he wrote in the *International*, echoing Browning. 'No! Let me taste the whole of it, fare like my peers. The heroes of old.'<sup>30</sup>

He succeeded in getting the verdict quashed. Judge Wessels described the pamphlet as 'intensely silly', but argued that 'if Parliament intended us to suppress Socialist propaganda, should not the statute have described it more explicitly than "matter calculated to excite public feeling"'. The outcome was perhaps a victory for free speech: 'it is the second or third mishap the Crown has suffered in attacking us', Sidney explained in the *International*. 'But the judgments avowedly lay down no rule as to when matter shall be considered as calculated to excite public feeling, so that we are still at the mercy of judicial rule of thumb.' Whether one was sentenced, in other words, depended very much on the interpretation of the particular judge handling one's case.<sup>31</sup>

As usual, Sidney had his fingers in several pies. He was busy once again with electioneering, running for Ward III in Johannesburg's municipal elections. The ISL's electoral manifesto bore his imprint: 'Remember the slaves of Rome', he appealed to prospective voters. 'As the moral decadence of a society upheld by slave labour recoiled on the Roman world conquerors, so are the white community in South Africa, and the white workers especially, threatened with moral and economic ruin to day by countenancing a slave caste of wage labour in the social foundation.' He and Jones held open-air meetings outside City Hall. Their message found little electoral support.<sup>32</sup>

Throughout this period Sidney had been courting Becky. They married on 22 December 1916 at the Magistrate's Office in Johannesburg; Rebecca Notlowitz became Becky Bunting. On Christmas Eve Sidney wrote to Jack and Mollie from the Beach Hotel in Durban about his 'International Socialist marriage'. His new wife, he told them, was 'a Russian Jewess', although 'not at all the type, either in looks or character: only in speech'. Becky had rebelled against her family's strictures about mixed marriage; 'her people, most bigoted Peruvian', Sidney recounted, 'wouldn't hear of marriage with a Christian'. She finally let them 'go to blazes, and here we are – they never came to see us married or off at the station'. Sidney was burning with enthusiasm for his new bride: 'I think the deal will turn out exceedingly satisfactory!'

In Becky's telling, Sidney 'invited her to take a holiday with him, travelling to Durban by train, then to Cape Town by boat, and back from the Cape by train; she had no objection to that, but insisted that they should be married first'. After a brief honeymoon and an even shorter late afternoon stop-off at Lidgetton – on 5 January 1917 – they were back in Johannesburg.<sup>33</sup> At some point Sidney had left the bungalow, and he and Becky moved to 123 Juta Street, Wanderers' View.<sup>34</sup>

Sidney had to get back to work. The Native Affairs Administration Bill came before Parliament in 1917. 'The Natives Land Act of 1913, nominally a measure of "segregation", was outrageous enough', Sidney wrote in an article called 'Manufacturing the Proletariat', which was reprinted by the Natal weekly, *Ilanga lase Natal*. 'This Bill repeals its whips and substitutes scorpions.' Its aim, he explained, was to drive Africans into the labour market, and this might very well have to be achieved before the law could be overturned and power won by 'the industrialised natives on the Rand'.<sup>35</sup> On 11 March the ISL held a protest meeting in the Trades Hall, attended by blacks and whites. Sidney spoke on the Bill's legal implications, especially 'the government by proclamation aspect and the provisions practically forcing all natives to be servants of the whites, giving complete dictatorship to the Native Affairs Department'. He was followed by three African activists, Horatio Bud-'Mbelle and Saul 'Msane and, lastly, R. C. Kapan.<sup>36</sup>

The next month Sidney argued that the ongoing debate in Parliament 'is really only a debate between two sections of one composite ruling class ... the Junker agrarian and the up-to-date financial industrial'. The government represented both, but was 'dominated by the more powerful section, the financial-industrial-Imperialist'. But all whites, 'including the Labour Party with its "White Labour" and Convict Labour policies', were united in the exploitation of cheap black labour – 'our national asset'.<sup>37</sup>

Predictably, the ISL's interest in black labour alienated whites. Although the members organizing black workers were very few in numbers, most white workers saw the ISL as anti-war and 'pro-Native'. Sidney, captivated by the revolutionary events in Russia, news of which reached the country in late March, hoped that they might serve as an inspiration and a lesson in South Africa. The overthrow of Tsar Nicholas II and the installation of a Provisional Government of conservatives, liberals and socialists supported by workers' councils or soviets could not fail to move South African workers whatever their colour, he hoped – and, crucially, sway white workers towards a broader working-class solidarity. 'The Star in the East', Sidney hailed in early June. 'The wonderful Proletarian revolution begun in Russia ... is a trumpet call to the nations of the earth', Sidney wrote. 'South Africa too, backward though her Labour Movement is, cannot long be deaf ... Workers under the Southern Cross', he appealed, 'will you not respond to this one clear call from Eastern Europe, whence cometh our salvation?'<sup>38</sup>

But such appeals for solidarity, both national and international, fell on deaf ears and precluded white electoral support.<sup>39</sup> Sidney had represented Bez Valley on the Transvaal Provincial Council until June 1917, when his term ended. But Bez Valley was a very pro-war English area. So he decided to run as an ISL candidate in the heavily Jewish area of Commissioner Street; his law office was now in Jooste & Bryant's Building, 104 Commissioner. The proletarian revolution in Russia, 'destined to encircle the civilized world, has completely thrown in the shade the parochial topics which Capitalism has hitherto allowed a Provincial Council to play with', he informed prospective voters. He held his usual open-air meetings, and the ISL issued election flyers in Yiddish and English. 'This is indeed no time, when the great Feast of Blood has almost reached its third anniversary, to come forward with a mere catalogue of pre-war reforms which at the very best of times served rather to mask than even to alleviate the cardinal disease of modern "civilisation"', read Sidney's election manifesto. He lost.<sup>40</sup>

On 23 June, three days after the election, Sidney was in Lidgetton. It had been another reasonable year for the estate. Sidney had no compunction at all about his involvement with the estate and was keen to maximize profits. He and Jack were trying to decide the best route for the new tram line that would connect the east and west sides of the estate. Sales of wood, bark and fruit were



good. They were keen to offload their green bark. They had sold some to the Natal Tanning Company in Pietermaritzburg, and Sidney had just succeeded in getting Philip Roux to purchase 100 pounds. But busy as he always was at the plantation, Sidney could hardly bear to be away from Becky, who was six months pregnant.<sup>41</sup>

‘The prospect of 32 hours at Lidgetton and then another 24 before we meet again at Park station, is awful dismal,’ he wrote to her. ‘No time to read Marx till the return journey,’ he admitted. ‘Good luck at tomorrow’s meeting,’ he wished her. Andrew Dunbar had irritated a number of his comrades due to his iconoclastic views and excitable behaviour; ‘if Dunbar runs amok,’ Sidney added, ‘I hope he will receive little attention, just be curtly and quietly disowned. Till Monday night I must kiss you by wireless,’ he concluded his missive to Becky. ‘My first letter to you since I became your husband.’<sup>42</sup>

The loss of his council position left Sidney freer to proselytize amongst blacks. In mid-1917 the ISL began holding Thursday evening meetings for black workers at Jack Neppe’s furniture shop. Neppe’s Building was located at 54 Fox Street at the corner of Fox and MacLaren – almost directly opposite the Marshall’s Square Police Station! Numbers fluctuated, but generally included, not surprisingly, two police spies masquerading as workers.<sup>43</sup> On 26 July ‘about 15 natives from Town and Mines, and about 8 white men of different nationalities’ were present, according to Native Constable Wilfred Jali. Sidney, Yeshaya Israelstam and Jack Neppe were often present; Andrew Dunbar was the principal lecturer. Dunbar used a language of socialism that denied the salience of ethnicity and colour, yet his syndicalist orientation nonetheless led him to organize black workers. He would draw box diagrams illustrating the class structure of capitalism and the proportion of wealth produced and owned by various classes and then explain the need for black workers to organize.

Sidney’s own teaching style was Socratic, and he was clearly a committed teacher. His question and answer approach enabled him to develop a dialogue with those attending the meetings, and he was learning. On 9 August, reported Jali, Sidney began by asking those present their views of the meetings. One man replied that the meetings were useful but that the small numbers in attendance impeded their impact. Sidney then asked why the men had come to work in the Transvaal since they had land where they came from. This question provoked much discussion about *lobola* [brideprice], about taxation and about the role of the Dutch and British colonizers. Sidney argued that the way ‘to abolish all these troubles is for the natives to be organised,’ Jali continued. ‘They should not limit their demands to wages, ‘but all the 250,000 natives on the Rand ... should all be organised and strike for everything and they will get it as soon as possible’. He urged them to organize soon, Jali explained, ‘because after this War natives will suffer a great deal more than they suffered after the great Boer war.’<sup>44</sup>

The following week '18 natives and 3 whitemen' – Sidney, Dunbar and Neppe – were present. Sidney 'wanted to know from the natives what the idea was on the Native National Congress' and 'of what men the Congress was composed and if they had anything to say for the natives as regards their bad treatment in South Africa'. According to one African, the 'Congress was composed of well-known men who owned lands, were exempted from native laws and they had nothing to say as regards the bad treatment of the natives.' Sidney then stated 'that these men were afraid that their lands might be taken away from them and they only made their own organisation and they had nothing to do for the poor natives who had no lands'. One of the Africans asked about pamphlets in African languages. Dunbar replied that he planned to produce bilingual isiZulu–Sesotho pamphlets.<sup>45</sup>

The weekly classes did not focus only on South Africa. On 23 August a Mr Barron from Russia lectured on the development of the Russian anti-tsarist movement and the lessons to be drawn by South African workers. 'By first forming small meetings of your own and keeping step by step at last you will all come together and strike for what you want and you will get it as soon as you do so', he told his audience. At the end of the lecture, 'the natives were talking together', reported Jali to his superiors, 'and they discussed that we should make our own meetings of natives only and form a Committee.'<sup>46</sup> But the next week some felt it was premature to establish an African organization. Sidney argued that blacks were paid less than whites because they were not organized. 'As the working class you have the power in your hands to make the present state of things to cease to exist', Sidney stated. 'The socialistic society is prepared to educate you and make you understand the way of using this power against the capitalists.' Herbert Msane was worried about the presence of police spies, but Sidney assured him that the police could do nothing. 'The present system must cease to exist. Change must come and it will come one day.'<sup>47</sup>

Sidney arrived at the close of the meeting on 6 September to distribute pamphlets.<sup>48</sup> The next day, 7 September, Sidney's and Becky's first child, Arthur Hugh, was born. The arrival of a new baby did not deter Sidney, ever the activist, from attending evening meetings. He was back at the next week's meeting on the 13 September; a crisis had occurred. The Johannesburg Trades Hall Society – fed up with blacks coming in for ISL meetings and with Sidney's rants against white workers – had just passed a resolution reserving the Trades Hall building for whites only. Sidney informed the meeting that the ISL would contest the decision and try to get the resolution rescinded.<sup>49</sup> The League complained without success against the 'reactionary regulation' and called on the trade union movement to 'protest against the stigma which it places on the whole labour movement in South Africa ... Few can deny the right of the native workers to organise industrially', it appealed. 'In fact, if we are to keep up white standards we

must encourage the industrial organisations of the native labourers, the bottom dog of the industry, the big mass of the real working class of this country.’<sup>50</sup>

Sidney resigned as secretary of the Trades Hall Society. His commentary in the *International* – ‘Workers of the World Disunite – No Niggers at the Trades Hall’ – did not mince words. The resolution, he wrote scathingly, represented ‘a challenge to the Socialists who recognise the class struggle; a sneering intimation to the underpaid, uneducated, unskilled toilers that they need not hope for the co-operation of the whites ... a wilful decision of the “trustees” of the working class movement to sell it for a “place in the sun”, where they clink glasses with magnates, with the d–d niggers as their footstool. It was now the white workers who were ‘tools in the hands of the capitalist’. Workers must ‘tear down that blasphemous legend “Labour Omnia Vincit” over the Trades Hall gateway. And substitute “All hope abandon ye who enter here”, for the solidarity of labour, the hope of the world, is by that snobbish, churlish resolution abandoned, spat upon and disowned!’ The ISL lost its office in the Trades Hall.<sup>51</sup>

These weeks were stressful for Sidney. They were harder for Becky: little Arthur was poorly the first few weeks of his life. But by the end of the month, the baby was better.<sup>52</sup> And the Thursday evening meetings in Neppé’s shop finally bore fruit. On 21 September the black workers who had been attending the meetings held their own meeting. The next week they agreed to form a society provisionally called Industrial Workers of the World whose first target would be the pass laws. A Mr Tsitsi was appointed as chair and Mr ‘Mbelle, secretary. On 11 October, they agreed on the name Industrial Workers of Africa (IWA). Echoing the Industrial Workers of the World slogan, ‘We shall be all!’, the new organization put forward the ambitious demand, ‘*Sifuna zonke!*’ (‘We want all!’).<sup>53</sup> As the year 1917 neared its end, Sidney, then 44, could point to a new wife, a new baby and the birth of the IWA. The events that took place in Russia that November could only strengthen his hope to change the world.

## 9 ‘THE EARTH IS THE WORKERS’

The revolution that erupted in Russia in November 1917 shook socialists around the world – South Africa was no exception. Socialism was now no longer merely a utopian vision, but a feasible alternative to capitalism. The International Socialist League was electrified. ‘Long live the Social Revolution, the Light from the East’, proclaimed the *International* on 16 November. Two weeks later it wrote: ‘The Word becomes Flesh in the Council of Workmen ... the political dictatorship of the proletariat.’<sup>1</sup>

It seemed a propitious moment to organize black workers. At the end of November the Industrial Workers of Africa’s bilingual isiZulu–Sesotho leaflet appeared – the first socialist appeal to African workers in their mother tongues. The English translation of the isiZulu version began ‘Native workers! Why do you keep in Slavery?’ and exhorted them to ‘Bind yourself in a chain of being workers’. About 10,000 leaflets were distributed across the towns and mines of the Rand. In December the IWA held joint meetings with the African People’s Organization and the Transvaal Native Congress.<sup>2</sup>

The allure of the Russian Revolution did not mean that South Africa should blindly follow the Russian path, Sidney argued the next month. When asked by black workers how to organize, he advised them to avoid a ‘slavish imitation of Russia, or any other imported methods’. These ‘would fail, and particularly in Africa, where whites are in the main hostile to non-whites. For some time to come, the only “organisation” the mass of workers need worry about here is the organisation of education in the Unity of Labour, irrespective of colour, skill or craft.’

After the League lost its office in the Trades Hall, it found refuge once again in Neppe’s Building at 54 Fox Street. As 1918 began, the ISL held its annual conference, this year at the Palmeston Hotel on Commissioner Street – the Trades Hall was now off limits.<sup>3</sup> Sidney and Becky also moved; with the baby they needed more space. They were now installed at the bungalow overlooking Orange Grove. It was picturesque – with a gong and paraffin lamps and a garden where they grew vegetables and Sidney pottered – and an ideal spot for Sidney’s writing; but it was far from central Johannesburg and public transportation.<sup>4</sup>

Soon after the conference, Sidney went down to Lidgetton. Sidney wanted to give Becky a holiday and was concerned that his politics were becoming a problem with Jack. But his cousin assured him to the contrary; he was glad to have the family for a visit. ‘You may think differently’, he wrote to Sidney, ‘but I see no reason yet to suspect humbug on anyone’s part’. For his part, he was keen to use the occasion to discuss business.<sup>5</sup> So, in February Sidney accompanied Becky and six month-old Arthur to Lidgetton and left them there for a fortnight while he returned to Johannesburg.

He had just published a piece called ‘Children of the Ghetto’ about the Natives (Urban Areas) Bill that the Native Administration Department was trying to push through Parliament. Its aim was to force all Africans living in towns into segregated locations and single-sex hostels; it was a counterpart to the Native Administration Bill that aimed to drive Africans from the countryside into the cities. ‘But neither Bill is law yet’, Sidney pointed out; ‘nor ever will be if the workers will – not petition the Government, that is played out, nor even demonstrate merely, but – organise to exercise the industrial power that will remove mountains’.<sup>6</sup>

Back in Johannesburg he began studying the legal implications of the bills. He dreaded going home to a lonely house. ‘It is very melancholy without you’, he wrote to Becky, ‘but I hope you are not finding it the same, but are sleeping and getting some exercise out of doors’. Becky normally did the cooking, and during her absence Sidney had arranged with Mrs Tyler – the Tylers were sharing the bungalow with them – to have lunch in town.<sup>7</sup> But dinners were harder. ‘I am sentimental over you, and don’t want to go up to dinner tonight and find no wife there.’ He had just received a letter from his old friend Beatrice Stuart – ‘married at last’ to conductor Elie Marx – and he was ‘more glad than ever’ that he had Becky for his sweetheart.

He had much news. The ISL was plagued by personality conflicts, and personnel changes were in the air. David Ivon Jones suffered from chronic ill health and was on the verge of leaving; he and E. H. Becker, the League’s treasurer, were constantly squabbling. In the event of Jones’s departure, Sidney was being pressured to take over editorship of the *International*. But Sidney wondered whether his intention was really ‘to get away from Becker, the Solidarity Committee’ – a committee set up to foster unity amongst black and white workers – ‘and to be out of the wage-slavery under the management committee’ – the latter a caustic reference to the ISL’s executive. The next day Sidney heard that Jones was resigning. ‘The League has been sacrificed to the quarrel between Jones and Becker’, he complained to his wife, ‘and both have behaved badly’.<sup>8</sup>

The Tylers had decided to leave, and Sidney had not found any other tenants. He and Becky might have to move. Although the bungalow had been ideal for his writing projects, it would be practical to live closer to town, particularly if

Sidney were to take over as editor of the *International*. He was busy organizing a concert to raise funds for the IWA. The 'Kaffir Concert', as he dubbed it, 'is going to be a bother, getting cups, refreshments & c: though the Hall is alright, and the programme will look after itself, pretty nearly'. He was always worried about money, complaining that he never got the big lucrative legal cases. But he had been talking business with Mr Nance, who had been negotiating with Sidney and Jack about the development of local tanning and extracting facilities. If tannin could be extracted locally from the bark produced at Lidgetton, this might be much more profitable than shipping the green bark overseas. If Nance were right, they 'needn't worry about bread and butter in a year or two's time'. Nonetheless, Sidney was cautious; Nance talked 'very big'.<sup>9</sup>

News of Sidney's political activities percolated down to Natal. A well-wisher had sent Jack an article entitled 'Workers of Africa' from the *Sunday Times* of 3 March. The article claimed that 'Comrades Bunting, Cetyiwe and Ntholi' were organizing a fund-raising concert 'for the "Workers of Africa" movement', Jack informed Sidney. 'I gather from it that you are supposed to be mixed up with some propaganda work amongst natives ... to engender discontent, get them to come out on strike whenever your white friends choose to strike, and instil ideas of general equality amongst the natives and coloured people with their white employers.' Jack was beside himself and expected Sidney to let him know without delay 'that the whole statement that you have *any* connection with such a movement is a lie and that you are taking steps to refute it publicly'. If the press report were true, he added, 'you ought to be in the asylum but I should hope you may be let off with deportation only, for the sake of your wife and child'.<sup>10</sup>

Jack's hopes were dashed. Jones left Johannesburg for Natal that same month, eventually going to a sanatorium in Sweetwaters. T. P. Tinker took over as secretary of the ISL and Sidney as editor. This raised his public profile.<sup>11</sup> The African concert had been 'shadowed simultaneously by C. I. D. and "Sunday Times" men, skulking like mosquitos round dark corners'. He was now organizing the ISL's May Day celebrations, which introduced a new name, that of the ISL's first African member, Thomas William Thibedi. The son of a Wesleyan minister, Thibedi taught in a Wesleyan school. He had become interested in socialism as a young man in 1916 after hearing Sidney speak and soon became a regular orator in the African townships around Johannesburg. The two men shared a scathing contempt for missionaries. They 'were leading the blacks away from the truth', Thibedi told his audience on May Day. He himself 'cared not for any hell they may tell him about excepting the one in which he realized he was existing on earth'. His prominence at the May Day celebration signalled that some ISL members, and notably Sidney, recognized the importance of reaching African workers.<sup>12</sup>

Over the next few months Sidney's name was splashed across the press, even making the *Times* in London – to the undoubted shock and chagrin of his relatives. On 6 June African municipal workers in Johannesburg went on strike, inspired by a successful strike of white power workers that James Bain had helped to organize that May.<sup>13</sup> An attempt to extend the action of the African municipal workers to a general strike of African workers on 1 July failed, although African mine workers at Ferreira Deep Mine came out, and there were attempted strikes at other mines. About 152 strikers were arrested and sentenced under the Master and Servants Act to two months in prison. The alleged leaders were arrested on 6 July and jailed without bail, charged with inciting public violence. These included J. D. Ngojo, A. Cetyiwe and H. Kraai of the IWA; D. S. Letanka and L. T. Mvabaza, who managed *Abantu Batho*; and T. P. Tinker, H. C. Hanscombe and Sidney of the ISL. L. W. Ritch was attorney for the black defendants; Advocate F. A. W. Lucas and, later, Dr Krause, KC represented the whites.

The Crown hoped to show that the ISL, working through the IWA, was responsible for the strike activity. The three socialists were accused of having 'sat in council with natives', leading to a 'strike among municipal natives and certain mine natives'. They had succeeded in creating a sense of 'general dissatisfaction among natives' – it was only fortuitous, suggested the *Times*, that the quarter of a million African workers on the Rand had not gone on strike. The police informant, Luke Messina, claimed that Sidney 'had personally seen the informant Luke and given him instructions to go to certain Mines and persuade the Compound Natives to organize and strike'.<sup>14</sup>

The Crown's case was based on an assumption that socialism would necessarily entail violence, especially if Africans were involved. This was a test case; it was the first time that the ISL had been refused bail, and it signalled a harsher attitude towards socialists. Until then, the only political convictions against the ISL in Johannesburg had been obtained under Martial Law, reported the *International*. Eight other attempts had failed. This was the first time that the charge was 'very serious', almost 'treasonable conspiracy' or 'sedition'.<sup>15</sup>

Sidney prepared the defence from prison, assisted by Lucas. 'I am terribly hungry for you', he wrote to Becky from prison on 8 July, 'but we shall be out I hope after the preliminary examination, so I must grin and bear it meantime'. This was followed by a long line of requests. He didn't write Becky again for five days. 'Up to this morning since Thursday I was working against time to get some statements ready for Lucas', words underlining his discipline even in jail. He was also writing business letters to his cousin Jack and Beatrice Marx. He was fairly optimistic. 'I am not going to worry yet about what is to become of you and Arthur', he promised Becky. 'In fact, we feel cheerful, only we have to lie in the dark about 4 or 5 hours longer than I can sleep, and then one's thoughts get a nuisance sometimes'.<sup>16</sup>

Fortuitously, on 18 July Luke Messina changed his statement under cross examination, admitting that he did not even know Sidney – he was later arrested and charged with perjury. With due acknowledgment that the accused had been denied bail on the basis of Luke Messina's affidavit, bail was now granted. Sidney resumed his various activities, waiting for the case to proceed. By August Sidney and Becky had moved to 132 Regent Street in Bellevue East; it was far more convenient than the Bungalow, being served by two tram lines, one to Yeoville and another to Observatory. Finally, on 27 August the defendants were committed for trial.<sup>17</sup>

Sidney became infamous as a result of his imprisonment. This became apparent on a trip to Lidgettton at the end of August. 'I have had people in the train staring and talking loud at me as I pass their compartments,' Sidney wrote to Becky on 31 August. 'What a thing to be notorious.' Moreover, the incident decisively soured relations with his relatives. 'Lidgett did not shake hands when I got out of the train,' he confided to his wife. 'I thought it was an accident ... Then he poured out all his story beginning from when we were there last, and I began to consider whether I would go back to the station.' But hoping to discuss the family venture, he advised Jack 'to avoid ... controversial subjects'. They proceeded to the house, but undeterred, Jack erupted: 'Ah ya ... pacifism is not so bad, but tampering with the Kaffirs!' As Sidney acknowledged to Becky, 'it is going to make it very awkward for me to do business there in future.'<sup>18</sup>

After all, the estate employed African labour and the proportion of African workers to Indians would likely increase in the future. Over the past year an average of twenty-six Indian and eighteen African labourers had worked on the plantation. But Indians had been going back to India. Labour was 'rather scarce', Jack reported to the directors, 'but we have had no call yet for any increase of our numbers; when the call comes, we may have to offer further inducements to obtain all we want'. The plantation had been thriving, despite ongoing problems with bagworm and drought. They were growing wattle and gum trees, mealies and fruit and raising livestock. They had produced a total of 2,518 tons of wood, an average of 31½ tons per acre stripped, for £1,645.16 and had made a profit of about £107 on their plums alone. Plans for further mechanization were proceeding – they had surveyed for another tram route and were thinking about a sawing plant. If these developments went ahead, more labour might be needed.<sup>19</sup>

So Jack had plenty of worries as a result of Sidney's politics. Certain business matters had been in limbo during Sidney's imprisonment, he confided to Alfred. It was difficult if not impossible to obtain Sidney's signature for cheques while he was in prison; things would no doubt worsen if he were arrested in the future. Jack was therefore making arrangements with the bank to ensure that either his or Sidney's signature alone would suffice should one of them not be available. The outcome of the present case was not certain. Jack had not seen 'the evidence



which has been led against him so cannot say what the chances are of his acquittal'. He understood Alfred's advice 'about not letting family feelings be disturbed by political views', but he had to let him know 'that this action of Sidney's ... goes a long way further than what is ordinarily understood by "political views"'. Sidney 'knows nothing of any Kaffir language', Jack noted, 'and cannot therefore check what his interpreter says to his audience'. He had warned Sidney 'time after time merely to be told that I take these things too seriously', he concluded.<sup>20</sup>

Once Sidney arrived at Lidgetton, Mollie refused to see him. Presumably, 'it is the arrest that has made the offence so serious to her', Sidney speculated to Becky, adding that as he was going to bed, he heard Jack 'saying to her, evidently in answer to a question "what on earth the natives wanted, haven't they got all they could wish for" &c., – Oh, more wages I suppose, and there followed no doubt an expression of horror from white virtue in terror of being outraged by a native Socialist.' Nor seemingly did Jack's sister Frances, who had come out from England for a visit, make any effort to see Sidney, although she planned to call on Becky and the children during his absence. Respectable whites were starting to avoid him.<sup>21</sup>

When the trial was finally held, Sidney used it to expound his views on socialism and violence. Revolutionary socialists were not concerned with 'instigating petty unorganised rabble strikes for a mere rise of pay', he told the court. 'We look to a single class conscious proletarian movement all over the world.' This need not entail violence. In England, 'it seems possible that the taking over will be peaceful', but this was 'doubtful' in the case of South Africa. Nowhere else was wage labour 'so unblushingly made compulsory by the immediate application of armed force to "subdue" the workers ... In militarised Germany or England, a Government would not dare to call out troops the moment a whisper of a strike went round.' The court proceedings attracted much public attention, which the socialists used to propagandistic advantage. 'This was the sort of occasion', thought Eddie Roux, 'in which Bunting delighted.'<sup>22</sup>

Ultimately, in light of Luke Messina's perjured testimony, the Attorney General declined to prosecute. But the experience did not leave Sidney unscathed. He had contracted rheumatism in jail and suffered from it for months after his release. In professional terms he had been injured, he reported in October to the Minister of Justice, 'both as a public man and more particularly in view of my position and practice as an Attorney, Notary and Conveyancer of many years standing and, I think, unimpeachable reputation in this Town. Logically or illogically, he explained, 'the fact of having been incarcerated, whether justly or unjustly, always entails a considerable loss in public esteem and respect'. His name had 'been brought into a certain amount of opprobrium both socially and in the Press of South Africa and of England where it is also well known'. His clients had suffered during his absence and 'still feel diffident about entrusting

their affairs to a solicitor liable at any time to be imprisoned on false charges'. He thus appealed to the Minister to award him damages, leaving the amount open 'to avoid the appearance of seeking to make a profit out of the occurrence'. His claim was unsuccessful.<sup>23</sup>

The next month, November 1918, brought an end to the Great War. The heavy hand of the censor was now a little lighter, and as editor, Sidney took advantage of this. Russian émigrés, hungry for news of their country, were showing a new interest in the ISL. At the same time, demobilized white workers, mainly English-speaking, returned from war, and trade union membership shot up. But white workers feared losing their jobs to cheaper black workers, and their racist attitudes were a continuing challenge for Sidney.<sup>24</sup>

He tried launching a discussion on the lessons that the Russian experience offered for South Africa. Neither black nor white workers had as yet attained class consciousness, he argued. 'This backward or unequal development in the proletariat makes the movement here more complicated than in a European country on the one hand or a purely Asiatic or native country on the other.' Socialists must form a 'bridge' between black and white workers, adapting their organization and propaganda to local conditions. As but one example, he pointed out, rural *pitsos* – assemblies or meetings – already provided the basis for organizing peasants and farm workers.<sup>25</sup> But there is little evidence that Sidney's arguments struck a chord amongst his comrades – let alone white workers.

At the end of the year, Sidney took Becky and Arthur for a holiday on the seashore.<sup>26</sup> They returned to Johannesburg in time for the ISL's annual conference in January 1919. The ISL remained tiny: thirty-nine delegates represented no more than a few hundred members, and two African delegates represented the IWA. The League recognized that Sidney, Hanscombe and Tinker, had 'borne the brunt of capitalist hatred for challenging its right ruthlessly to exploit the black man'. But one still heard downright racist attitudes in the ISL. Some delegates argued that 'little could be done with semi-savages'. Two IWA members 'repudiated the stigma of "savagery"', declared that a traveller was safer and less likely to starve in native territories than in big cities, and appealed to white workers to solve the problem by removing the "colour bar". Only after much debate did the conference decide that 'special attention' should be 'paid to the native workers'.<sup>27</sup>

Sidney used the paper to highlight these issues. But editing was exhausting, and he needed a rest, he confided to David Ivon Jones. It took 'a deuce of a time' to go through all the material he was receiving from overseas, and 'so much reading & skimming also deadens one for thinking or article writing'. He had 'had no ideas' for weeks. And he dreaded public speaking, as 'it takes such a lot of preparation. That is unhealthy', he told his friend, 'and the reason is the same staleness

you felt creeping on.' There was plenty of gossip to report, but he couldn't even remember that: 'memory going soft I fear!'<sup>28</sup>

In the meantime, with the war finally over, Jack was keen to move ahead with business plans for a bark extraction process with the Nance Company. In mid-February he wrote berating Sidney for dragging his feet on the matter. He and Sidney had been debating the relative merits of either a tanning or an extraction venture for years. Sidney, he felt, had 'perpetually vacillated [*sic*] between the rival claims of tanning and extract, generally with a bias in favour of tanning', whereas he had never wavered in his 'attitude that extract is the first and chief matter for which the L.L.Co. became interested in the Nance Co.' Sidney clearly had not studied the plans and did 'not apparently even superficially understand them'. Moreover, Sidney had been writing directly to the company directors in London about the matter, and Jack felt he was being undercut. He planned to ask the directors to clarify their spheres of activity.

Sidney retorted that Jack's animosity towards him was not due to business differences but to hostility over his political views. Jack adamantly denied this. Rather, he told Sidney, he objected to his 'method of "butting in" and writing singularly unfortunately worded letters to my co-Directors ... The effect has merely been to once again upset the Board just as I had managed to get them harmoniously working for a move.'<sup>29</sup> They signed their letters with their usual 'Affly', but their disagreements continued. Jack finally told Alfred in March: 'I have never known Sidney to acknowledge himself to be in the wrong about anything and I do not expect that he will in this case.'<sup>30</sup>

Johannesburg was in turmoil that March 1919. African protest was reaching a peak with strikes and pass burnings. The Native National Congress organized a passive resistance campaign against passes, during which both resisters and Congress leaders were arrested. Sidney was developing a reputation as one of the very few lawyers willing to defend Africans. He was busy with court appearances, but made little money from African clients, who were generally too poor to pay. The work carried risks. Leaving court one day at the end of March, 'he was set upon by a lunch-hour mob of whites' and frog-marched through the streets, 'carried face downwards by four ruffians, each of whom had hold of a limb'.<sup>31</sup>

White municipal workers in Johannesburg and Pretoria were also in a state of agitation. In Pretoria white tramway workers had gone on strike in February; their Johannesburg counterparts followed suit in March, along with power and building workers. Bill Andrews inspired the Johannesburg strikers to take control of the municipal services. The strikers formed a Board of Control and decided to operate the trams themselves; this became known as the 'Johannesburg Soviet'. At a meeting of the strikers' representatives and the Town Council, one of the councillors noted 'the considerable Native unrest in town' – a reference to the anti-pass campaign – and 'asked if the strikers were going to stand by

the community in the event of any Native trouble.' Several of the strikers' representatives assured him 'that they would stand by the Council in this particular matter'. On 1 April the Board of Control, chaired by James Bain, took over the City Council and began operating the city's tram, light and power systems; their demands were quickly met.<sup>32</sup>

Some of Sidney's comrades had played key roles in the strike. That did not dissuade him from writing a passionate commentary – aptly titled 'The White "Soviet" and the Red Herring'. African municipal workers far outnumbered whites. Why, therefore, did the Board of Control not include 'delegates of the Sanitary Boys whose demand for 1s. a day rise nearly a year ago ... has ever since been haughtily ignored by the whites?' A working-class movement that ignored white capital's exploitation of black labour scarcely deserved support, he chided. 'Ye fools and blind! Can you not see that by taking up this white against black red herring ... you are playing completely into Capitalism's hands.'<sup>33</sup> Heed 'the bitter cry of outcast labour', he appealed two weeks later – that exposé of London's poor that he had heard so much about as a child thirty-six years earlier, echoed in his ears.<sup>34</sup>

These months brought many personal pressures. Becky was ill in March and April; Johannesburg's altitude and climate did not suit her, and she frequently suffered from catarrh.<sup>35</sup> In April Sidney's aunt Elizabeth Lidgett died after seven months' illness. A few months later, on 11 July, his mother collapsed, struck down with illness.<sup>36</sup> In Sidney's heart, he may have mourned the loss of the aunt who had supported him and his cousin Jack in the launch of the Lidgetton Land Company, and he may have worried about his mother's health. But he had distanced himself from much of his past life and was by now as scathingly critical of his own past privileges as he was of the privileges of others. A sarcastic reference to Magdalen College in the *International* that August certainly bore witness to that. The college was hardly of concern to the paper's readers; Sidney was revealing his own feelings about the college that had once rejected him.<sup>37</sup>

He was also preoccupied with negotiations with Nance over the extraction plant. The past six months had been difficult at Lidgetton. The influenza epidemic of November 1918 had led to the death of eight Indians on the plantation, and work had stopped completely. Severe weather problems had restricted crop output. There had been an outbreak of East Coast fever in the area, meaning that cattle grazing was restricted, and they had started dipping the cattle every week. Shipping had not yet recovered from the disruptions of the war years. Along with the delay launching the extraction plant, these problems created stress between Sidney and Jack.<sup>38</sup>

Closer to home, socialist politics were in turmoil – the unity inspired by the war was fragmenting. Syndicalists from the Socialist Labour Party and the Industrial Workers of the World who had joined the ISL during the war had

recently formed an internal faction led by Andrew Dunbar and R. MacLean. This linked up with the Industrial Socialist League, a tiny Cape Town group that had split from the Social Democratic Federation the year before, in May 1918. The ISL was worried about a schism. Moreover, the ISL wanted to purchase a printing press; Sidney ran around trying to raise funds and had the headache of dealing with the printer. There was, however, a personal happiness – by August Becky was pregnant again.<sup>39</sup>

Sidney's mother, though, remained bedridden for several months. After Sir Percy's death she and her eldest daughter Evelyn had moved to a smaller house. They were now living at 9 Torrington Place, on the other side of Gower Street. Sidney's mother died there on 5 October 1919, her younger son Sheldon arriving from India just before she passed away. 'You would hardly know yourself when you next come to London – no Gordon Square, no Buntings at this house, no sisters at Caroline Place, no Hooles at Lastingham,' Evelyn wrote to Jack on 19 November. 'It all feels very strange ... We cousins begin writing to one another in a sort of new effort to hold together somehow ... Well, we must hold together as much as we can.'<sup>40</sup> But with family scattered across the empire, and as generations died and the world changed, holding together became increasingly difficult.

In December 1919 a strike of 400 black dock workers erupted in Cape Town. This had been organized by the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union (ICU) – launched in Cape Town that January – and the IWA, a few of whose members had moved down to Cape Town; eventually, the ICU absorbed the tiny Cape Town branch of the IWA. The black strikers were responding to the Cape Federation of Trades call for a boycott of shipments overseas – an attempt to force down food prices. But white workers failed to come out. As the strike continued into the new year, the *International* implored white workers to 'WAKE UP!' and aid the black workers' struggle. By the second week of January, however, white workers in the National Union of Railway and Harbour Servants were scabbing, and the strike collapsed.<sup>41</sup>

On the Rand labour unrest continued into the new year. The ISL held its annual conference on Sunday 4 January 1920 at West's Academy on Pritchard Street, near End Street, preceded by a social the evening before at Wanderers' Hall. Its members were full of revolutionary zeal. 'The instinct of the bourgeoisie shows that every general strike on the Rand brings us to the brink of Revolution,' argued the *International* of 6 January. But bourgeois democracy could never provide a solution in South Africa, where white workers faced the alternatives of either being 'driven back to helotage with the natives' or of advancing 'with the natives to freedom'. Without African freedom, any Rand Soviet 'will be a misfit, a freak, a coalition at best of farmers and artisans exploiting the native workers by police and military'.<sup>42</sup>

National elections were set for March 1920. The ISL decided to run four candidates on the Rand – Sidney, Bill Andrews, C. B. Tyler, H. Barendregt – and a comrade in Kimberley. Hoping to prevent further attrition of those critical of electoral politics, its aim was ‘to proclaim the Soviet OR INDUSTRIAL UNION principle AS THE ONLY HOPE OF THE WORKERS ... we do not hold out any great hope of gaining reformatory measures for the workers through Parliament.’<sup>43</sup> Sidney expanded on this theme. A new world was being born in the aftermath of the Great War. Its ‘first principle’ is ‘that the earth is the workers’; that ‘all men fit to work shall work and produce ... for the whole community of workers alike without respect of race, colour or creed’. Socialists elected to Parliament could function as critics but could not take part in a bourgeois government. However, a vote for the ISL was ‘a vote of censure on the capitalist system and a vote of confidence in the Socialist Revolution’. This was hardly an inducement for those seeking practical benefits from their vote. Nonetheless, with his campaigning in hand, he made a short trip to Lidgett on the end of January.<sup>44</sup>

On 17 February 1920 a strike of black mineworkers broke out and over the next week brought many mines to a standstill – at their peak, the strikers numbered about 71,000. The government swiftly retaliated, rounding up the leaders and forcing the striking men back to work at bayonet point.<sup>45</sup> At Sidney’s insistence, the ISL published a leaflet beseeching white workers, *Don’t Scab*. It was largely his work: ‘White Workers! Do you hear the new Army of Labour coming? ... The Native workers cannot rise without raising the whole standard of existence for all.’ But Sidney’s endless appeals to the conscience of white workers invariably fell on deaf ears.<sup>46</sup>

The election results were hardly surprising. The ISL election platform had offered nothing for prospective voters, and its candidates fared dismally. Jack Lidgett got his toes wet in politics that year, running unsuccessfully for the Dominion Party in the Natal Provincial Council elections.<sup>47</sup> But white workers, both English-speaking and Afrikaners, made their votes felt. The National Party’s seats increased from twenty-seven to forty-four; the Labour Party from four to twenty-one. The South African Party decreased its seats from fifty-four to forty-one, and the Unionists from thirty-nine to twenty-five.<sup>48</sup> Yet Sidney was not discouraged.

His and Becky’s second child, Brian Percy was born on 9 April. Sidney did not want to leave Becky just then, so Jack came up on the 23 April to discuss the extract venture. But Sidney was frenetically busy with politics, and he had built up quite a public profile. He even made the bioscopes, filmed addressing an audience on May Day 1920. ‘I had the pleasure ... of seeing you on a film last night haranguing a crowd on May Day in Johburg’, Jack commented dryly after his return to Lidgett.<sup>49</sup>

The estate had recovered after the previous year's calamities. The war-time shipping restrictions had finally been lifted, prices were 'moderately good' and by all indications the extraction factory would finally be up and running by November 1920. Labour, of course, was a perennial source of uncertainty. 'In common with all other classes,' Jack informed the directors in September 1920, 'Indian and Native labourers have pressed for higher wages and larger rations of food'. The government was trying to induce Indians to return to India with the offer of free passage and a £25 bonus. Under the indenture system, Indian labourers had been paid no more than tenpence per day; now free Indians were getting £2.7.6 per month, and African labourers, £1 per month.<sup>50</sup>

But Sidney was less and less concerned with the affairs at Lidgetton. His attention was on developments overseas. In early March 1919 a group of international socialists had assembled in Moscow at the request of Vladimir Lenin, Leon Trotsky and other revolutionaries to form a Third International – known as the Communist International or Comintern. They believed that capitalism was in a state of collapse and that an organized body of international revolutionaries would facilitate the seizure of power by working classes around the world. The Comintern, whose Executive Committee (ECCI) reflected the disproportionate influence of the Russian Communist Party, would direct this process.<sup>51</sup>

The Comintern's Second Congress had taken place in Moscow and Petrograd in July–August 1920. The congress delegates had drawn up a list of conditions for admission to the Comintern – twenty-one points in all. The points were premised on the idea that class struggle in Europe and America was approaching civil war – an assumption by then already outdated by international developments. All national sections were to adhere to the Comintern's policies; within national sections, factions were to be subordinated to the Central Committee. Organizational practice was to be based on democratic centralism, which meant that the party centre was to have 'complete power, authority and ample rights'. Social democratic and social pacifist principles were to be replaced with Communist ones. Reformists and centrists were to be removed from leadership posts in all labour organizations and replaced with Communists, even at the costs of replacing experienced with inexperienced personnel. The twenty-one points were the subject of intense scrutiny by socialists worldwide.<sup>52</sup>

The ISL and the Industrial Socialist League were both keen to affiliate. The Comintern recognized only one party from each country, but as the two South African groups frequently worked together, the idea of unity was not anathema. The Industrial Socialist League merged in October 1920 with members of the Social Democratic Federation and the tiny Communist League to form the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA); Andrew Dunbar led its Johannesburg branch. Endorsing the organization of all workers regardless of colour, it opposed electoral politics as shallow reformism.<sup>53</sup>

Did the unity efforts turn Sidney's thoughts back to the many discussions of Protestant unity during that summer of 1892 at Grindelwald and to his father's hopes for that project? Perhaps. He certainly was one of the main instigators of the unity efforts in Johannesburg, pushing for the inclusion of all workers regardless of colour. In late October 1920 he published an article entitled 'Socialist Unity – What About?' that argued for the need to include black workers. A month later, the ISL invited other socialist groups and individuals to attend its January 1921 annual conference in order to discuss unity prospects.<sup>54</sup>

Sidney put forward two papers at the conference, one entitled 'The ISL and the Coloured and Native Workers' and the other on 'Socialism and the Dutch Nationalist Movement in South Africa'. His first paper called for support for black 'bourgeois democratic liberation movements' and proposed a council of black and white workers that would work to improve conditions for black workers on the basis of an eight-point programme. After furious debate, this was unanimously adopted. Following a similar logic, his second paper proposed qualified support for Afrikaner nationalism because of its opposition to British imperialism. The socialist movement should aim 'to enlighten the disinherited among the Dutch people in town and country on the false position they occupy as Nationalists and Republicans, and on their only true salvation, the Socialist Republic or International Commonwealth of all workers'. This proposal, however, was rejected.<sup>55</sup>

By the time the conference ended, the delegates had adopted the ISL's statement on socialist unity and formed a Unity Committee. This organized a conference on 27 March, Easter Sunday, that drew socialists from around the country. The twenty-one points were adopted with minor qualifications. But not all socialists agreed. The Durban Social Democratic Party argued that the twenty-one points would lead to 'suspicion, distrust, strife, and the stifling of all personal generosity', while Dunbar's CPSA opposed the Comintern's emphasis on political action and refused to attend the Easter conference.<sup>56</sup>

The 24 May 1921 – 'Empire Day' – saw yet another example of the wanton brutality of the South African state. That day government troops gunned down about 400 Africans at Bulhoek, a densely populated location in the Whittlesea District of the Eastern Cape, an area where Africans had long suffered from land hunger due to colonial policies. They were all members of the Church of God and Saints of Christ at Mlungisi, an African location near Queenstown. Due to the intense pressure on land available to Africans at Queenstown, the Israelites, as they called themselves, had decided to occupy common land at Bulhoek and refused to move when ordered by state authorities. Their leader, Enoch Mgijima, claimed that the land was 'God's ground'.<sup>57</sup>

When news of the massacre reached Cape Town, the Social Democratic Federation held numerous protest meetings and drew up a leaflet that began:



'MURDER! MURDER!! MURDER!!! THE BULLHOEK MASSACRE. Christians Slaughter Their Christian Brethren.' It accused the 'Government, whose forces are headed by a brutal assassin, of murdering unarmed strikers in Johannesburg, 1913, slaughtering unarmed Natives in Port Elizabeth, 1920' and now, 'the gruesome mutilation of hundreds of Natives who were Christians and a passive community'. This was reprinted in the *Cape Times* of 28 June, a propaganda coup for the Social Democratic Federation. But four members, including Wilfred Harrison, were arrested. The case was still pending when the CPSA (Section of the Communist International) was finally launched.<sup>58</sup>

This took place, after almost a year of discussion involving more than ten groups, at the end of July 1921. The foundation conference was held at 20 Plein Street in Cape Town from 30 July to 1 August. Sidney was part of the ISL delegation to the conference; Becky stayed home with the two little boys. They just missed each other at the train station as he departed. Sidney was sharing a compartment with four of his comrades, and on the train he wrote to tell her that he missed her for he was 'sure there will be lot of things you will say the Congress should have done and forgot to do' – Becky always made her views felt; 'it is rather a case of "What every woman knows", he teased – a literary allusion to J. M. Barrie's play. It was a jolly trip, and they ate a lot. He was reading F. Anstey's book, *Red Europe*, but not making much progress; 'I daren't trot out Marx' Capital!' He missed the boys, but supposed they wouldn't miss him – he was so often away in the evenings even when he wasn't travelling.<sup>59</sup>

Sidney wrote to Becky again the next day. His comrades were 'all wanting to go to a first rate hotel – for fear of not getting the best food I suppose: food is an immense factor with us, it seems & yet we haven't nearly finished our stores, and I shall have to eat mine up on the return journey'. But they ended up at 'a very poor set of rooms' arranged by the Cape Town comrades. They were eating at a 'Greek Shop' run by a local comrade, and their hair was being cut by yet another comrade. He was not impressed with his Cape Town counterparts – they couldn't even organize a good social. 'And how they quarrel.' Sidney was particularly irritated with the generational conflict – 'young boys full of words and abuse, kicking out Harrison', who was 50, two years older than Sidney. The younger comrades were trying – unsuccessfully – to prevent Harrison from being a delegate, even though he 'has more grit and pluck than all of them', Sidney thought. 'I got a very bad impression of some of them.' He also met with the lawyers on the Bulhoek case. Sidney had advised the local socialists to obtain the services of Advocate Morris Alexander. Although they didn't say so, he told Becky, 'they think ... I rather interfered in it, especially in advising Alexander: they prefer another advocate'. In any case, he speculated, the case might well be dropped.<sup>60</sup>

The conference began on 30 July. There was 'a lot of jealousy and suspicion from some of the Cape delegates; but not from all', Sidney recounted to his wife, 'and we have so far got them to agree to most of the main points'. The public launch took place the next evening, Friday, at the Town Hall. It was packed, with over 2,000 in the audience; the atmosphere was a complete change from their Johannesburg meetings. For all Sidney's criticisms of the Cape Town socialists, he found it a real relief to speak 'without that dread of mentioning any matters of colour' to a receptive audience. 'Whites, coloureds, Malays, natives all sitting alongside each other and talking to each other and joining in cheering Communism', he described the scene to Becky. 'The majority were not white, and the orthodox Labour and Trade Union element ... were conspicuously absent.' Nonetheless, Sidney picked up 'a sense of the instability of that class of audience: they cheer us today, and Smuts tomorrow'. The Cape Town left was strong on propaganda. They had a tradition of open-air meetings and a number of good speakers. Nonetheless, Harrison admitted to Sidney, they produced 'few converts'.

Sidney was one of the speakers. Public speaking was still not his forté, but he felt things went 'pretty well', he told Becky. Harrison spoke 'quite amusingly and suitably', while Andrews was 'sound but not up to form – perhaps the coloured audience put him off', Sidney could not help sniping. Harrison, for his part, thought Sidney 'long-winded' and 'monotone'. 'The gallery crowd there did not seem to appreciate Bunting's heights of Communist ideology', he recalled. Some of the comrades sent Harrison notes urging him to liven things. This he did; his own jokes, he remembered, were 'loudly appreciated'. However, he added, 'Bunting's dialectics of Marxian Communism, as a ways and means of changing those conditions, sent them to sleep'.<sup>61</sup>

It was a successful conference, and Sidney went back to Johannesburg the next morning. The new CPSA was to be headquartered in Johannesburg; Tyler was the chair, Andrews, the secretary-editor and Sidney the treasurer; Becky was on the executive. The conference delegates had represented no more than 175 members out of a country of seven million. The twenty-one points still worried a minority of delegates, but the majority felt immeasurably strengthened by their affiliation with the Comintern. The unified party was seen as a precondition for promoting the solidarity of the working class across colour lines.<sup>62</sup> This was a view that Sidney held close to his heart.

But white workers rejected this view, and in January 1922, only six months after its launch, the CPSA's professed belief in the equality of black and white workers was put to the test. That month white mineworkers went on strike over an issue that had been, for them, an ongoing problem for close to two decades.<sup>63</sup> During gold mining's early years white mine workers who had arrived in the country as experienced craft workers from overseas enjoyed a monopoly

of skilled work in the mines; black workers performed heavy labour classified as unskilled. But industrial developments on the mines led to deskilling. From 1907 higher-priced English-speaking craft workers were replaced by cheaper, unskilled Afrikaners, who defended their new access to training and skilled work on the grounds of colour. Over the next decade the Chamber of Mines periodically tried to lower labour costs by replacing whites with cheaper black labour. However, in 1918 it conceded a Status Quo Agreement that protected white workers in specified jobs from replacement by black workers. But the gold mining industry was hard hit by the global recession that followed the post-war inflationary boom. Between 1920 and 1922 the premium gold price dropped significantly. As the recession deepened, the Chamber of Mines decided to abrogate the Status Quo Agreement, restructure underground work and cut the wages and the numbers of white workers.

White trade union leaders saw these developments as a prelude to either driving down white wages to the level of black workers or eliminating higher paid white workers from the mines altogether.<sup>64</sup> The South African Industrial Federation and the South African Mine Workers' Union sought to 'protect the White race', 'maintain a White standard of living', and 'preserve White South Africa'.<sup>65</sup> At demonstrations on the Rand white workers and their wives carried a banner proclaiming: 'Workers of the World Fight and Unite for a White S.A.'<sup>66</sup>

The dispute accelerated; in some areas of the Rand coal miners, electrical power workers and those in allied industries stopped work. A Central Strike Committee coordinated all the local strike committees and was, ostensibly, answerable to the Augmented Executive. A Council of Action began functioning on 10 January. This was led by miners expelled from the Mine Workers' Union for unauthorized strike activities, including Harry Spendiff, Percy Fisher and Ernest Shaw; later, Bill Andrews joined. About two weeks after the strike broke out, commandos began emerging in villages and towns across the Rand. Commandos had been used by rural Afrikaners during the South African War, and now they were adapted for use in an industrial setting where Afrikaner workers formed at least half the white workers on the mines; indeed, possibly most of the commando members were Afrikaner. But the commandos also reflected the experiences of strikers who had served in the First World War, which may have been just as important as the Boer traditions, if not more so.<sup>67</sup>

The CPSA sought to distance itself from the strike's racist overtones but backed the efforts of white mine workers to retain their wage levels; Communists could hardly ask the strikers to accept lower wages. The Party allowed the Council of Action to set up headquarters in its own office, but it was well aware that white workers might try to scapegoat blacks and urged whites to refrain from such violence. Bill Andrews, the Party's secretary, was a popular orator during the strike. 'The white miners are perfectly justified in fighting to keep up the

numbers and pay of holders of blasting certificates,' he claimed. 'They would get native support ... if they also insisted on higher pay and better treatment of the blacks.'<sup>68</sup> In practice, though, Andrews did not dwell on white workers' treatment of blacks.

Sidney was never invited to speak. He was too concerned with the moral dilemma posed by the strike's racist assumptions. It was in the Party press rather than on the podium that he gave free reign to his views. 'Like a gruff bear,' Eddie Roux recalled, 'he would go about among the crowds, mumbling his criticisms to those who cared to listen, and always with a bundle of *Internationals* under his arm.' He rode around Johannesburg on his Douglas motor cycle relaying messages from different groups of strikers.<sup>69</sup>

'Your strike seems to drag along,' Jack wrote to Sidney on 20 January, 'but the papers say a settlement is in sight. We cannot get any orders for props from anyone till it is over and then there won't be a rush.'<sup>70</sup> The next day Jack wrote to his son Geoff, who, following the family's Methodist tradition, was at the Leys School. 'The big strike of gold and coal miners ... means the loss of about a million pounds every week when all the wages and gold not won are reckoned up. They are very stupid ... Things are very bad out here, and there is very little business doing at all. We keep busy with bark and firewood, but the strike has stopped all orders for mine props.'<sup>71</sup>

Once again, Sidney appealed to the reason of white workers. "'White South Africa', or "the maintenance of the colour bar", has ... been accepted by the white workers as the prime "motif" in this strike,' he wrote on 27 January. The fight for the colour bar was at best 'a rearguard action,' he warned. 'The people who do the work of a country eventually inherit it.'<sup>72</sup> A few days later a CPSA manifesto argued that 'without necessarily identifying itself with every slogan heard in the strike,' it nonetheless supported the strike as 'a fight against the rule of the capitalist class'. But, it cautioned: 'To maintain the "white standard" to build a "white South Africa", is impossible under capitalism, whose nature is to degrade every class it employs'. The only way to fight capitalism, the manifesto exhorted, was through the solidarity of all workers.<sup>73</sup>

By late February Jack was certain that the strike would 'soon be given up'. Many of the strikers had already returned to work, he wrote to his son. 'All they have done is to lose six weeks' wages and blow off a lot of hot air.' But things did not calm down. On 27 February a demonstration in support of imprisoned strikers at Boksburg was met with bayonets and bullets; the strikers now had martyrs.<sup>74</sup>

The 6 March marked a turning point. Reflecting mounting popular anger at the mine owners' intransigence and the government's use of force, the Augmented Executive called for a general strike. In Johannesburg some of the strikers and their sympathizers, women prominent amongst them, launched an open revolt

and seized the city's post office and power station. They met with fierce resistance from the police. An insurrection was beginning. On 7–8 March violent attacks on blacks took place in certain areas of Johannesburg and in Germiston, on the east Rand.<sup>75</sup> But for all the mounting tension on the Rand, in other parts of the country, the call for a general strike failed to generate support. In Durban, a few hundred workers struck; in Cape Town there was no response at all.<sup>76</sup>

On 10 March, the revolt began, its launch signalled in one area after another by dispatch riders.<sup>77</sup> The government called in the Union Defence Force and air force artillery and proclaimed Martial Law, imprisoning about 1,500 strikers. Fighting ensued throughout the week. Socialists went underground; the *International* ceased publication. The state began a military campaign, using bombs, tanks and machine guns against the civilian population in the working class areas where white miners lived. The heaviest battles took place at Fordsburg, where government planes rained leaflets warning the population to evacuate the area prior to the artillery bombardment scheduled the next day. The strikers' stronghold at Fordsburg fell on 14 March. Spendiff and Fisher were based there and committed suicide just before troops stormed the area.<sup>78</sup>

Sidney was arrested on Sunday 12 March.<sup>79</sup> 'F' – a typist in the CPSA office – arrived at Sidney's house just in time to see the detectives take him away. Ralph and Ada Rabb – friends of the Buntings – had been arrested distributing leaflets the previous evening. Other arrests followed. 'The past week seems like seven years, not *days* – a tragedy for each day', wrote F. to David Ivon Jones, who had left South Africa in November 1920, making his way to Moscow in mid-1921. On Friday 10 March, shortly after martial law was declared, F. recounted, 'a large posse of mounted police surrounded the Trades Hall. The detectives poured into our office arresting all that were there but myself, – Comrades Andrews, G. Mason + Ernest Shaw; when they took them away, I had to look on while they ransacked the office. This time seemed the signal for all the shooting that went on continually for five days throughout the town – aeroplanes, bombs, machine + Lewis guns.' When F. returned to the office he found 'the Printing Press ... wrecked, parts removed, the motor smashed, + type scattered'.<sup>80</sup> Six-year-old Joseph Glazer watched the police arrest his father Henry, who worked with Sidney at the CPSA office. The police entered their house in Doornfontein and 'turned everything upside down, looking for communist leaflets and books, anything that had to do with communism'. One policeman tore a picture of a sickle and hammer off the wall and smashed it over his father's head.<sup>81</sup>

Jack had not heard from Sidney in two weeks. 'The strike in Johannesburg has now developed into an attempt at revolution', he wrote to his son on 13 March. He had no sympathy at all for the strikers. 'Last week the commandoes of strikers started interfering with ordinary people, ordering stores to be closed and bakers to make no bread etc., and the Government sent troops and extra police

up to keep order. On them the strikers opened fire, and also on a lot of inoffensive natives.' Over the weekend fighting had erupted 'all along the mines', and the government responded in turn. 'Aeroplanes are bombing and using machine guns on the revolutionaries. Of course there will only be one end to it,' Jack was convinced. 'Government will win when the rioters get tired of being killed. We hear that numbers of those known or suspected to be concerned in the matter have been arrested, and we all wonder where a certain relative of ours is.'<sup>82</sup> Several days later, on the 16 March, the Augmented Executive called off the strike.<sup>83</sup>

'Dearest Girl', Sidney wrote to Becky from prison on 17 March. 'I have got the basket with socks, chocolates, etc. also paper and envelopes, and want the greatest luxury more than ever – *to see you*.' His personal effects – toothbrush, spectacles, pyjamas, and pipe – had been taken from him at Police Headquarters, and he had not yet been allowed to see either his wife or his attorney, Advocate Lucas. He needed some Thermogen wool, cotton wool, nail scissors, toilet paper, sugar, postage stamps, and a needle and thread, he told Becky.<sup>84</sup> She had been 'ill with anxiety', but two days later, on Sunday, she was allowed to see him. Sidney wrote to her the next day reminding her to pay the household accounts. Most of the food she sent had arrived, he told her, 'but not the sweets'. 'However, we are not starving for food, but only for our homes.' On the next visit Becky came with little Arthur, who was then four and quite taken with soldiers' guns. Sidney's absence from his home did not last too long. He was released without charge after two weeks.<sup>85</sup>

Martial law lasted until late May. During that period Sidney wrote an analysis of the strike that the CPSA published as a pamphlet entitled *Red Revolt*. This revolt, he argued, 'was not the proletarian revolution: at the most it was only a prelude, or rather a preliminary study'. It raised two tactical questions: firstly, whether strikes could ever succeed in conditions where the state habitually resorted to armed force; secondly, whether strikers could ever surmount capital's use of force and the ideological resources that enabled it to divide workers. Sidney saw little solidarity between English and Afrikaner workers, despite their common interests against black competition. Ten years earlier, friction between English and Afrikaners had been his greatest worry. Now, he was convinced, the greatest obstacle in the fight against capitalism was discord across the colour line.<sup>86</sup>

The strike deepened the polarization of black and white workers. Thousands of black miners lost their jobs during the strike, sent back to the reserves by the Chamber of Mines. Racial attacks on those who remained in the compounds and on blacks living in towns fuelled black anger. In Cape Town, when white trade unionists canvassed in support of the strike, the ICU and other black organizations condemned the 'White South Africa' agenda, demanding the abolition of the colour bar and government protection of blacks. At an ICU meeting,

a CPSA resolution to support the strike was defeated.<sup>87</sup> Overall, about 230 to 250 people died during the strike, about thirty of whom were black. More than 1,000 people were injured. Close to 5,000 people were arrested, forty-six were charged with murder, and of these, eighteen were sentenced to death and four, executed.<sup>88</sup>

In Moscow, Jones had followed the Rand Revolt from afar. He wondered whether it was ‘the last revolt of a non-revolutionary white working class driven to arms by the very insecurity of their economic position’. Perhaps, he speculated, ‘the conditions for a Communist Party based on white militants have disappeared’. If so, ‘the Comintern will henceforth have to take over the direct responsibility for the native masses.’<sup>89</sup> Sidney, still thinking through the strike’s implications, was working on the defence of those arrested during the strike. But he was also preoccupied with other matters – most definitely not business, though; he had not been down to Lidgetton in well over a year. In February the CPSA had appointed two delegates to attend the Fourth Comintern Congress in Moscow: Sidney was to represent the Johannesburg branch, and Wilfred Harrison, the Cape Town branch. Sidney planned to take the family with him, and there was much to be done before their departure.

## 10 FIGHTING AGAINST EMPIRE

In anticipation of their long trip abroad, Sidney and Becky gave up their seats on the Party's central executive committee and let their house on Regent Street. The family sailed for England in June 1922. Brian had just turned two in April, and Arthur, who boarded the ship carrying an improvised red flag to the consternation of some passengers, was almost five. The parents had their hands full.

Visually London had altered little since Sidney's last visit, although the last horse-drawn tram had ceased service in 1911, and there were more motor buses and cars carrying the middle class from the inner districts to the suburbs. London of 1922 was the capital not only of a victorious nation but of an empire since 1919 at its greatest geographical extent. Political life was changing. The Nonconformist conscience that Sidney's parents had served was in decline, along with a divided Liberal Party. There was an establishment desire to go back to 1914 and re-establish old certainties. But Labour was advancing in trade union strength, in local government and in confidence, even though the peak of post-war industrial militancy had passed. The massive expansion of the franchise posed a big challenge for politicians of older parties.

Sidney and Becky settled the boys in with Sidney's sister Evelyn on Torrington Place. There was no question that his sisters would not welcome the family, especially the children, even if they looked askance at Sidney's political activities and his marriage to a Russian Jewess. News of his politics had even reached Canada, where his cousin Frank Hoole was living in Vancouver. 'I met a man last week, a very decent Englishman who had lived out in Johannesburg for some years,' Hoole had written to his mother Judith in Essex the year before. 'I asked him if he had ever met Sid Bunting. He looked very hard at me and said he had. I told him he was my cousin, and was I understood a great labour man out there. He said that he was doing a fearful lot of harm among the natives, and that he was a crank with very curious opinions.'<sup>1</sup>

Sidney was ever on the margins, casting a sceptical eye at social pretensions and hypocrisy. 'Bloomsbury is alive with members of the subject races of India and Africa learning to be Western, i.e., bourgeois, even if anti-British, and parading with English lady companions to show how civilised they have become,'



Sidney wrote sarcastically to Eddie Roux. By now Eddie Roux was a committed socialist who the previous year had helped found the Young Communist League. He had just started studying botany and zoology at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) that March. He and Sidney got along quite well despite their age difference and kept in regular touch.

Neither did Sidney find much revolutionary spirit in the Labour Party, he told Roux, even though Tom Mann, by then a Communist, assured him that class consciousness was growing.<sup>2</sup> In the meantime, the Buntings were informed that the Party would be allowed one delegate only. However, Sidney learned that Zinoviev had requested his presence, and the Buntings prepared for their journey across Europe, even though the congress dates had not yet been finalized.<sup>3</sup> Ironically, that very same summer Sidney's cousin Maurice Amos was in the Tyrol mountains, taking a break from his post as judicial advisor to the government of Egypt. But the two cousins – both empire men – had travelled different roads and had long since lost touch.<sup>4</sup>

When Sidney and Becky set off, Evelyn took Arthur and Brian down to Cowes on the Isle of Wight to play at the seaside. They were joined by Sidney's younger sister Dora, who the previous year had started as assistant medical officer of health in Southampton. By early August Sidney and Becky had reached Berlin, where they spent several weeks waiting for their visa. They sent the boys frequent postcards. 'Do you do everything that Auntie Levellin' and Nurse tell you, and whoop no more?' Sidney wrote to the boys teasingly on 2 August. 'They are all Germans here, even the children are Germans, but we don't fight them and they don't kick their mothers, I hope, nor will you ever again, when we come back, will you?'<sup>5</sup>

The post-war Weimar Republic formed in 1919 was marked by hope, modernization and frivolity. The *U-bahn*, launched in 1902, was undergoing another growth spurt. Horse-drawn carriages still roamed the streets, but the last horse-drawn bus had gone out of business two years earlier. Plans for Germany's first skyscraper were in the air; the City Hall had held an exhibition of skyscraper designs that March. But there were portents that things were slowly falling apart. The Communists Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht had been assassinated in 1919; the Jewish foreign minister Walther Rathenau, recently back from a trade mission to Moscow, was murdered on 24 June 1922 by two right-wing army officers. Wilfred Harrison arrived shortly after Rathenau's assassination. The left was aflame, and mass demonstrations were being held in the *Lustgarten*, off *Unter den Linden*.<sup>6</sup>

Sidney and Becky met up with Harrison. There was much merry-making; the inflated German mark made the South Africans feel like millionaires. Sidney was enthralled to hear the Communist violinist Eduard Soermus and the Communist 'speaking chorus' chanting revolutionary poems in unison. He and

Harrison made frequent visits to the offices of the local Communist Party at *Rottenstal Strasse* and to its newspaper, *Rote Fabne*. Despite the government's harassment of Communists, the German Party seemed to be thriving, if the events they attended were any indication: 'What is striking in all these meetings is the very outspoken revolutionary sentiments expressed and the immense fervour, conviction and enthusiasm, not to say violence ... What they call "sedition" or "incitement to violence" in South Africa is nothing to it!' But all in all, Sidney thought, Berlin had 'something of a fly-blown look about it, as if for the last few years it had had to subsist on its past glories'.<sup>7</sup>

Sidney sent the boys a postcard of the Reichstag with 'more kisses from Mummy & Daddy'. There was no lack of political lessons. 'There is one road through a park here where they have statues ... every few yards', Sidney wrote on 18 August, 'and such stupid looking fellows they are too ... kings and snobs and policemen and princes and detectives and soldiers. It's lucky for them they are all made of stone, so that noone [*sic*] can hurt them: and for the same reason none of them can hurt us.' To Eddie Roux, Sidney commented that 'the war to end war has really "abolished militarism", so far as obtrusive appearances go, in Berlin.' There were no doubt 'plenty of troops ready to suppress Communists', he presumed, 'but they must be kept behind the scenes.' There was 'no public rattle of the sword', and the old social divisions had to all appearances loosened. 'There is no swank worth mentioning in the Berliner now, not even among the bloods ... and the "upper ten" do not parade their "superiority", nor do "Hoi Polloi" acknowledge it at all as grossly as England; people of all conditions live in the same quarter, the same buildings even.'<sup>8</sup>

With the congress date still up in the air, Harrison went back to England to visit his family; when the date was finally set for 5 November – 5 December he was unable to get to Moscow.<sup>9</sup> Late in August the Buntings left Germany by train for Lithuania, where Becky had grown up. 'The police wake you up several times in the night to ask for our passes – we have to have passes, like the kitchen boy at home, wherever we want to go', Sidney wrote to the boys on the 27 August. 'When we went through Poland we had no pass, and he told us we must get out of the train and go back to Berlin, but he let us go on after all.' They passed through 'a lot of little countries, with policemen and soldiers searching our bags'. On the 30 August they reached Riga, in Latvia, 'full of soldiers again, aeroplanes, officers and policemen with guns', Becky thought, 'but not a single street light: they seem to depend for light on the moon.' She hoped the boys could come on their next trip to Russia, she wrote to Arthur, and that 'by then there will be no more of these soldiers but that there will be light everywhere'.<sup>10</sup> They reached Moscow in September, presumably staying at the Hotel Lux on Tverskaya Street, where the Comintern put up foreign visitors. As it turned out, David Ivon Jones was too ill to attend the congress and had gone to the Crimea to recuperate.<sup>11</sup>

From the Isle of Wight the boys went to Southampton to visit Dora, who was living with Jack Lidgett's two sisters, Hilda and Frances, and then back to London with Evelyn. Arthur started kindergarten that autumn at the Gordon Square School for Girls, which was 'for very small boys and for girls of all sizes' and had non-denominational prayers every morning. This was not far from Evelyn's flat, but he still had to thread his way back in the London fog.<sup>12</sup> 'These are rooms made for the Emperors of Russia, but there are no more Emperors now, and the workers hold meetings in the rooms instead,' Sidney wrote on a postcard of the ornately decorated Palais de Théremas. 'We shall be attending a lot of meetings in that palace in November.' And Becky wrote that 'Mommie and daddy are going to have photographs taken and we shall send them to you.' Would Brian recognize them, she wondered? 'You ask him who it is,' she told Arthur, 'and then write to me what he said. Kiss Brian for mommie and daddy.'<sup>13</sup>

A true believer when he arrived in Russia, the experience made Sidney even more committed. The economy had been devastated by civil war. Lenin had recently instituted the New Economic Policy to attract capital investment in Russian industry and to kick-start production. Sidney defended the policy. Russia's 'transitional economy' depended on reviving heavy industry through "proletarian state capitalism" (with the working class as its own owner-capitalist); he argued. The revival of trade was not in itself reactionary, while petty commodity production of corn or rice, although comprising 'the bulk of human production, is in general not so directly amenable to capitalist control: it is too scattered, and goes direct from hand to mouth'. For that reason, he speculated, agriculture would be the 'last form of production to be socialised'.<sup>14</sup>

He was amazed at the regime's popular support. One hundred thousand demonstrated at Red Square, he wrote to Roux after a mass rally in September, 'with scores of bands and countless banners'. How the freedom of Russian workers contrasted with the persecution of those in South Africa! 'To us ... this first Marxian step of proletarian political control, as the prerequisite of workers' control of industry, seems more ... far-reaching and wonderful than ever' – as were the cultural experiments like Moscow's conductor-less orchestra.<sup>15</sup> Some time later he wrote to his other comrades: 'Streets are swept clean of mud. Banners, with symbolical pictures in that curious art style ... bedeck the public buildings ... The newspapers come out with big special editions. At night the town is illuminated.' Another demonstration to commemorate the revolution. Mass demonstrations were 'Russia's forte', he acknowledged, 'but you can't manipulate the entire public like this; them at any rate you can't make cheer against their will'.<sup>16</sup>

Sidney occupied his time during the first month drafting a paper on the 'colonial' labour front, which he finished in late October. As the prospect of socialism receded in the industrialized world, the Comintern gave increasing attention to the 'national and colonial question', hoping that national liberation movements

would provide a means for the promotion of socialism in colonized areas of the world. It was now specifically concerned with the struggle for black liberation, which it saw as a challenge to imperialism.<sup>17</sup>

Sidney's paper attempted to apply the Comintern's united front policy to racially-divided societies like South Africa. Communists in such societies were confronted with the exclamation: 'What, would you make the natives equal to the whites?' Yet the fight for equality was necessary to promote cooperation and build solidarity against the common enemy. However, national liberation movements were 'stepping-stones at best,' as 'the only revolutionary movement of the subject races is the movement of their workers organised as workers.' It was as workers that blacks and whites 'find their point of contact as well as of repulsion.' Thus, the call for equal pay for equal work might act as a *modus vivendi* between them. He submitted several papers on this theme to the Anglo-American Secretariat, some of which were published in Comintern and Soviet periodicals.<sup>18</sup>

The congress opened on the 4, 5 and 6 November in Petrograd. From there delegates were conveyed in special trains to sessions in Moscow. But the atmosphere was pessimistic: international Communism was coming to terms with the dimming of revolutionary prospects across Europe and the failure of Communists and Social-Democrats to resolve their differences.<sup>19</sup> Sidney was disappointed. 'You in South Africa, with your huge funeral demonstrations of surging hate against bourgeois terror' – a reference to the funerals of those executed by the state in the wake of the Rand Revolt – 'have had more excitement than we in the Kremlin,' he wrote to his comrades back home. Perhaps it was "subjectively" piquant to hold proletarian congresses in the Tsarist halls of gilt and marble, but the Kremlin Palace was far from ideal. Its acoustics were poor, and even though at any one time two-thirds of the delegates had to rely on interpreters, the 'proceedings would have been more effective if even the other one-third could always have heard properly'. To make matters worse, those deemed less important, 'being accommodated towards the back, have been more or less out of earshot of the "tribune"'.<sup>20</sup>

Moreover, Lenin, the great revolution's great hero, was in poor health and rarely seen. On the one occasion that Lenin addressed the congress, he seemed very much in control, Sidney thought. His features retained 'their extreme mobility and vivacity,' and the 'impression he gave was that every word ... was true, correct, sound, neither exaggerated nor understated ... but something you could bank on.' Nonetheless, his 'non-appearance, except to make one speech ... had something of a subduing effect,' Sidney conceded.<sup>20</sup>

While Sidney was busy with his writing and his meetings, Becky, who had fled the Tsarist empire years before, was finding the trip to Russia profoundly unsettling. She fell ill, despite keeping a brave face for the children. 'It snows in Moscow now everyday,' she wrote to Arthur. The city was preparing for its annual

celebrations of the Russian Revolution. ‘They will have lots of demonstrations, with red flags and the soldiers will play the International on their drums and bugles’, she told him. ‘You know here the soldiers don’t shoot the workers as they do in Johannesburg, the workers here like the soldiers.’ To her chagrin, she was too ill to attend the congress and had to rely on Sidney for news, who was left feeling like ‘Orpheus without Eurydice.’<sup>21</sup>

The first snows in Moscow had already melted, the streets were a mess and Sidney ‘was running off to a meeting ... meetings all day.’<sup>22</sup> Hot on the agenda were ‘immediate demands’ and ‘united fronts’, issues that Sidney took to heart, struck by the reluctance of many of the delegates from other national sections to support the tactics. On 13 November he heard Lenin speak on ‘Five Years of the Russian Revolution’. He had hoped to meet Lenin and the rest of the ‘Big Six’ – Trotsky, Zinovieff, Bukharin, Radek and Losofsky – and regretted that they ‘never found time to discuss South African affairs either with me or without me’. But of course, the ‘delegates from countries with a bigger party and more immediate prospects are more important – Moscow soon takes the conceit out of a fellow!’

In fact, he praised the Comintern, the ‘army of attack’ that would unleash ‘the will of a victorious working class’. The days when socialists ‘welcomed party divisions as “healthy”’ were gone, he informed his comrades. Splits were ‘objectively unfounded ... The whole weight of the Congress is brought to bear on eliminating them more and more’, so that the Comintern can operate as ‘a single-minded executive body conducting the world campaign continuously, daily, on behalf of all its component parties’. The ‘Big Six’ constituted ‘political genius’, while many of the foreign delegates, ‘seemed of quite mediocre calibre ... making it easy to understand why the Communist Parties of the world are not merely content but well advised to “take orders from Moscow”, in other words to elect those great Russians to their Executive.’<sup>23</sup> Here was a staunch defender of the Comintern’s centralizing tendencies.

Because of Becky’s ill health they left Moscow on 30 November; Sidney missed the last week of the congress, but the CPSA’s alternate delegate, Jack Campbell, arrived in time to replace him. Before they left Russia, Sidney took Becky to a seaside resort in the Crimea, a Russian Brighton with a promenade overlooking the ocean, not far from Jones, hoping that a milder climate and change of scenery might help her.<sup>24</sup>

They arrived back in London on 14 December. Becky was too ill to sail to South Africa, and Sidney spent his time getting the family settled. They spent Christmas, complete with a Christmas tree, at Evelyn’s flat. It was the boys’ first Christmas in London, with its ‘lights in the toy-shop windows in Holborn and the dark winter evenings’. Their uncle Sheldon, home for the holidays from India, was staying nearby at the Russell Hotel; one bright blue morning Sidney

took the boys across Russell Square to meet him. Wilfred Harrison, still staying with his family near Guildford, in Surrey, came up to London to visit.<sup>25</sup>

On 1 January 1923, still at his sister's, Sidney wrote to the Comintern about the newly-adopted thesis on the 'Negro Question'. In light of his earlier adulation of the 'Big Six', it was an astonishingly frank letter from a man who thought for himself. The Comintern thesis laid down a universal policy, he argued, that was 'chiefly applicable to conditions in the northern United States'. The congress had rejected the separate organization of black workers 'as suggesting "Jim Crow" unions'. But in South Africa, where blacks and whites performed very different work, the separate organization of black workers might well be the best way to proceed. The ICU's call for 'One Big *Non-European* Workers' Union' expressed that view. The way to overcome white prejudice, Sidney suggested, 'is not ... to agitate for "raw Kaffirs" to join the Amalgamated Engineering Union, but rather to confront the whites with the spectacle of strong organisations of native workers, demanding equal pay for equal work ... and ... industrial unions to include both black and white workers, where both coexist'. For Sidney it was vitally important to work towards cooperation between black and white, 'instead of the present mutual repulsion'.<sup>26</sup>

He was surprisingly critical of the congress. It was not uncommon for a thesis to be accepted without delegates having seen a copy beforehand and without debate, he noted. The thesis might have been drawn up in disorderly meetings held without prior announcement and without proper minutes. '[I]n this irresponsible manner any ill-digested stuff may be jockeyed through the Commission, adopted by the Congress, and promulgated as Comintern law throughout the world', he chided; thereafter, 'it is a breach of discipline to ignore it'. The Comintern should ensure that 'meetings are properly convened, conducted and minuted'. The length of theses should be reduced, otherwise, the 'accumulated theses of the C.I. will soon become as voluminous as the statutes of a capitalist state like England, and you will require a special class of lawyers, learned in C.I. lore, to expound them'. The Comintern should also organize lectures and meetings for the conference delegates so that they would not 'become mere spongers and loafers at the Comintern's expense', hastening to add that he spoke for himself 'no less than others' and ending 'With cordial Communist greetings'.<sup>27</sup>

Still worried about his wife, later in January Sidney sent the boys to Doris in Southampton and rented a cottage for himself and Becky in Surrey. Because of its altitude and clean air, Surrey was seen at the time as a healthy environment not too far from London's damp. 'Here we are in a cottage, with fires indoors and rain outside', Sidney wrote to Arthur from Peaslake. Their mother, he added worryingly, 'seems worse than when she came from Russia. Perhaps you will come and see her on the way from Southampton'.<sup>28</sup> Harrison, living nearby, thought Becky had suffered a nervous breakdown.<sup>29</sup>

Despite his wife's poor health, Sidney made time to attend the weekly meetings of Guildford socialists with Harrison. On one occasion the noted socialist and feminist Sylvia Pankhurst addressed the meeting, attacking the Third International. Sidney was quick to challenge her for 'pushing her own little barrow' against the mighty Comintern, and he and Harrison won the audience to their side. In turn, they were asked to address a meeting; Sidney spoke about Russian developments, and Harrison, about South Africa. Notwithstanding these excursions, Sidney loyally nursed Becky. 'I am feeling better the last [*sic*] few days, and hope to be well soon', she wrote to Arthur, with 'lots of kisses'. By February she was on the mend, and they sailed for Cape Town. Harrison was on the same boat. Harrison already had quite a reputation, having been jailed for Communist activities in Cape Town, and he and Sidney were forced to endure the taunts of other passengers once it became known they were Communists. But Sidney's legal training and Oxford accent made him a formidable opponent in such encounters.<sup>30</sup>

Becky was still unwell when they arrived in Cape Town, though. Sidney busied himself settling the family into a cottage in Seapoint, hoping that the calm environment and seaside climate would be easier for her than the high energy and high altitude of Johannesburg. He, too, preferred Cape Town's tranquillity, but he was pulled back to Johannesburg, leaving Becky and the boys with the English nurse he had hired to help Becky. By 11 April he was in Johannesburg, already 'discussing things with Andrews, Glass, Mason &c and also Rabb and Wilfred'. Surprisingly, the family's finances were in a reasonable state: 'From one source or another', Sidney wrote to Becky, 'there is quite a little bit of money in the bank or to come in'. In fact, he was able to invest £760 at 12 per cent and even had a bit more that he could add!<sup>31</sup>

Jack was impatient for news of Sidney. 'I have no word from Sidney so I don't know whether he has landed at Capetown or not', he had written Alfred on 18 March. And on the 23 March he noted: 'Sidney. Where he is is a mystery. We hear that he sailed from England on the 15th February so that he must have arrived at Capetown by the 7th. March at latest and still I have no word of any kind from him, not even a post card telling me where to write.' But a Cape Town paper had reported that the local socialists had held a social evening in Sidney's honour and that he given a short talk on Russia. 'I suppose I shall hear from him sometime and need not worry till I do.'<sup>32</sup> For all the worries that Sidney's politics caused, he was still family.

In London Sidney had resigned as agent of the Lidgetton Land Company; he was no longer able to reconcile his Communist politics with his directorship of a plantation. He broke the news to Jack in early April. 'I had quite given up puzzling my head as to what could have become of you since your arrival in Capetown but your note to hand today makes it clear that you are still alive', Jack

replied.<sup>33</sup> The estate was doing adequately. Business had been hurt by the Rand Revolt – sales of wood poles had stopped for four months and demand remained low for many months thereafter. The venture with Nance had failed to pay, but they had ‘proved that vacuum extraction produces absolutely first-class extract’, and Jack was confident that ‘we can produce this more cheaply than any of our competitors.’ Nonetheless, production had improved after last year’s drought and bagworm, and they were going ahead with the construction of a new railway siding. Moreover, with Indian workers returning to India, Jack had started using Africans from the Eastern Cape on six-month contracts; ‘the experiment was a fair success’, he thought. ‘Things at present are far from cheering’, he had written to the directors a few months earlier, ‘but if the Nance Company can be reconstructed and get to work again we shall soon put our difficulties behind us.’<sup>34</sup>

Jack frankly did not understand Sidney’s decision to withdraw as director, but he was nonetheless full of well-intentioned counsel for his wayward cousin. ‘I wish it were possible for you to take my old advice and settle rather in a country dorp than in one of the large towns ... I feel that in the towns you will never live down your political reputation whereas in a dorp probably noone [*sic*] would bother about it.’ As long as Sidney remained in Johannesburg, Jack advised, ‘you cannot possibly make a clean cut away from your political past so I hope you will at once abandon the idea of going there.’ Cape Town would be difficult enough. ‘[I]f you must have town life what about Port Elizabeth?’, he asked Sidney. ‘Between there and Grahamstown I should think there should be a good legal living and certainly the latter place would keep you in touch with some of the best musical taste in the Union.’

Jack was nothing if not solicitous of Sidney’s needs. ‘I have often thought you might make good in Howick where there is only one solicitor worth employing as the other drinks like a fish and there is a very great amount of native work to be had which pays well if you get it.’ Sidney and Becky need not feel marooned in the countryside, Jack pointed out. They ‘could easily keep a two-seater Ford and run in and out of Maritzburg for musical and other show[s] in less than an hour’. But, Jack chided his cousin, ‘you are not likely to make a success of the legal business anywhere if you are going to keep in league with the Andrews and Ivor [*sic*] Jones party for ordinary people will not believe that you can do that and still be a good lawyer.’<sup>35</sup>

To which advice Sidney could only comment wryly to Becky, ‘Did you read Lidgett’s letter? Quite amusing, suggesting that we should settle in a dorp!’<sup>36</sup> And privately, Jack commented to Alfred that Sidney ‘sounds rather down in the mouth about Becky and I fancy she is pretty despondent about herself which does not help him. I suppose nothing but a town life would suit him’, Jack conceded, ‘tho’ I cannot help thinking that, if he is going to abandon extreme



politics, he would live down his past better if he took say five years in a country practice and then moved into town if he wished. We shall see what he does.<sup>37</sup>

Sidney did not really want to remain in Johannesburg. 'I am not any keener on staying in Johannesburg than I was before, though it is true that more is going on here', he confided to Becky on 14 April. Becky preferred Cape Town. But Sidney was drawn to Johannesburg's intensity, moving three times in the first month, finally settling at Becky's sister Annie's crowded house. When he could he ate with Becky's mother; he had developed a taste for her cuisine and for tea from a samovar. At night he would creep into Annie's house to avoid waking the children. 'I have something on – committees, meetings etc., – every night', he told his wife.<sup>38</sup>

He was busy organizing the CPSA's second congress and laying the ground for the Comintern's united front policy, which he wanted the congress to adopt. From Russia, David Ivon Jones signalled his support. In Cape Town, the radical tramway worker Manuel Lopes argued that a united front was necessary during a period of socialist retreat; Manny and his brother Francis, the sons of Portuguese Catholic immigrants, were well-known in the local socialist movement. But Wilfred Harrison felt that a united front with the reformist Labour Party would dilute the CPSA's revolutionary goals.<sup>39</sup> 'Let us drop the bigotry which dates from older days, when the Socialist movement was more of a debating society, and consequently bred splits', Sidney countered. The Comintern was 'an engine, a conquering force ... It should be our privilege', he added tactlessly, 'not to stand on a Capetown dunghill and crow that we know better, but to march in solidarity with it'. The *International* printed Harrison's rejoinder with the admonition: 'No further controversy on this subject will be printed ... Action, not debate, is the need of the moment'.

At stake was the CPSA's political direction. Central to this was the Party's stance on 'the colour question'. Black political leaders were still reeling from the Rand Revolt. The president of the African People's Organization, Dr Abdullah Abdurahman, had scathingly forecast that if whites 'persist in their insensate folly of repressing the African ... they will awaken the nationality of colour ... Then, just as the past witnessed a great scramble by Europeans for land in Africa, so the future will see a great white scuttle out of Africa.'

'Serious words,' wrote Sidney in response, 'and in the main, a correct forecast, even if flawed in logic. For "colour prejudice", like any other racial or national prejudice, is a factor only because it is exploited, worked up and inflamed by those interested to serve capitalist purposes.' But if white workers refuse to support black labour, he warned, there will indeed 'be a clash of black and white ... And if it should end in the fall of the master class', Sidney concluded starkly, 'they will go down with it'. Once again, he turned to the words he had heard

in his childhood: this time it was 'the bitter cry of outcast Africa' of which he wrote.<sup>40</sup>

After his long spell abroad Sidney was repelled by the racial attitudes he encountered, not only amongst white workers, but amongst white Communists. The differences over the matter were personified in the relationship and outlooks of Bill Andrews, the Party's secretary, and Sidney. Both born and raised in England, the two nonetheless came from very different social backgrounds. Andrews was a labour movement stalwart who had impressed Tom Mann as 'absolutely straight, a bit abrupt in manner, + perhaps soured a bit, but true as steel'.<sup>41</sup> But he was steeped in the white trade union movement. Indeed, most of the head office, Sidney sensed, seemed to feel that the Party should hang on to the white trade unionists no matter what.

In Moscow Sidney had nominated Andrews as a member of the ECCI. Andrews had not yet received official notification, and he was having difficulties getting a passport as a result of his arrest during the Rand Revolt. Sidney felt that his own decision to remain or not in Johannesburg hinged on whether or not Andrews left; certainly that must have been hard on Becky. 'There is as yet no fresh light on the situation as far as my future movements are concerned,' he wrote to her on 16 April. 'Andrews seems unable to say anything definite as to whether he wants a rest or not. If he does, I fear I am for it, and I must say I hope he will not drive me to that; I want to come to the Cape.'<sup>42</sup>

Sidney certainly did not feel comfortable at the Johannesburg office, where there was 'nothing like the cordial welcome of the Cape comrades'. It was clear by 19 April that his final decision rested on whether the Party wanted him to remain in Johannesburg. He was depressed, the Johannesburg climate did not suit him, and 'the office atmosphere is the same as ever, or rather worse ... I am praying that I shall not be wanted to remain here, for even if we had our home here again I would rather it were elsewhere', he wrote.

On the 21<sup>st</sup> he was more eager than ever to leave Johannesburg. The Cape Town comrades had been eager to hear his account of Moscow, but the Johannesburg Communists tried to ignore the matter. Sidney nonetheless insisted on reading his report to the central executive committee, but Andrews tabled it to avoid considering Sidney's recommendations. The head office wanted nothing to do with anything that did not speak directly to white labour, Sidney felt. Yet, although he found its vituperous atmosphere hard to bear, he felt a responsibility to the Party. 'I can't see things being left as they are, and must put up a fight against Andrews for a more liberal or proletarian policy, and if that means that he clear out I must be prepared to be asked to take his place.' Yet he actually wanted Andrews to stay so that he could leave. What did Becky think?<sup>43</sup>

The second congress, which took place on 28–9 April, was not as bad as Sidney had feared. Julius First was elected as chair, and Sidney as secretary-edi-

tor, despite his anxiety that Andrews and others had tried to marginalize him. Becky, still in Cape Town and in poor health, was not on the executive committee this time. Andrews, Sidney claimed, had threatened 'to quit the party if it became a party for blacks' and had tried to intimidate Sidney as 'the last of the negrophiles'.<sup>44</sup> The central executive committee's report to the congress side-stepped Sidney's report on Moscow.<sup>45</sup> Most of the committee's report dealt with the white trade unions and the Rand strike. Nonetheless, Sidney's campaign for the united front was vindicated; the congress endorsed the policy, although the debate on the CPSA's relationship with the Labour Party proved more controversial. The congress 'did some good', he reported to Becky. 'It decided to apply to the Labour Party for affiliation; I opposed but have no great objection.' The Labour Party was not a strong body, he felt, 'and to ally with it is rather a smack in the face for the natives and coloureds, who look on the Labour Party and especially the Trade Unionists as their worst enemies – at least their spokesmen say so'. But if the Labour Party accepted the Communists' bid for affiliation, the CPSA would aim to reform it.<sup>46</sup>

In the meantime, Sidney was organizing the May Day demonstration and preparing the music. But organized labour was still in a slump. The celebrations were likely to be 'a small affair', he wrote to Becky; 'the Trade Unions and Labour Party, who were to have taken part in the demonstration, have just backed out, lest they be defiled by contact with the Communists'. Moreover, he added, 'anti-native prejudice, so far from having weakened here, seems stronger than ever as the result of the strike'. He was very depressed and missed his wife. 'I am terribly widowed here, and want badly to talk to you', he let her know. There was one good discovery, though: the Young Communist League was flourishing.

Surprisingly, the May Day events were better than Sidney had hoped. 'The procession was fairly small, only 4 banners – the Miners, the BWIU [Building Workers Industrial Union], the Young Communists & ours'; the unemployed turn-out was disappointing. 'But the band helped things along ... they played the International after each resolution in quite Moscow style: I had scored it for them', he bragged to Becky, 'and it really sounded fine, and the public joined in'. They had two platforms, and several Labour Party officials actually turned up. The social was the big success: 'there were over 600 there, and the floor of the Hall was packed. Every item was encored, and the Jazz band led the International very effectively.' Even Sidney's long speech at Town Hall on May Day Eve – heralded in the *International* as 'Bunting's Great Speech' – was a success, although the press didn't turn up.<sup>47</sup>

It finally seemed that Bill Andrews was staying and that Sidney would join his family in the Cape. 'I presume he considers he has secured that the party shall not be a Black Party', Sidney could not help adding, sarcastically. 'So we are now committed to Capetown', he told Becky. Yet in his heart he felt 'a little

melancholy at leaving old scenes' and was ambivalent about the decision. 'I feel I am leaving the sphere of greatest activity in coming to Capetown: and I am oppressed by the feeling that the CE has gone rather reactionary on the colour question, and that I am as it were not wanted any more on that account; still we'll shake them up somehow at the coast.'<sup>48</sup>

Fate intervened through the hand of Moscow. The Comintern informed the Party that it was expecting Andrews at the forthcoming meeting of its enlarged executive. This threw Sidney's plans up in the air. 'I shall have to be at call I suppose in case plans should be changed again,' he informed Becky. 'It is very annoying, though I suppose those are right who say that Capetown is a sleepy hollow compared with Johannesburg, and that one should think many times before pulling up ones [*sic*] stake here ... I only want now to be decided.' Finally, on 6 May he told Becky he was staying. Andrews was going to Moscow; it had been decided that Sidney would replace him. 'I do not feel at all happy about it but suppose I must try what I can do. What I rather fear is that those who have (as I can feel) been got into the habit of running me down as a nigger crank will not work smoothly with me and may desert altogether.'<sup>49</sup>

Would Becky come up as soon as possible or remain in the Cape until September, when Sidney could hopefully join her after Andrews' return? No doubt lonely and frustrated with Sidney's wavering, she decided to come up. But moving was very stressful for her. In a letter to her friend Mrs Rabb, she 'broke loose,' and she fell out with the nurse. 'Make it up to Nurse ... You must remember that you are still nery, and tell her that she must remember it too, and make allowances,' Sidney advised. But to ease things, he went down to Cape Town to help the family pack, and they took the train up to Johannesburg, resettling in their old house on Regent Street. Aside from her Party activities, Becky looked after the children and managed the household: Arthur began primary school at Yeoville School, not too far from their home, but Brian, still a toddler, stayed home with his mother.<sup>50</sup>

News of the 1923 May Day events reached Jack in Natal. Sidney's political activities continued to embarrass him. To Alfred he sent a clipping that 'throws some light on the views which Sidney has brought back ... and shews [*sic*] that others are taking mote [*sic*] of his activities'. Sidney had finally written Jack of his decision to stay in Johannesburg in order to work for, as he put it, 'our party'. He seems to have 'very deliberately declined to avail himself of the break made by his trip home,' Jack thought, and 'decided to throw in his lot with the extremist [*sic*] crowd finally'. Sidney seemed oblivious to the effect of his decision on Becky's health. It was all so lamentable, Jack felt. He did not hesitate to speak his mind to Sidney. He was very sorry to hear about his decision to devote himself to 'extremist politics', he let him know. 'To my mind, it means the absolute waste of your life and all the specialised training which you received at considerable cost



Figure 4: Sidney, Brian, Becky and Arthur, c. early-1920s. Courtesy of Brian Bunting.

goes for nothing,' he admonished. 'However that is your concer[n] and one can only hope that it won't lead you into too much trouble.'<sup>51</sup>

Nor were the family in England happy about Sidney's political direction. After Sidney's resignation as agent, he had told Jack 'that the Board were not keen on his further concerning himself' with the estate. Jack asked the directors for confirmation. It was agreed that Sidney would no longer act as agent but that Jack would consult him as needed and pay professional fees.<sup>52</sup>

Sidney threw himself into full-time Party work, even spending weekends working at home on an old Smith-Corona typewriter. With Andrews' departure, Sidney had taken over as secretary and – once again – editor. He decided not to open a law office just yet – he had sufficient income from the estate. '[I]t is interesting to be occupied all your time on what you feel your heart in, that is the compensation,' he explained to Jack, 'as compared with the law which is a pure means of making bread and butter and not only does not interest me at all but usually disgusts me.'<sup>53</sup>

The Rand Revolt had convinced Sidney that racial animosity was the main obstacle to the overthrow of capitalism. In June 1923 he had applied for membership of the Johannesburg Joint Council of Europeans and Natives. Joint Councils of whites and Africans, as well as of whites, Coloureds and Indians had sprung up around the country in the early 1920s, offering a genteel forum in which blacks and whites could jointly discuss issues pertaining to social development, allowing educated blacks to express their views. Not surprisingly, given Sidney's notoriety, his application was rejected. But his attempt was further indication of his willingness to consider the 'colour question' and his open-mindedness compared to other white Communists – as well as his social ease in middle-class environments.<sup>54</sup>

Yet Sidney could be ambiguous about prospective black activists. The few educated Africans were quickly co-opted by the state or, as he phrased it, 'snapped up by the enemy'. When the Comintern asked the CPSA to suggest a few African delegates for Fifth Comintern Congress and for a Negro Conference that it was planning, Sidney claimed that they could not find anyone. 'Here, while I would not say they are all crooks,' he baldly began, they were 'so much under bourgeois influence, that I should not care to enter into any confidential arrangement with any of them, it would ... be reported to the police or to the agents of the Chamber of Mines, posing as parsons or friends of the natives or what not'.

Sidney explained that African workers, 'ignorant and half civilised ... unable to speak any but their native languages, are the most class conscious elements, but what can you do when it comes to getting a representative of them to travel through the world?' They tried organizing African workers, but 'they fall away quickly as soon as the police get wind of it'. The Party did not yet have 'any able and trustworthy native "missionaries" to do it among their compatriots'. But he

quickly added that ‘the best propaganda will be not by Communists as such, but a case in which in a strike of natives the white workers openly stand by them.’<sup>55</sup> Yet his own thinking could still fall into racial categories. When he wrote to Jack that same month – November 1923 – he inquired whether there was ‘a job for a white man running the engine etc? There are some really good men about now out of work here.’<sup>56</sup>

Life as a full-time Party activist was uncertain. Sidney was no longer interested in the estate’s operations and scarcely able to understand Jack’s technical reports. But he maintained a strong interest in the profits. ‘My only interest is coming to be in the divvy’, he wrote pointedly to Jack; ‘have you reason to expect a 5% or 10% dividend this year end?’ Sidney preferred the larger figure as his job in the Party did not ‘pay cost of living’. In fact, the estate was doing adequately. Indian workers were continuing to return to their mother country, and Jack was employing more African contract workers, but now from three different areas of the country. They had to be paid in advance so desertion was a real problem; Jack, for one, favoured revising the pass laws to address the problem. The bumper mealie crop that year made it hard to recruit African labour, but further mechanization on the farm offered a possibility of cutting labour costs.<sup>57</sup>

Sidney’s personal plans were up in the air until Andrews, for whom he had been standing in, came back from Moscow; he was still unsure about remaining in Johannesburg. Becky preferred Cape Town, and the climate suited her better. She had suffered a relapse since her return to Johannesburg. Not only had their nurse left them, much to their relief – Sidney thought her a ‘mischief maker’. But Becky’s sister had left her own two children in Becky’s care. She did not have the stamina for this, and it had led to a setback. Nonetheless, the children were delights. Arthur was ‘a voracious reader, also becoming a pianist’, Sidney wrote to Jack, while Brian was ‘very taking but very disobedient’. He could already tell that both boys were musically gifted. Sidney’s problem, so typical of middle-class parents despite his relatively modest income, was finding ‘a really musical teacher, they are so wooden for the most part’.<sup>58</sup>

Despite its hopes for a united front, the CPSA was cold-shouldered by the Labour Party. Earlier that year, in April 1923, the Labour Party had entered into an electoral pact with the National Party, both concerned to defeat Smuts’ South African Party – the ‘tool of “big finance”’. In July the CPSA learned that the Labour Party had overwhelmingly rejected its application for affiliation on the grounds that the CPSA’s alleged advocacy of violent revolution conflicted with the Labour Party’s evolutionary approach.<sup>59</sup>

The South African Party was hugely unpopular in the aftermath of the Rand Revolt. Memories of the Rand Revolt remained intense in 1924, and there was still much sympathy for those who had been caught up in the revolt. Many Johannesburg Communists, Labour supporters and trade unionists made an

annual pilgrimage to the outskirts of Rosettenville, where some of the strikers had been shot; Sidney used to take his own family.<sup>60</sup> After losing several by-elections, Smuts scheduled a general election for June 1924. With the ICU neutral and the African National Congress (ANC) – successor to the Native National Congress – calling for a change in government, the CPSA's prime concern was to defeat the South African Party. Notwithstanding its unease with the Labour–National alliance, it threw itself into the election campaign on behalf of the Pact candidates. 'Vote Pact', urged a CPSA manifesto, 'not for the sake of the "Pact" but ... as a step towards WORKERS' CONTROL OF THE WHOLE MEANS OF PRODUCTION and SELF-DETERMINATION IN A WORKERS' REPUBLIC!' Bill Andrews had returned in February 1924. He campaigned for the Pact, vainly trying to convince the Labour Party not to enter the Cabinet.<sup>61</sup>

Sidney finally made up his mind to remain in Johannesburg – ending months of indecision. He opened a law practice in mid-1924, this time at 42–3 Asher's Buildings at the corner of Fox and Joubert Streets; he could not live indefinitely on his dividend without working. Jack reproached him: it was 'a pity you did not decide on your return from England to cut Johannesburg out and make a fresh start in some other spot where I am certain there would be a good recompense for your legal talent', he wrote in May. Becky was still not well, and she went down to Durban for a few weeks to rest.<sup>62</sup> But Sidney felt compelled to stay in Johannesburg and fight things out within the Party. His long-time comrade David Ivon Jones, who had spent his last months in a sanatorium in Yalta, died in late May, so Sidney lost that distant ally.<sup>63</sup> Jack was dismayed when he heard of Sidney's decision. Sidney knew that Johannesburg did not suit his wife; the decision undoubtedly meant, Jack feared, 'that he cannot tear himself away from his Communist associations. He has not figured in the papers lately but I have no doubt he is active at this election time.'<sup>64</sup>

It was soon clear that the Pact government was just as racist as its predecessor and that white labour organizations had no interest in black workers.<sup>65</sup> White workers, Sidney reported to the Comintern in November, still had a 'damned nigger' attitude; he himself was tarred a '*kafir boetie*' for his willingness to take on African clients.<sup>66</sup> The entrenched racism of white trade unions strengthened the hand of those advocating the organization of black workers and who had been marginalized after the Rand Revolt. These included Sidney at head office, a few members of the Young Communist League, and some of the Cape Town branch.

They were vindicated at the Party's third congress in December 1924. Sidney went on the offensive: if the congress 'accomplishes no more than to remove mutual aloofness on the subject of native affairs, it will have justified itself', he stated. The labour movement was crippled by its failure to address the 'native question'; the Party must avoid the same fate. He was convincing. The congress



decided not to reapply for affiliation to the Labour Party, but to work for a united front. Even more importantly, it resolved 'that the overthrow of capitalism can only be achieved through the joint endeavours of all the workers and therefore urges all branches to help to the utmost all the attempts of the native workers to organise industrially'.<sup>67</sup> Sidney was elected chairperson of the Party and his protégé, Eddie Roux, vice-chair.

The CPSA's decision to actively recruit black workers dovetailed with the Comintern's policy of Bolshevization. This had been announced at the Comintern's fifth congress in June–July 1924, when Joseph Stalin replaced Trotsky on the ECCI, and revised the following March and April. Under the new policy the Comintern's national sections were to be centralized and subjected to proletarian discipline; factions were no longer tolerated. The policy had its roots in the defeat of the attempted German revolution in 1923. Together with other setbacks, this had forced the Bolsheviks to recognize that their revolution would very likely remain isolated. Paradoxically, the German defeat reinforced the prestige of Russian Bolsheviks as having produced the one successful socialist revolution. This enhanced Russian dominance within the Comintern; the Soviet triumvirate of Stalin, Zinoviev and Kamenev argued persuasively that other Communist parties must follow the Russian model if they were to implement successful revolutions. This was codified in the policy of Bolshevization, which inaugurated a spate of expulsions throughout the Comintern's sections, as the key criterion for posts became loyalty towards authority rather than particular policy stances.<sup>68</sup>

Discussions about the CPSA's reorganization began in force in late 1925, facilitated by the arrival of two British Communists, Jimmy Shields and Violet Shields, from Scotland. The young couple had come to South Africa in the hopes that the milder climate would improve Jimmy's health, and they threw themselves into local Party work. The changes were minor: discipline was stressed; agendas, regularized; study classes, set up; and a clear dividing line between members and sympathizers was established.<sup>69</sup>

The impact of the turn to black labour was soon apparent. White Communists like Bill Andrews and Frank Glass withdrew their support. Andrews retained his membership but resigned as secretary-editor from 15 February, turning all his energies to the white labour movement, while Frank Glass resigned from the Party on 14 May. Both men supported the ICU, but felt that the CPSA's new policy would alienate white workers.

The bleak state of affairs was felt at the CPSA's fourth national conference in December 1925. The conference was held at the Party's hall on Long Street in Cape Town, and Sidney came ready for a fight. His first words when he saw Wilfred Harrison, the latter recalled, were: 'You appear to have been harassing the party'. Harrison had always been sceptical about the Comintern's twenty-

one points, and he found the recent changes difficult; some of the Cape Town branch members had already reported Harrison's criticisms to Sidney. The conference suspended him for six months for talking about branch activities to a non-member.<sup>70</sup>

There were now a number of black delegates. But many white Communists had been alienated by the Party's new orientation, and the Party had lost many active members, Sidney reported to the conference. There had been a high turnover both in the general membership and on the Central Executive, and the Johannesburg and Cape Town branches were in disarray. Such problems should not deter a Bolshevik Party, Sidney argued. 'Bolshevisation', he exhorted, 'consists in espousing the cause of the native workers', but 'many of our members are reluctant in this matter – "our most Bolshevik work"'. Acknowledging that 'the "white S. Africa" slogan is still popular with whites on the Rand', Sidney nonetheless insisted that the Labour Party had no future. 'If carrying on this work offends the white trade unionists we should still go ahead with it', he concluded.<sup>71</sup>

The shift towards black workers antagonized white workers, to the consternation of most remaining white Communists. The conference debate reflected heated views on the matter. Willie Kalk began. The son of a German immigrant and by trade a furniture maker, Kalk worked with Eddie Roux in the Young Communist League. Nonetheless, concerned about Roux's egalitarian tendencies, he argued that 'Com. Roux should not say at public meetings in Jobg that natives should walk on the pavements, etc. That is what causes trouble at the meetings.' Sidney retorted: 'Com. Kalk has no business to blame Com. Roux for attacks at the meetings. The capitalist class is responsible for attacks on us, not "lack of tact" on our part.' Joe Pick agreed with Kalk; William Thibedi agreed with Roux. R. de Norman insisted that they 'stand firm on the native question whatever the consequences'. Those favouring the new direction won the day. Sidney remained chairperson and editor, and Eddie Roux became general secretary. Jimmy Shields and Violet Shields joined the central executive committee, along with Thibedi, the only black member of the executive.<sup>72</sup>

Sidney received a handsome dividend of £165.4.0 that January 1926, enabling him to devote more time to his political activities instead of his legal practice.<sup>73</sup> The estate was thriving. The plantations were 'all in good order'. Mechanization was continuing: a suction gas plant was operating the sawing, chopping and bagging machines 'at very low cost'. The railway siding was very convenient, and Jack had purchased another train for the tramline; that year the line had carried 8,915 tons of wood. Some of the plantations were three miles from the siding, and he was planning to extend the tramline up to and possibly across Lions River. Securing labour, though, was still not easy. Most of their workers were now on six-month contracts. They had to take those who showed up, 'espe-

cially since cotton has become a great competitor for the available labour and the natives consider that work less laborious than wattle stripping'. Over the past year they had employed about sixty African contract workers, twenty African farm workers and fifteen Indians. The year's financial results were 'not too bad and, provided a fair supply of labour can be secured and capital expenditure kept down', Jack expected 'an even better showing from next season'.<sup>74</sup> In effect, Sidney's share of the estate's profits subsidized his unpaid political work. Ironically, the CPSA's turn to black workers was keeping pace with the Lidgetton estate's increasing use of African labour.

The CPSA now launched a series of activities aimed at black workers, setting up a night school, holding public gatherings and organizing trade unions. Thibedi ran the night school. This held classes by candlelight at an African church in the predominantly black area of Ferreirstown, attracting 40 students its first year. The programme was far from easy: Bukharin's and Preobrazhensky's *A.B.C. of Communism* and Bukharin's *Programme of the World Revolution* were staples. But given the lack of educational opportunities for working-class blacks, this did not deter those who were keen.<sup>75</sup>

Under Sidney's editorship, the paper ran more articles relevant to black workers. In February 1926 the Party's central executive committee discussed publishing African language articles and decided that Thibedi 'should submit an article as an experiment'. This was a success: African readership increased.<sup>76</sup> Reflecting the new national orientation, the paper was renamed the *South African Worker*; on 27 August it announced that 'A Communist Primer for South Africa' would be serialized to replace the Eurocentric *A.B.C. of Communism*.<sup>77</sup> The Party had its share of helpers who sold the paper. Ten-year-old Joseph Glazer 'used to go to the office when the communist newspaper was printed', where he ran into 'Mr Bunting'. On some occasions, he recalled, 'I would go from house to house delivering the papers myself. They would give me a couple of pennies'.<sup>78</sup>

Sidney's main headache concerned the paper's precarious finances. In 1925 the Party had decided to enlarge the printing press in order to take on more business and increase the press's financial viability. It invested in a new plant, but a year later, in November 1926, the press was still £750 in debt. In order not to alienate potential customers, the Party concealed its ownership of the press, paying its non-Communist manager to pose as the owner. But the stress of being confronted with debt collectors was taking its toll on the man, and he was increasingly difficult to work with, antagonizing black customers like the ICU.<sup>79</sup>

The CPSA began giving more attention to the ICU. Led by the charismatic Clements Kadalie, since 1923 this had spread across the country 'like a veld fire'. From its original headquarters in Cape Town, branches were set up in the coastal towns of Port Elizabeth and East London, then in rural areas of the Cape



Figure 5: Sidney Bunting addressing an ICU meeting in Johannesburg around 1926. The interpreter is Thomas Mbeki; the man on the chair is probably Clements Kadalie. Courtesy of Brian Bunting and UWC Robben Island Mayibuye Archive.

Province, Orange Free State and Transvaal. In 1924 Thomas Mbeki and Stanley Silwana, two ICU activists who had joined the Young Communist League, launched a Johannesburg branch. The next year Kadalie moved the organization's headquarters to Johannesburg, purchasing and revamping Workers' Hall. Because of the ICU's success, a number of black leaders who had heretofore remained aloof now joined. A. W. G. Champion, for one, took charge of the ICU's Natal branch, soon the organization's leading section.<sup>80</sup>

The Communists were impressed with the ICU's success, but judgmental about its leadership, whom they viewed from behind their own ideological lenses. There was certainly much for Communists to criticize. Despite its ambitions of enrolling 100,000 members, the ICU's organizers were inexperienced, opening the door to financial irregularities and to corruption. The leadership was torn by personal rivalry and factionalism. It also faced severe repression. In March 1926 Kadalie was banned from entering Natal, and other ICU officials were subjected to continual harassment, both by the government and by hostile whites. The organization inevitably became less active and effective, although the dues kept flowing in. It faced increasing pressure from its members, and the CPSA took advantage of this to promote its own agenda. Communist criticism was particularly loud in Natal, where local white Communist L. H. Greene joined the ICU, then attacked its leaders in the Communist press.<sup>81</sup>

Sidney was swamped with political work. Eddie Roux left South Africa in September to study botany at Cambridge, having completed a BSc Honours degree at Wits the previous year. Sidney had tried his best to dissuade him from such an elite choice. 'The life at these old universities is very pleasant but very insidious, as I know from experience', Sidney remarked, suggesting that the University of London might be preferable. 'It was the old nonconformist attitude of "get thou behind me, Satan"', Roux supposed. When he left for Cambridge, Sidney took over as general secretary and Jimmy Shields as editor.<sup>82</sup>

By late 1926 the relationship between the ICU and the CPSA had deteriorated, as Communist members of the ICU's National Council called for financial controls and checks on the power of the leaders. Sidney himself was very critical. Clements Kadalie, 'vain and anxious for limelight, though not yet a bad lot', Sidney wrote to Eddie Roux on 15 December, 'is coming under the influence of reactionaries, including Champion who is now hostile'. Indeed, there was now 'quite a coolness' between Champion and the Party. Sidney wanted to avoid a split. In good Bolshevik fashion, he proposed that the Party's 'views must be made to prevail on every occasion of division, and the rank and file accustomed to act as a team and take the lead'. With that in mind, Jimmy Shields was now trying to reorganize the Cape Town branch, as 'that old type of Branch ... has failed to attract the I.C.U. elements'.<sup>83</sup>

Sidney had underestimated the tension between the two organizations. Ironically, the very next day – 16 December – the ICU's National Council passed a resolution by six to five that 'No member of the I.C.U. shall be a member of the Communist Party'. CPSA members on the National Council were forced to choose which organization they would remain with; three chose to keep their Party membership and were expelled, while two stayed with the ICU.

From Sidney's point of view, this was a temporary setback. The ICU had been adopted by several extraordinary women – Mabel Palmer, Ethelreda Lewis and Winifred Holtby – whom the Communists derided as liberals. Mabel Palmer was a Durban-based university lecturer and Fabian socialist who had put Kadalie in contact with Arthur Creech Jones, assistant secretary of the British Transport and General Workers' Union and member of the Independent Labour Party. Ethelreda Lewis, a Johannesburg-based author with a horror of Communism, raised funds for the ICU and organized lectures at Workers' Hall. Winifred Holtby was a young English novelist and journalist who had come to South Africa in January 1926 as a League of Nations lecturer. Captivated by the country, but appalled by the stark contrasts between rich and poor, white and black, she began campaigning tirelessly for the ICU in Britain. Many Communists suspected the three women of turning the organization against them.<sup>84</sup> That their public condemnations of the ICU might have had something to do with its decision to distance itself from the Party never seemed to occur to them.

Undeterred, the Party turned its hand directly to the organization of black workers. Its fifth annual conference in January 1927 indicated its ability to attract Africans. Jimmy Shields was chair, and Sidney, general secretary. But now three Africans – William Thibedi and two relatively new members, a young worker named Gana Makabeni who had been attending the Party night school and ICU activist Eddie J. Khaile, a bookkeeper – were elected to the central executive; Becky Bunting and Violet Shields were both on the executive. Solly Sachs, a trade unionist recently returned from representing the Young Communist League in Moscow, was full of recommendations to instil discipline.

The year 1927 brought both successes and setbacks. Early that year Thibedi and Bennie Weinbren, a laundry van driver who organized both black and white workers, launched several industrial trade unions, and Thibedi and Jimmy Shields set up CPSA branches in Vereeniging and South East Transvaal.<sup>85</sup> In March Thibedi became the Party's first African organizer. In July the Party headquarters were moved from the Trades Hall to an African neighbourhood at 41a Fox Street, next door to the night school. But in August the paper finally collapsed due to the financial problems that had been preoccupying Sidney.

With Sidney's days and evenings consumed by politics, he had little time for socializing. The family had few callers. There were a few white Communists like Issy and Irma Diamond, Julius and Tilly First, Eddie Roux (before he left

for Cambridge) and Benny Sachs (a Young Communist and brother of Solly Sachs). There were also a number of African visitors, the most memorable, from the children's point of view, being Gana Makabeni, who lived in nearby Prospect Township. Sidney's oldest son Arthur had fewer memories of the years between 1923 and 1928 than either before or afterwards. But in 1927 he was nine going on ten, and his father began seriously introducing him to music, taking him to concerts and operas – even Gilbert and Sullivan. Both of the boys had been attending Yeoville School. At the end of June Arthur finished his primary schooling; his terminal report indicated that he was the first in his class with marks of ten out of ten in all his subjects.<sup>86</sup>

Nor did Sidney have much time to earn a living. But the family needed a holiday, and he wanted to send them to Port Elizabeth to stay with one of Becky's sisters for a few weeks. Sidney wrote to Jack in early September asking for an advance on his dividend. As Jack had anticipated the year before, the estate was thriving. The plantations were 'in flourishing condition', he had 'managed to get a fair supply of men on six months' contract' and had even bought an automobile. With the usual divvies a sure bet, Jack sent his cousin £50.<sup>87</sup>

## 11 FOR A NATIVE REPUBLIC

With the family back from Port Elizabeth, life resumed its normal pattern. This meant endless political activities and meetings for the parents – although Becky avoided evening meetings to stay home with the children – and school for the children. Brian was still at Yeoville School, and Arthur was starting at Athlone High School in Judith's Paarl, known for its scholarly reputation.<sup>1</sup>

In August the ECCI had sent the Party's central committee an unusual letter and a new resolution detailing the Party's tasks. The ECCI suspected that 'some parts of the resolution, some new tasks of the Party, may give some difficulty to the members of the Party'. It advised the central committee to carefully study and publicize the resolution.<sup>2</sup> But when the committee read the report of the Party's purported problems, it decided that it was 'not a correct bird's eye view of local problems'.<sup>3</sup>

The CPSA's criticism of the ECCI's resolution did not go without response. The Comintern was emphatic about the slogan it had proposed: 'an independent native South African republic as a stage towards a workers' and peasants' republic with full safeguard and equal rights for all national minorities'.<sup>4</sup> The native republic thesis, as it became known, was part of a broader strategy emphasizing the role of anti-colonial and national liberation struggles. Nikolai Bukharin was the chief architect of this strategy.

Bukharin's emphasis on national liberation struggles developed against the backdrop of Comintern power struggles. Since 1924 the Comintern's policy of Bolshevization had concentrated power in the hands of Russian delegates to the ECCI and had been accompanied by a vilification of Trotsky. The Comintern became an arena in which Soviet political struggles were played out, and foreign Communist delegates ratified decisions already taken by Russian delegates. A series of Soviet foreign policy disasters intensified the political stakes. Stalin's policy of accommodation with Chinese nationalists led to a catastrophe for Chinese Communists, and deteriorating relations with Britain culminated in the Conservative government breaking off diplomatic relations. Bukharin argued that post-war Europe had gone through a first stage of revolutionary upheaval and a second stage of capitalist stabilization characterized by united fronts. With



the prospects of revolution in Europe waning, anti-colonial and national liberation struggles would weaken imperialism until such time as the contradictions of capitalism led to its collapse – Bukharin's third stage of capitalist development.<sup>5</sup>

To this end, the Comintern put its energies behind a broad campaign against colonialism and imperialism that drew together a range of organizations. A Congress of Oppressed Nations, supported by personalities such as Albert Einstein, Mohandas Gandhi, Bertrand Russell and Mrs Sun Yat Sen, was convened in Brussels from 9–16 February 1927, attended by 174 mandated delegates from thirty-one countries. British colonial Africa had only marginal representation, although three South African delegates were present: Jimmy La Guma of the CPSA, Josiah Gumede of the ANC and Daniel Colrairie of the Trade Union Congress.

Jimmy La Guma made quite an impact at the congress, recalled one Indian participant, as 'a Negro delegate (a Communist) who did not believe in the professions of his white colleagues'.<sup>6</sup> About thirty-three years old, La Guma was a passionate proponent of black liberation. Born in Bloemfontein, as a boy he went to Cape Town, finding work in a bakery and then as an apprenticed leather worker. In 1910 he went to South West Africa as a contract worker. By 1914 he was working on the diamond fields, and he founded an ICU branch in Luderitz. Back in Cape Town in 1921, La Guma rapidly rose up through the ICU's ranks. In 1925 he joined the CPSA and the following year was elected to its central executive committee.<sup>7</sup>

Josiah Gumede, a much older man, was born in October 1867. A Zulu raised in the Eastern Cape and educated at the Healdtown Wesleyan mission station at Fort Beaufort, Gumede trained as a teacher at the Kaffir Institute in Grahamstown and began teaching at the Amanzimtoti Institute. He accumulated much experience in Zulu politics in Natal, then helped found the Native National Congress and came into the national limelight in 1913 during the struggle against the Native Land Act. Over the decades his long-held faith in British justice was eroded. The Brussels congress marked a turning point in his political development; its radical anti-imperialism struck a chord.<sup>8</sup>

The congress saw the founding of the League Against Imperialism. This adopted a number of resolutions relevant to African peoples. One, submitted by the South African delegates, called 'on behalf of all workers and peoples of South Africa, irrespective of race, colour or creed' for '[t]he right of self-determination through the complete overthrow of capitalistic and imperialist domination'. Another demanded '[c]omplete freedom for the African people and all peoples of African origin' and 'Africa for the Africans, African land to go into the possession of the Africans, African self-administration'.<sup>9</sup>

After the Brussels conference La Guma travelled to Moscow, where he met representatives of the ECCI's Anglo-American Secretariat. On 16 March he

attended a meeting of the ECCI's Presidium, at which Bukharin argued that the CPSA must 'make demands, such as a demand for a Negro republic independent of the British empire, or in addition for autonomy for the national white minorities'.<sup>10</sup> After much discussion, this became the basis for the native republic thesis.

When the ECCI's resolution was first sent to the South African comrades, the majority on the Party's mostly white central executive, Sidney amongst them, rejected the idea of an 'independent native republic'. While most South African Communists, including the whites, were disillusioned by the passivity and bureaucracy of white trade unions under the Pact Government, the Party's leaders still believed that white workers were necessary for a successful socialist revolution. They also believed that national liberation and democratic rights were reformist goals secondary to the class struggle and saw participation in national liberation organizations in purely tactical terms, a view reinforced by the ICU's recent expulsion of Communists and the ANC's ambivalence towards the Party. For some, the call for a Native Republic evoked Marcus Garvey's 'Black Republic' and 'Africa for the Africans' slogans. The Garvey movement, an international movement whose goal was to imbue blacks with a shared sense of racial and national identity, was vigorously opposed by Communists for its racial exclusivity and nationalist orientation, and many of the executive members saw the Native Republic thesis in the same light.<sup>11</sup>

Both La Guma and Gumede were invited to Moscow to participate in the October celebrations commemorating the tenth anniversary of the revolution.<sup>12</sup> Throughout that year Stalin had been tightening the bolts against opposition. In May 1927 the Eighth Plenum of the ECCI had censured Trotsky for 'fractional struggle', and a few months later, in September, he was expelled from the ECCI.<sup>13</sup> Back again in Moscow, La Guma's criticisms of opponents of the Native Republic slogan found receptive ears. On 1 December La Guma participated in a discussion on South Africa with the Comintern's Anglo-American Secretariat and submitted a *Report on the South African Situation in the Party*. This noted 'the opposition on the part of rank and file of European labour to cooperation with Blacks', claiming that the Party's Johannesburg-based leadership had given black members the impression that it 'considers the mass movement of the natives should be held up until such time as the white worker is ready to extend his favour'.<sup>14</sup>

A thorough discussion within the CPSA was postponed until La Guma's return to South Africa. Shortly after his return, La Guma had written to Victor Demar of the Anglo-American Secretariat warning that the thesis 'is going to mean a split on colour lines again or prove very strong purgative'.<sup>15</sup> On 15 March 1928 La Guma presented his report at a special meeting of the central executive chaired by Sidney. Significant opposition to the slogan remained, but not, as La

Guma presumed, along colour lines. Gana Makabeni felt that the slogan ‘may be alright later on but was not suitable now. It does not take into consideration the wishes of the people.’ Thibedi described the slogan as ‘Garveyism and Racialistic’. Becky Bunting thought that a black republic was ‘inevitable’, but that ‘launching ... the slogan now will mean the hostility and antagonism of the entire white working class’. Phooko argued that it would be a means of ‘placing power in the hands of the chiefs who will use it for their own ends’.<sup>16</sup>

But La Guma had two key supporters in Johannesburg: Douglas Wolton and Molly Zelikowitz Wolton. La Guma and the Woltons had known each other in Cape Town. English-born Douglas Wolton had come to Cape Town in 1921, where he worked on a newspaper. In 1923 he embarked on a Cape to Cairo journey, but turned back when he reached Northern Rhodesia. Once again in Cape Town, he became involved in socialist politics and through this met his future wife. She was a Lithuanian Jew, born in 1906, who had emigrated to South Africa in 1919. Like the Buntings, the Woltons had a ‘mixed marriage’, and when the Woltons moved to Johannesburg, the two couples became friendly. Also like the Buntings, both the Woltons were on the central executive, and Douglas Wolton had taken over as secretary and editor from Jimmy Shields when the Shieldses returned to Britain in November 1927.<sup>17</sup> The Woltons were in a minority on the executive in their support for the thesis; Douglas Wolton had warned La Guma to come to Johannesburg ‘adequately prepared for a battle of logic and a good deal of nonsense’.<sup>18</sup> Wolton felt that because the slogan ‘Workers of the World Unite’ could not be easily understood by blacks ‘in face of daily oppression at hands of white workers’, there was a need for a slogan ‘reaching out to native masses especially’. Molly Wolton thought that the slogan had been misinterpreted and rejected the idea that whites would be ‘driven into the sea’. After all, she pointed out: ‘[e]ven a Native Bourgeois Govt would mean improvements for the native worker and the limited freedom secured would be an advance on present conditions’.<sup>19</sup>

At a central executive meeting the next month it was announced that Jimmy Shields had sent his support for the thesis. Sidney now conceded certain points made by the supporters, but felt that they all had ‘an Anti-White attitude’. The slogan was ‘a social democratic, social patriotic cry’, he contended. ‘We cannot tell on what lines the liberation of African Workers will take place’, he stressed. ‘A slogan of a Workers South Africa, – Liberation – Freedom, etc, is and would be more popular and to the White Workers also’.<sup>20</sup>

The central executive asked the Johannesburg and Cape Town branches to submit majority and minority reports. Nothing was received from Cape Town, despite La Guma’s earlier claim that since his return to Cape Town, ‘we have had very hot arguments on the thesis supported by the entire black membership’.<sup>21</sup> But in May, Sidney and Douglas Wolton submitted respectively the majority



Figure 6: Sidney Bunting and comrades, c. late 1920s. From left to right, front: Douglas Wolton, unknown, Becky Bunting, Molly Wolton, Sidney Bunting. The three men in the rear are not known. Courtesy of UWC Robben Island Mayibuye Archive.

and minority positions for the Johannesburg branch. As Sidney explained to the Comintern, despite the CPSA's predominantly black membership, 'so far the effectiveness, the "specific gravity" as it were, *per head*, remains greater among the white members'. Thus, the Party's central executive committee 'contains only 3 or 4 native members out of a total of 13, simply for want of more efficient native comrades available *as yet*'. But the Party was trying to train a black cadre, he assured the ECCI. He made it undiplomatically clear that he was tired of the matter: 'Our discussion on the slogan has largely been due to our great respect for E.C.C.I. decisions, (without however attributing pontifical infallibility to them). But it has monopolised too much of our time.'<sup>22</sup>

Critics of the thesis could point out that the CPSA's efforts in organizing black workers were paying off. Charles Baker, a retired teacher, was appointed to run the Party's night school. Baker, recalled Eddie Roux, was 'a fiery little man, an ex-Roman Catholic and now a violent atheist' whose 'chief business in life was to denounce religion as "the opium of the people" and castigate missionaries as "agents of imperialism"'. With Baker in charge of the school, Thibedi concentrated on other activities. Thibedi 'had a natural genius for getting people together as required for special meetings' and, given the opportunity, 'displayed talents for organisation which made him invaluable as general factotum'. He and Bennie Weinbren built up the newly-formed South African Federation of Non-European Trade Unions (FNETU). The Party's paper had been beset by financial problems, but it had finally settled its debts. At Thibedi's suggestion the paper became multilingual, with the first two pages in English and the last two in isiXhosa and Sesotho.<sup>23</sup>

As the CPSA grew, so did Sidney's renown as a lawyer willing to defend Africans and political activists, with some notable successes. In an attempt to deal with the growth of black political organization and protest, the previous year the Pact government had passed the Native Administration Act. At the heart of the Act was the notion of intent. Clause 29 stated that any individual engaging in words or action 'with intent to promote any feeling of hostility between Natives and Europeans, shall be guilty of an offence and liable on conviction to imprisonment not exceeding one year or to a fine of one hundred pounds or both'. In late March 1928 Thibedi had been arrested at Potchefstroom, charged with 'inciting to hostility between the races'. The Party arranged bail, and Sidney handled the case, travelling to Potchefstroom to defend Thibedi during the trial. Sidney was able to secure Thibedi's acquittal on the charge of intent. The magistrate maintained that the CPSA was a legal body and that Africans had the right to use legal means to protest against laws they felt were unfair. The trial had been closely followed by the local townspeople, and the result was greeted with a wave of enthusiasm.<sup>24</sup>

Despite the Party's growth, both the ICU and the ANC distanced themselves from it. Although Gumede himself supported the CPSA, at the ANC's second annual convention of Chiefs in Bloemfontein in April 1928, his report of his trip to Moscow caused an uproar. When he referred to the overthrow of the Tsar, a voice taunted: 'Do you intend to kill our chiefs?' Mention of the CPSA provoked such hostility that the meeting had to be recessed. When it was reconvened, the ICU leaders present insisted the ANC renounce its relationship with the CPSA, a stance with which the Chiefs unanimously agreed. Subsequently, at a joint meeting of their executives, the two organizations affirmed their desire for cooperation. The meeting unanimously resolved that the ANC 'hereby repudiates its association with the South African Communist Party, which of late has openly identified itself with the Congress.'<sup>25</sup> These developments gave credibility to Sidney's criticisms of the thesis.

But La Guma, by contrast, believed that black South Africans were developing a national consciousness and that anti-imperialist national liberation movements were inherently revolutionary, whatever their class leadership. The Native Republic thesis, he contended, would help white workers to learn that their future lay in unity with blacks.<sup>26</sup> White working class racism should not be appeased, he argued powerfully. Should the Party now tell blacks: 'Yes, you will be allowed to march into the promised land at such time as it can be considered without wounding the susceptibilities of the "Baas". This same "fellow" worker of ours who in 1922 on the Rand rose in arms to perpetuate our serfdom.'<sup>27</sup>

The Comintern was planning its sixth congress to be held later that year, and the central executive decided to take the debate to Moscow. After an initial tie between Sidney and Douglas Wolton, the central executive voted eight to two for Sidney as delegate at the congress. It agreed that Eddie Roux, who was studying at Cambridge, would represent the Party as co-delegate.<sup>28</sup>

Once again, the Buntings left Johannesburg en route to Moscow, the children in tow; Brian was now eight, and Arthur, ten going on eleven. The family went down to Natal in early June, spending a night at Lidgetton. Jack probably avoided giving Sidney the contentious news that several of the ICU's 'active emissaries' had been caught 'trying to stir up trouble' among his workers that year. But he did discuss railway siding with his cousin – a much safer subject. Then the Buntings set off to Durban, where their ship, the *Benalla*, was due to sail on 8 June.<sup>29</sup>

In London Sidney and Becky left the boys with Evelyn at 32 Woburn Square and met up with Eddie Roux. As Sidney, Becky and Eddie Roux made their way to Moscow, Evelyn took the boys up to Appleton. The Lidgetts had sold Appleton Hall around 1920 or 1921, following the deaths of three of the original four siblings. However, George Lidgett's daughter – now Lady Ellen McDougall – decided to rent a house in the village – the Firs, 'the most refined house in the

village', owned by Miss Violet Tomlinson, daughter of a local Methodist family. As a result, the Buntings still had links with the village. Evelyn and the two boys arrived at Appleton on 10 July; the next day Arthur sent his parents an inventory of the locale, which boasted, he reported, 160 inhabitants, five cars and two motorbikes.<sup>30</sup>

But the two boys fought continually – it was not easy having parents on the move for long stretches – and had to be separated. Arthur was sent to Southampton to stay with his aunt Dora, the local medical officer. Brian spent the next two months happily in Appleton. The Firs may have been the best cottage in the village, but the eight-year-old found it quite rustic. It did not even have a bathroom, and the boy 'was bathed in a tin bath with water which had been heated on the stove'. Sidney had prudently given him 'a new cricket bat – nothing sophisticated, a plain blockbat with no springs – but sufficiently impressive', it transpired, to make him 'sought after to play cricket on the village green'. One day he was taken to see a Roman camp, but 'instead of the rows of tents' that he had eagerly anticipated, he was dashed to find 'piles of ancient stones' that he was obviously 'expected to enthuse over'. Usually, though, he played in the garden at Appleton Hall, where his father had stayed many years before, picking the various types of currants that grew in 'rows and rows'.<sup>31</sup>

As for the three Communists, they were full of hope, Eddie Roux recalled, 'confident that we had a good report to make of work done in South Africa, certain that we had earned commendation'. After all, the CPSA had well and truly 'gone Native'; its composition was now overwhelmingly African. But Roux's words, that 'like the innocents we were, we journeyed happily towards our doom', underlined how traumatic the experience would be.

The few days they spent in Berlin foreshadowed the profound changes Sidney and Becky would find in Moscow. If London was the epicentre of the world's largest empire and Moscow the centre of world revolution, Berlin – the fastest-growing city in the world – was the crossroads of Europe. It had grown helter-skelter since the Buntings' last visit in 1922 – 'a distressing agglomeration of squares, streets, blocks of tenements, churches, and palaces. A tidy mess, an arbitrariness exactly to plan, a purposeful-seeming aimlessness.' Horse-drawn carriages were gone; no permits had been issued since June 1927. The first *autobahn* had opened in 1921; Tempelhof Airport, opened in 1923, was the junction for European air transport. Across the city double-decker buses and trams competed with the *U-bahn* and the *S-bahn* and with hooting cars.<sup>32</sup>

Through the cacophonous streets the trio light-heartedly roamed, 'eating cherries, the red-fleshed cherries with their sharp-sweet flavour, from a paper bag, at a cost of a few pfennig a kilogram ... carefully collecting the cherry-pips in the bag.' It reminded Eddie Roux of the time he and Sidney had eaten buns while they walked the streets canvassing for a comrade's electoral campaign back

in Johannesburg. But in the Germany of 1928, where, they felt, the Communist Party was still holding its own against the local social-democrats, there was a new political force to be reckoned with. It was one that the Buntings had not encountered on their first journey, and it was still electorally very small. 'We did not see any brown-shirts or red-front fighters and we were unlucky in that there were no big meetings during the few days we were there', recalled Eddie Roux, 'but posters we saw everywhere, chiefly Nazi and Communist'.<sup>33</sup>

Sidney dithered about the smallest choices, a personality trait that was both exasperating and endearing. One Berlin morning, wrote Roux, 'we stood on a street corner ... discussing whether we should go to Potsdam or the *Tiergarten*. Bunting stood considering all aspects of the problem. In the end he decided for the *Tiergarten* and so we rushed off only to see our bus disappearing round a corner.' Leaving Berlin and eager to reach Moscow, their Mecca, they decided not to stop in Warsaw. But their reception in Moscow, when they arrived, was chilling. They were met by the head of the Anglo-American Secretariat – Ukrainian-born David Lipetz, who also went by the names of Petrovsky, Goldfarb and, during his several years as Comintern representative in Britain, Bennett. Lipetz and his wife, British Communist Rose Cohen, moved to Moscow in 1927. Both held high-powered positions; they 'were the golden couple of the expatriate community in Moscow'. Lipetz was supremely confident of his position and his future. His greeting to the three South Africans was short and to the point: 'We are going to attack you!'<sup>34</sup>

The congress opened on 17 July. It was well attended, with over 500 delegates, mostly young and mostly male, including seventy-four from dependent and colonized countries.<sup>35</sup> Behind the scenes, profound struggles had been going on within the Comintern. Bukharin's star was fading fast. In June Bukharin had asked Stalin to 'give us a chance to hold the congress in peace; do not carry out any superfluous splits; do not create an atmosphere of gossip'. He had told Stalin that after the congress he would 'be prepared to go' anywhere Stalin wished, 'without any scuffles, without any noise and without any struggle'.

Yet Bukharin's theory of capitalist development still held sway. The congress officially proclaimed that the world economy was now in its third phase, a period of acute capitalist contradictions. Against the backdrop of growing class antagonism, Communists were to lead the working class under the slogan of 'class against class'. This was to be the 'New Line'. Yet, despite Bukharin's intellectual influence, the congress was riddled with rumour-mongering, not least of which was a rumour that he was soon to be exiled.<sup>36</sup>

The three South African delegates quickly sensed the political climate. Sidney and Becky found the ambiance markedly different to the comradeship they had felt at the fourth congress six years earlier, and it was palpably difficult for Becky. Now, observed Roux, 'there were numerous factions and cliques, each



trying to curry favour with the powers at the top ... Comrades were afraid to discuss things openly for fear of being accused of political deviations.' Moreover, the South African delegates sensed that they 'were deliberately cold-shouldered by some of the delegates'. Most painfully of all, it transpired, rumours had circulated that they were 'white chauvinists'.<sup>37</sup>

There were, indeed, behind the scenes attempts to discredit them. Jimmy La Guma, angry at the CPSA's resistance to the Native Republic thesis, had been corresponding with various Comintern officials and was highly critical of Sidney's influence and his administration of the Party's affairs. 'The crowd led by Bunting are unable to divorce their feelings from the parasitical white worker who are using the black worker now as a catspaw', he wrote on 22 August to Petrovsky. 'I am going to make every effort at the next Congress of the CP of S.A. to change the leadership', he informed him.<sup>38</sup>

The three South Africans had no idea how to respond to this situation. Sight-seeing gave them temporary relief, but their treatment at the congress weighed on their minds. They saw Eisenstein's *Potemkin* and Pudovkin's film interpretation of Gorki's novel, *Mother*. The Soviet Union's New Economic Policy, Lenin's programme for mixed economic development, was coming to an end, and the first Five Year Plan was due to be launched. 'Moscow was a city of contrasts', thought Roux. They were impressed by 'the well-planned factories and the towering blocks of workers flats', but could not help noticing the 'inefficiency and inconvenience by western standards ... The streets were thronged with drably-clothed communistic workers while beggars importuned us on every corner and pickpockets were active everywhere.' There was 'squalid overcrowding in the new flats as well as in old houses'. They admired the Park of Culture and Rest, but their hotel was infested with bugs and its bathtubs and washbasins lacked plugs. 'A good Woolworth store seemed to be what was needed', Roux noted with ironic pragmatism.<sup>39</sup>

The colonial question was high on the congress agenda, and central to the debate was the role of the national bourgeoisie in anti-colonial struggles. The vituperative debate embroiled not only the South African but the British delegates, who, while keeping their distance from the South Africans, were also at odds with the Comintern.<sup>40</sup> On 23 July Sidney made his first presentation, a bold if foolhardy critique of Bukharin. Sidney argued that the Comintern's colonial theses overlooked the proletarian character of colonial peoples. South Africa, he pointed out, was not a pre-capitalist society, but a white settler society with an imperialist-financed gold industry, and iron and steel industries; the apparent peasantry was actually a migrant labour force. A black nationalist movement should not be opposed, Sidney acknowledged, but the Comintern's programme did not allow the colonial proletariat to play its full role in the struggle against capitalism. Its reference to colonial 'masses', counterposed to the European 'pro-

letariat, reeked of the same racial chauvinism as white South African labour, he stated baldly. The essence of the white worker's prejudice, was 'not that he wants to kill the black worker, but that he looks upon him not as a fellow-worker but as native "masses"'. Communists must come to terms with the proletarian nature of the colonial working class so that it could take its place in the international proletarian movement. Sidney was soon attacked as a 'social-democrat' by Bukharin and by Petrovsky and Dunne of the Anglo-American Secretariat.<sup>41</sup> Undeterred, he naively asked that the attacks 'be sternly repudiated and disavowed' and that 'the wrong impression given by Comrade Bukharin's speech should also be definitely removed'.<sup>42</sup>

Nor did Becky or Eddie Roux hesitate to speak their minds. On 25 July Becky addressed the congress on the need to organize women. Her pointed question, 'Why are there so few women delegates here?', and her claim that this was 'evidence in itself that not enough work is done among women', could scarcely have endeared her to those present; nor would her contention that the organization of women should be taken up by men comrades as well as by women – despite the perfunctory circulars on the matter that the Comintern sent to its sections.<sup>43</sup> On 28 July Roux submitted two papers. One was an overview of trade union developments amongst black and white workers.<sup>44</sup> The other criticized the Native Republic thesis on the grounds that it 'presupposes the *presence* of a native bourgeoisie and the *absence* of a large class of white proletarians capable of becoming the allies of the natives in their struggle'. The thesis failed to admit '[t]he possibility of the *complete telescoping* of the bourgeois nationalist revolution and the development of the proletarian revolution in the *absence* of a native bourgeoisie'. Roux proposed instead an '*Independent Workers and Peasants Republic with equal rights for all toilers*'.<sup>45</sup> Two days later, Roux gave an address on white workers that was highly critical of the thesis.<sup>46</sup> The ECCI was not impressed.

Sidney continued to push his point of view despite the obvious lack of interest displayed by key officials. On 11 August Sidney attended the Negro Commission, of which he was a member, accompanied by his wife and by Eddie Roux. He reported on the debate within the CPSA on the Native Republic thesis. Roux was beginning to have second thoughts about his initial opposition and now felt that the CPSA needed to reconsider the thesis. A sub-commission was set up to repudiate the CPSA's majority position rejecting the thesis, and on which Sidney and Eddie Roux were accepted as members.<sup>47</sup>

On 20 August Sidney gave his final address to the Congress, a reply to the theses presented by Otto Kuusinen, a Finnish Communist and ECCI member and a loyal follower of Stalin. Kuusinen's theses reflected the Comintern's emphasis on the revolutionary nature of national liberation struggles, but in its repudiation of national bourgeoisies signalled a new left turn in Comintern policy. In his response to Kuusinen, Sidney insisted that the Native Republic thesis

mechanically applied the model of a peasant-based, anti-imperialist struggle to South Africa. But both black and white workers were far more militant than their rural counterparts. If white workers could be won to a position of neutrality rather than antagonism towards blacks, they might act as a shield to protect black workers if circumstances warranted. Unfortunately, the Native Republic thesis would alienate them, possibly even driving some towards fascism. Thus, concluded Sidney, the majority of South African comrades, ‘while standing for proletarian equality and for majority rights’, opposed ‘the CREATION of any special nationalistic [*sic*] slogan ... except of course the liberation of the native people from all race oppression and discrimination and separation from the British Empire.’<sup>48</sup>

The South African delegates submitted one last statement on 25 August. They proposed an amended thesis that read: ‘AN INDEPENDENT WORKERS’ AND PEASANTS’ SOUTH AFRICAN REPUBLIC WITH EQUAL RIGHTS FOR ALL TOILERS IRRESPECTIVE OF COLOUR, AS A BASIS FOR A NATIVE GOVERNMENT’. The CPSA executive, they added, ‘should have a certain discretion to express, interpret and apply the slogan in accordance with the need of the actual local situation.’<sup>49</sup> They also complained that their reports had ‘been altered’ and that the atmosphere at the congress had been like that ‘of a law court, where our opponents “look for points” and pose as judges of the kind that listen to no arguments saying they have heard them all before’. Theirs was not the only such criticism. Three days earlier the British delegation had condemned ‘the tone and method of polemics ... which, if persisted in, can only have the effect of killing healthy discussions’. The rush ‘to tie labels on comrades who hold different opinions’, the delegation maintained, ‘can only result in destroying independent thought and in robbing Comintern discussions of much of their value.’<sup>50</sup> Such views were in a distinct minority; ironically, the two sections holding them had not met together during the congress.

The congress closed on 1 September. Eddie Roux returned to Cambridge and began trying to convince himself of the thesis’s correctness, putting the blame on the alleged theoretical backwardness of the South African comrades. But the Buntings remained in Moscow for several more days. Becky still hoped to get some official understanding of their position, and she had convinced her husband to write articles for *Pravda*, which she translated into Russian.<sup>51</sup> Nonetheless, the Comintern officials were not swayed by their appeals, and the Buntings finally left for home.<sup>52</sup>

When they arrived back in London on 11 September, Sidney was suffering from exhaustion and stress. The London Communists, moreover, seemed to be avoiding him, although Jimmy Shields, back in Scotland, couldn’t understand this. ‘It sounds as tho’ there must be laxity or indifference somewhere’, he wrote to Sidney. ‘I am also surprised to hear that the British and S. A. delegation did

not jointly meet in Moscow to discuss affairs ... Surely such a meeting was a necessity', he added, 'especially at this time'. Jimmy was convinced that the new thesis 'stands out bold and clear as a veritable trumpet blast to the exploited and oppressed Africans', although his wife Violet, he confided, worried that the new slogan would 'provoke racial clashes'. Her views were probably similar to Sidney's, he suspected.<sup>53</sup>

Sidney wanted a holiday and a good month's rest. Back home the Party was pressuring the Buntings to return as soon as possible. 'Still, our party life and work is going to be a desperate business from now on, the "slogan" is now "law" ... and we are in for a hell of a time, however much we "make the best of it", in fact I can't see the future at all clearly', he wrote to Eddie. With that in mind, he decided not to rush back; they planned to take the P&O ship, which sailed on 18 October.<sup>54</sup> The family, reunited, spent several weeks in the Oxfordshire countryside, renting rooms at the Dog Inn at Peppard Common, Henley-on-Thames, and walking in the woods. At nearby Kidmore End, a well dedicated to the poor – 'whom ye shall have with you always' – did not fail to rouse Sidney's contempt.<sup>55</sup>

The remainder of their time was spent in London, and Sidney made the most of it. Despite the British Communists' cold-shouldering, Sidney did meet quite a few West African and West Indian students – their presence in Britain underlining for Sidney the striking absence of South African blacks studying abroad. No doubt the South African state bureaucracy 'grudges natives going abroad to study', he presumed. The Native Affairs Department wanted them to stay at home and work, '*not swell their heads with ideas of liberty or equality!*'<sup>56</sup>

Eddie Roux came down from Cambridge to see them before they left. Sidney, he thought, 'had taken the discussions on the slogan and our failure to get it altered, very much to heart'. He and Sidney had been exchanging views on the thesis, Roux contending that the Party's reluctance over the thesis was due to its theoretical backwardness. But it was not a question of theory or lack of theory, Sidney maintained, and he rejected Roux's 'Mea Culpa' attitude. 'I still think the switching off from the class struggle to race struggle an exaggeration and a departure from Lenin', he wrote to Roux. As a final touch of irony, Sidney added, Petrovsky had even refused to help them draw up an election manifesto using the slogan!<sup>57</sup>

On the boat back Sidney set his mind to explaining and justifying the slogan. He spent much of the journey in a deck chair with a thick volume of 'theses', finally producing a booklet called *Imperialism and South Africa*. With echoes of Lenin and Luxemburg in its analysis of imperialism as capitalism's 'last phase', it was, Sidney explained to Eddie, 'the best foundation I could think of for the slogan.'<sup>58</sup> Black workers, wrote Sidney, were 'under *an extra subjection, that of race by race as well as class by class*', while whites of all classes had 'their heel on the neck

of the blacks as a whole'. National liberation was therefore distinct from the class struggle, Sidney argued, but 'in the absence of a native bourgeoisie or bourgeois national movement, the two aspects tend to telescope or coincide'. Communists, therefore, called for 'a struggle for a S. African Workers' and Peasants' Republic, as contrasted with the present regime of white rule over black and capitalist rule over worker'. This meant 'a government very predominantly native in character, with the basic condition however of equal rights for every man and woman and consequently all necessary protection for racial or national minorities'. As for the white liberals who support trusteeship for Africans, Sidney asked, '*Will they come out boldly on the platform of native self-determination ... Or will they slink away sorrowful like the young man in the gospels (for he had many possessions) and wriggle out of it as pacifists do when it is a case of real disarmament?*' Those who rationalize their fear of full democracy by claiming that Africans are too backwards for the vote, should take note, Sidney concluded, that 'the best way to learn to vote' is by voting. Democracy is learnt through practice.<sup>59</sup>

They landed to a huge press reception. Reports had appeared in the local press erroneously claiming that Becky thought the 'slogan would be a serious menace to white workers in South Africa.'<sup>60</sup> Sidney spent his energies writing to the press, and he and Douglas Wolton held public meetings promoting the thesis. During the past several months, white politicians had grown increasingly strident in their racial attacks on blacks. Had they heard the speeches of South Africa's Minister of Justice, Tielman Roos, in Moscow, Sidney wrote to the *Star*, he doubted that they would have spent any further time haggling over the precise formulation. 'To white domination and tyranny a "Black Republic" is perhaps the most natural counterblast.' Becky, too, returned to her political work, going to a women's meeting in Potchefstroom with Molly Wolton and Mrs M. N. Bhola of the ANC.<sup>61</sup>

While the Buntings were overseas, the Party's leadership had become embroiled in a destructive controversy over the thesis. Vicious fighting took place at the central executive meetings. On one side were Jimmy La Guma and Douglas Wolton, staunch proponents of the Native Republic thesis; on the other was William Thibedi, an ardent opponent. Initially this began as a conflict between La Guma, who had moved up to Johannesburg to act as secretary of FNETU, and Thibedi, the federation's organizer. But the relationship between Wolton and Thibedi soon deteriorated.<sup>62</sup> The situation came to a head on 20 September, when Thibedi informed the executive that he had found a document written by Wolton and sent to the Comintern that stated that 'the Party depends on donations from S. P. Bunting or some of those who aim to visit Russia eventually and claim allegiance to the movement'. The document maintained that black members were 'persistently clamouring for recognition and accordingly the white members of the Party see their privileged monopoly being threatened'.

Even more damagingly, it claimed that the development of black Communists was deliberately stunted.

Thibedi claimed that Wolton had told him that over 'the last ten years some members had been trying to get the Buntings out of the Party – this is now their chance'. He accused Wolton and La Guma of intrigue – allegations that both denied. The majority eventually sided with Wolton, and Thibedi was reprimanded.<sup>63</sup> Nonetheless, he and Bennie Weinbren remained hostile to the Native Republic thesis, and whatever the attitudes of their rank and file, FNETU rejected the thesis.<sup>64</sup>

Not surprisingly, therefore, Sidney 'found the party split sideways and endways with quarrels, intrigues, backbiting etc to incredible lengths'. The local branches were 'bewildered' at all the infighting, and the trade unions were 'paralysed especially by disagreements between La Guma & Thibedi'. Sidney heard about Thibedi's allegations that the Woltons had been undermining him behind his back. He had considered them as friends 'on the best of intimate terms', despite political disagreements, he confided to Roux, 'but in our absence they have worked up a case against us to make you shudder ... it has destroyed all the real confidence between us'. Sidney now thought that their treatment in Moscow was 'the result of a violent secret preparation in the shape of reports which as you know Bennett & Co never showed'.<sup>65</sup>

Nonetheless, despite Sidney's criticisms of the sixth congress, he defended the Comintern's doctrinal authority. The CPSA held its seventh annual conference in Johannesburg from 29 December 1928–2 January 1929. Thirty delegates, twenty of them black, claimed to represent close to 3,000 members.<sup>66</sup> Wilfred Harrison came up with a black comrade named Johnny Gomas to represent the Cape Town branch. When they boarded the train, the other whites in their compartment left as soon as they set eyes on Gomas; in Johannesburg Gomas stayed with the Buntings as the hotel would not admit him.

It was a well-organized conference. The conference venue, Inchcape Hall, had been chosen because it allowed blacks entry. African women prepared the food, carefully laid out on tables. On the morning of 30 December a procession headed by a brass band led the way from the Party office to Inchcape Hall. About 250 people, overwhelmingly black, attended the formal opening that day. English was the *lingua franca*, but interpretation into three African languages was provided. Sidney, as chair, began the proceedings by reciting the International and then addressed the meeting assisted by interpreters.

One afternoon the Buntings had everyone over to their house for tea. It was 'a strange spectacle on a Johannesburg suburban lawn', thought Harrison, who was convinced that Sidney's interest in Africans was a Bohemian affectation. 'What Bunting's wealthy neighbours thought we did not know, nor for that matter did

we care’, he added. ‘We took it all and did all according to the conference agenda – fraternising was general and we were all happy about it.’<sup>67</sup>

What white labour organizations thought of Sidney and the Native Republic thesis was not in dispute. With all the publicity given to the slogan, opined the Labour Party organ, *Forward*, ‘every newspaper-doped South African who possesses a firearm is sleeping with it under his pillow’. But there was ‘a vast difference between communism according to St Marx and the Gospel according to St Bunting’, it continued. ‘The first treats every worker as equal, irrespective of race, creed or colour. The second makes the black worker a member of the Chosen and the white worker an Amalekite.’<sup>68</sup> Sidney was indeed notorious amongst white South Africans.

With Sidney’s insistence, the conference adopted the Native Republic thesis. Although ‘some wanted to move amendments’, Sidney explained to Roux, ‘I felt bound, while allowing full discussion for the sake of arriving at an understanding, to disallow these as contrary to the Comintern statutes, enjoining unreserved acceptance.’<sup>69</sup> On 1 January 1929, the CPSA endorsed a version of the thesis which read: ‘An Independent South African Native Republic as a stage towards the Workers’ and Peasants’ Republic, guaranteeing protection and complete equality to all national minorities.’<sup>70</sup>

Douglas Wolton announced his desire to return to Britain. Criticizing ‘alleged “chauvinistic errors” in the party’ – an unveiled reference to Sidney – he asked that a black person replace him as general secretary. After discussion he agreed to remain until, he stated, ‘a non-European is ready to take my place’. Elections were held. Sidney was elected chair and treasurer; Solly Sachs, vice-chair; Douglas Wolton, general secretary and editor; Albert Nzula – a teacher who had been recruited some months earlier by Wolton – became organizing and assistant secretary; and Sam Malkinson, bookkeeper. Becky, Molly Wolton, William Thibedi and Johannes Nkosi – a young ICU organizer from Natal who had joined the Party in 1926 – were on the executive.<sup>71</sup> Sidney and Becky were still in the leadership, whatever the behind-the-scenes machinations that may have gone on in their absence.

The final South African consensus was an effort to combine democracy and socialism in one stage and echoed the arguments in *Imperialism in South Africa*. As Sidney explained to Roux, ‘[w]e agreed on interpreting the slogan as meaning much the same as a (predominantly & characteristically native) Workers & Peasants republic, and not meaning a black dictatorship.’<sup>72</sup> Working-class unity across the colour line had to be based on equality. This meant fighting to end ‘the unequal, subjected, enslaved status of the native workers and people’. In that respect, ‘race emancipation and class emancipation tend to coincide’, while ‘the conception and realisation of native rule merges into that of the Workers’ and Peasants’ Republic, non-imperialist, non-capitalist, non-racialist, classless and in

effect Socialist.<sup>73</sup> To the oft-posed query, 'Won't your black republic fall under Imperialist influence?' Sidney's reply was 'that this language about "stages" represents sociological rather than chronological sequences ... as really no black republic in SA could be achieved without overthrowing capitalist rule'. Personally, though, Sidney still felt that the idea of stages was 'verbiage'.<sup>74</sup>

The Comintern had been keeping a close eye on the situation. It had made plans for ten black South Africans to study at the Eastern Workers Communist University in Moscow. However, black South Africans had great difficulty obtaining passports, and none had been able to travel to Moscow for study thus far. Two white Communists, Victor Danchin and Willie Kalk, much to La Guma's chagrin, went off to study at the Lenin School.<sup>75</sup> They left Johannesburg on 17 October, arriving in Moscow on 22 November. In early December they met with the Anglo-American Secretariat, reporting on the divisions over the thesis.<sup>76</sup> The secretariat, maintained that Sidney's letter to the *Star* indicated that he 'had merely accepted the slogan because it was endorsed by the C. I.'. However, William van Reesema, a Dutch member of the ECCI, reported on 20 December that since Sidney's return 'the inner Party situation has proved to be not so bad as it appeared to be after hearing the report of the two members of the Central Committee'.<sup>77</sup>

There was still grouching about the thesis, though, especially by trade union activists. La Guma returned to Cape Town in late 1928, temporarily withdrawing from politics. This left the FNETU in the hands of Weinbren and Thibedi, who were 'still irreconcilable to the slogan', Sidney reported to Roux, 'especially W, who is leading the native T. U.'s against it'. Thibedi wrote directly to the Comintern, boldly asking them to reconsider their views on the thesis: 'Tell Comrades Losovsky, Bukharin, Stalin and the CI Secretariat for dealing with the Negro problems ... the Federation of Non-European Trade Unions ... consider the Black Republic slogan a mistake, and that a "Workers and Peasants Republic" would really rally the black and white workers in this country'.<sup>78</sup>

Sidney, though, was pragmatic. He still considered the slogan to be 'defective', but nonetheless felt that 'we can get along with it, and *may* make a hit'.<sup>79</sup> In any case, the political climate for black South Africans degenerated as the year 1929 unfolded. This lent greater credibility to the Native Republic thesis, and a number of those who had originally opposed it changed their minds.<sup>80</sup>



## 12 INTO THE WILDERNESS

The 1929 general elections were scheduled for June. As the first term of the Pact government drew to a close in the first half of 1929, the 'black peril' was high on the political agenda. The previous years had seen several attempts to curtail African political rights. In July 1926 Prime Minister Hertzog had tabled several bills aiming to reinforce African segregation and curtail their franchise rights. One, the Native Land Act Amendment Bill, aimed to decrease the amount of reserved land available to Africans as stipulated in the 1913 Land Act; another, the Representation of Natives in Parliament Bill, aimed to remove Africans in the Cape Province from the common voting roll. The bills were not passed, but they were a harbinger of things to come, and the ensuing debates provided the backdrop for the 1929 election.<sup>1</sup>

The Communist Party was keen to campaign under its new Native Republic slogan. Africans and Coloureds in the Cape still had a qualified franchise, although only whites could represent them. This franchise was a legacy of the representative government that Britain had granted to the Cape Colony in 1853, when all male British subjects over the age of twenty-one who owned property in the form of land or buildings of a certain value or who received a certain annual income were given the right to vote, irrespective of colour.<sup>2</sup> At its recent conference, the CPSA had decided to contest seats in the two constituencies where blacks constituted close to half the electorate. One was the urban area of Cape Flats outside Cape Town, which included the bleak, impoverished African location of Ndabeni, where the Party had a history of some activity. The other was Thembuland, a region in the Transkeian Territories with no history of prior Communist activity and where the dispersed rural towns and homesteads and the rough roads made campaigning slow and arduous. Douglas Wolton was to contest the new electoral seat in the Cape Flats, and Sidney, eager to atone for his initial opposition to the Native Republic thesis, was to contest the more difficult seat in Thembuland.<sup>3</sup>

Eddie Roux drafted an election manifesto. 'I think we should go all out to get the support of every non-European voter at the next election', he had written to Douglas Wolton in late November 1928. 'Theoretically every one of these votes

should come to us. If we work hard enough and put forward the correct slogans I think the majority of them will', he noted with naive optimism. But if they aimed equally at black and white voters, they would 'probably get neither', he advised. 'What we want is a direct appeal to non-Europeans ... to vote for the C.P.'<sup>4</sup>

Noting that the CPSA was 'the only party to come forward with a programme expressing the demands and aspirations of the Native and Coloured people', the manifesto called for "*A South African Native Republic*" ... a thoroughly independent and democratic form of government, in which the African people will come into their own as free men in a free country'. It also demanded retention of the Cape African franchise and all existing black rights; equal political and employment rights for all; free primary education; abolition of the Native Land Act, pass laws and all other discriminatory laws; extension of the African reserves and adequate land for all black South Africans; freedom of speech and assembly; and abolition of the Native Administration Act that extended authoritarian powers over Africans.<sup>5</sup>

By January Sidney was planning his electoral campaign – 'a real adventure it will be', he wrote to Roux, noting his intention to close his Bloomsbury bank account 'before departing for the wilds'. The scathing rejections of his arguments at the Comintern Congress and the personal attacks left him more determined than ever to prove his commitment as a loyal Communist. For Sidney, commitment was shown through sacrifice. He shut down his law practice, and he and Becky prepared to travel by caravan across the remote region of Thembuland, leaving Arthur and Brian in the care of the Winters, Communist sympathizers who lived in Doornfontein.<sup>6</sup>

Sidney and his cousin Jack rarely communicated now, but when he wrote to Jack to acknowledge his dividend, he told him his plans. Jack was livid. 'The rotten part of it', he wrote to Alfred, 'is that he says that he will probably be standing for a native constituency ... where I should doubt if the natives have ever heard of Communistic ideas ... this means that a certain amount of his poison will be let loose amongst them'. Sidney claimed he would be living on little else aside from the dividend, Jack continued, 'but he seems to fail to see that, if he is successful politically ... his dividend will soon become extinct' – although Jack was convinced Sidney must be getting Soviet funds. In any event, it was 'all so silly to think of his endeavouring to become the Parliamentary spokesman for natives when he cannot speak their language and all he says to them will have to be interpreted'. Sidney had told him he planned to live in a motor car for several months, and Jack could not help wondering 'whether he has the health which would permit his roughing it in all weathers for a long period. It all seems a wicked waste of his undoubted talent as a lawyer.'<sup>7</sup>

Jack no doubt feared the opprobrium of the local landowners in Natal; it was not easy being the cousin of a notorious Communist. Arthur and Brian, too, had

to cope with their parents' politics. Arthur, eleven years old and a student at Athlone High, wrote to his parents regularly while they were away. The boys were well looked after and had no complaints, but Arthur was very conscious that his parents' activities did not fit the general pattern of those of his school mates. 'By the way', he asked them with meticulous concern, 'we have to fill in forms at school, in connection with a forthcoming intelligence test. We have to fill in "Parent's [*sic*] Occupations, Past & Present". What shall I fill in for "Present"?'<sup>8</sup>

Notwithstanding Jack's caustic remarks about his cousin's language skills, Sidney's campaign struck a chord amongst the local people, the abaThembu.<sup>9</sup> Dabulamanzi Gcanga of Manzana was born in 1912, 'together with the ANC'. Two members of his family, George Gcanga and William Gcanga, had heard Sidney speak, and Dabulamanzi Gcanga 'used to hear them talk about Bunting at their gatherings. At my brother's house next door there were meetings where they talked about Kadalie and Bunting. As I grew I began to understand what they were talking about.'

The abaThembu were not unfamiliar with politicians who came from outside the region to campaign. Since Africans and Coloureds in the Cape Province had a qualified franchise, Cape liberals or 'friends of the Natives' periodically entered the region to canvass for their votes during electoral campaigns. Advocates for Marcus Garvey's 'Back to Africa' movement had also toured the region. There were 'many people coming around trying to stir us up so that we might resist oppression', Dabulamanzi Gcanga recalled. 'Bunting wanted freedom for the black man so that they could be free to form their own republic, independent of the white man.'<sup>10</sup>

Sidney and Becky went to Durban in February to purchase a caravan and prepare for the trip; coincidentally, Sidney bumped into Wilfred Harrison, who was just setting off for England. The Buntings entered the Transkeian territories on 1 March via Kokstad, travelling in a caravan sporting a red flag.<sup>11</sup> With them were Gana Makabeni, their comrade and interpreter, and Eddie Litshaba, their driver, both from the Transkei.<sup>12</sup> Sidney was almost fifty-six, and, as Jack had speculated, it was an arduous and stressful experience, driving on rocky, unpaved roads, campaigning in the day and camping by night. And it was chilly at night, even though they had a primus to warm themselves. But the experience, hard as it was, bred intimacy and, through this, friendship between Sidney and the much younger Gana.<sup>13</sup>

From the moment they entered the territories, Sidney later recounted, they were pestered by police who tailed them and 'queried the right of the two Transkeian natives who were with me'.<sup>14</sup> 'Wherever we made a halt', he wrote to Eddie Roux, 'they scrutinised our Native passes and our car license, and at Umtata ... they threatened us all with prosecution and eventually arrested our driver for entering the Transkei without a permit, although he ... was born here ... Our

slightest move is watched and reported by the police from place to place.' The authorities were hostile, and the 'chiefs have been told to take no part in the election campaign – and their salaries are at stake!' Sidney found the whites more 'vulgarly hostile' than he had expected.<sup>15</sup>

The harsh repression and racism were testimony of a region that had been deeply marked by colonial penetration and by long resistance. Until the 1820s the abaThembu had occupied land between the Mbashe and Umzimvubu Rivers. In the 1830s, following the social dislocations known as the *Mfecane* and wars with the amaBhaca and amaMpondo, some of the abaThembu moved north into an area that became known as Emigrant Thembuland. Struggles against colonial intervention over the next several decades finally culminated in the Gun War of 1880–1, won by the colonialists. The next year, 1882, colonial authorities set up the Thembuland Commission to address the position of chiefs in the post-war society. The thrust of colonial policy was to undermine the institution of the chieftainship in areas where chiefs had led anti-colonial resistance.

The report issued by the Thembuland Commission in July 1883 recommended that land hitherto occupied by the chiefs who had led the Gun War be given to white farmers. Africans deemed to have been loyal to the colonialists were moved south so that they formed a buffer between the whites and the anti-colonial rebels, and they were given arable land on a quit-rent basis with commonage rights. While undermining the chieftainship, the colonial authorities imposed a system of headmen to act as intermediaries representing the local population. In Xhalanga District, a part of Emigrant Thembuland, the colonial magistrate appointed headmen. This practice was in marked contrast to other areas of the Transkei, such as Phondoland, where headmen were drawn from chiefly lineage.

From the 1880s Africans were subjected to repeated attempts by whites to encroach upon their political rights. Africans who did not own land on a freehold basis – for example, those who held land on a communal basis – were precluded from the franchise. The Glen Grey Act of 1894 introduced a system of individual land allocation in the restricted areas of the reserves that deprived those in the scheme of the franchise. Colonial authorities also mooted the idea of a District Council for Africans, in which African councillors could debate matters of the day but would have a purely advisory role. In Xhalanga the subject was introduced in 1897. But both headmen and landowners resisted the Glen Grey Act and the District Council scheme: they wanted political rights on the same basis as whites. Following Union in 1910 the government renewed its efforts to introduce the District Council in Xhalanga. After much resistance it was eventually imposed by fiat; in Xhalanga it began meeting in March 1925. District Councils, governed by a Resident Magistrate and six members, two of whom were nominated by the South African Governor-General, dealt with a

range of local issues, including railways, roads, dams, housing sites, cattle dipping, agriculture and livestock, as well as the position of women and educational and political matters. But the system represented a significant curtailment of African political rights.<sup>16</sup> The attack on African rights continued full force with the Native Administration Act, which declared the Governor-General to be the Supreme Chief of all Africans and allowed him to govern by proclamation.<sup>17</sup>

Colonial influence brought other changes as well, especially in the domains of religion and education. Christian missionary influence in the Cape Province was long established: the Nonconformist London Missionary Society arrived in 1799, and the Glasgow and Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Societies in 1820. They did not, however, make significant inroads until the millenarian cattle-killing of 1857, which had been inspired by the prophecy of a young woman named Nongqawuse.<sup>18</sup> By the twentieth century, Methodism was the most influential Christian denomination in the region and had permeated many families.<sup>19</sup>

Aside from state-assisted education, African education fell under the domain of missionary societies, and the impact of these was particularly strong in the Cape Province. Of the leading African secondary education institutions, the Cape Province had fourteen, many of which were in the Transkeian Territories, compared to seven in Natal, three in the Transvaal and two in the Orange Free State. The Cape was also the home of the South African Native College, founded in 1916 at the military post of Fort Hare in Alice after years of work by John Tengo Jabavu, the only black university-level institution in the country. Missionary education had introduced a social distinction between 'school people' or *amagqobhoka*, who accepted some Western values and practices and were often Christian, and 'red people' or *amaqaba*, who resisted such influences. This distinction was reinforced by class and ethnic divisions. In Xhalinga, for example, school people granted farms with right of occupation as long as they were in residence were generally amaMfengu, while red people, mostly amaGcina, paid hut tax but lacked access to arable land.<sup>20</sup>

Education was so important to Africans in the Transkeian Territories that even some in the state bureaucracy had to recognize 'a growing inclination amongst a certain section of the native population, particularly in the Transkeian Territories, to secularise native education and to obtain a larger direct share in its management.'<sup>21</sup> Colonialism's ambiguous impact on people in the territories was succinctly captured by Krune Mqhayi, the Xhosa *imbongi* or praise singer: 'You sent us the truth, denied us the truth; You sent us the life, deprived us of life; You sent us the light, we sit in the dark, Shivering, benighted in the bright noonday sun.'<sup>22</sup>

When Sidney began his campaign, Thembuland had a population of about one million Africans and 20,000 whites. That year 3,487 people were registered to vote, up from 3,259 two years earlier. Of these, over half, or 1,711, were Afri-

cans, 1,629 were whites and 147 were 'mixed and other Coloured races'.<sup>23</sup> Sidney was contesting against A. O. B. Payn, the South African Party candidate, and G. K. Hemming, a South African Party member who had been holding the seat, but who was now running as an independent with the support of Professor D. D. T. Jabavu, the oldest son of John Tengo Jabavu. But unlike his opponents, Sidney did not target voters, even African voters, who were essentially freehold land owners. Instead, he focussed on Africans' lack of political rights, urging voters and non-voters alike, men and women, to show up at the polls on election day and protest their lack of democratic rights. While this approach may have been effective in spreading the Communist Party message, it was nonetheless limited as an electoral strategy.

Sidney did everything by the book. In Kokstad, he introduced himself to the Chief Official of the Transkei Native Affairs Department. Entering the Transkei, they proceeded to Umtata, a rapidly growing town whose colonial-style bungalows, topped with corrugated-iron roofs, faced wide, unpaved boulevards. There Sidney met with Chief Magistrate Welsh on 4 March to announce himself as the Communist electoral candidate. Two days later the campaigners held their first public meeting in Market Square. As would be their pattern, Gana Makabeni opened the meeting in isiXhosa and introduced Sidney, who addressed the crowd in English, followed by Becky. Makabeni would then translate their speeches into isiXhosa, as most of the local Africans did not speak English. His skill as an interpreter and his knowledge of local issues that could be used to illustrate Sidney's speeches were critical in spreading the Communist Party's message. As isiXhosa lacked many of the concepts describing capitalist political economy that Sidney used in his speeches, this gave much scope to Makabeni's interpretive imagination.<sup>24</sup>

There was already a precedent for English-language campaigning in the Transkei, assisted by translators. In addition to the liberal Cape politicians who periodically campaigned for the African and Coloured vote, the Gold Coast educator James Aggrey had come to South Africa in 1921 on behalf of the American philanthropic Phelps-Stokes Commission, addressing enthusiastic crowds in the Transkei on the need for patience and hard work. Several years later, Marcus Garvey's 'Back to Africa' movement made its influence felt in the Transkei. Elias Wellington Buthelezi, born in Natal in 1895, had been greatly influenced by Garvey's United Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) and by Ernest Wallace, a Caribbean who had come to Basutoland to organize UNIA branches and whose own speeches were imbued with notions of a millenarian black liberation. Wellington Buthelezi restyled himself as the English-speaking African-American Dr Butler Hansford Wellington, claiming to represent both the UNIA and the African Methodist Episcopal Church. He toured the Transkei in 1926 and 1927, preaching liberation brought by African-American emancipators in airplanes,

punctuating his speeches with passages from the Bible, hymns and prayers. He was finally banished from the Transkei in March 1927 but not before drawing a large band of followers; his trial in early 1927 was reportedly attended by over two thousand Africans.<sup>25</sup>

Thus, while Sidney's presence as a white campaigner was unusual, neither his use of English, nor his frequent censorious references to Dr Wellington's hoped-for airborne liberators were unfamiliar to his audiences. Nor, indeed, were his frequent Biblical references. For while Sidney was staunchly critical of missionary influence in Africa, considering men of religion to be 'among the most reactionary of all', his own political discourse was steeped in that tradition. As Sidney addressed his first public meeting in Umtata, with routine recourse to his 'somewhat lengthy notes', Becky distributed flyers and papers.<sup>26</sup> The speech was full of the concepts of capitalism and class struggle, but it nonetheless drew a crowd of about fifty whites and many more Africans.<sup>27</sup>

With surprising frankness, Sidney told his listeners that he was 'an Englishman born and bred' who had 'come out here more for the fun of the thing than anything else ... but he was not proud of that page of his history'. He outlined his political background, dating from his time in the South African Labour Party, then noted that he was honoured to find 'two places in that constituency bearing his family name, Buntingville and Old Bunting'; he had only 'heard yesterday for the first time that his Great-grandfather came out here and founded Old Bunting'. On his maternal side, 'the family had a little property in Natal', he acknowledged. But 'he was not standing on those grounds'. Instead, he was appealing 'to the Native and Non-European Voters more particularly', not because the Communists were anti-white, 'but because they were in favour of equal rights'. The Communists were not alone on that issue, he observed: John X. Merriman, former leader of the South African Party, had also called for equal rights. But the Communist Party was distinctive in founding its struggle for liberty, equality and justice on a scientific analysis of capitalism.<sup>28</sup>

Sidney explained that the capitalist system was premised on a minority controlling the means of production for their own benefit and to the disadvantage of the majority, who lacked such means of production. This laid the basis for colonialism.<sup>29</sup> The Europeans came, 'not as Whites, but as the possessors of capital; surplus profits were accumulating in the home country, and they invested somewhere where there was room for further dividends.'<sup>30</sup> The African territories were 'just a huge breeding and recruiting ground of cheap Native labour for Chamber of Mines', where there were 'more restrictions on freedom than any where else in the Union'. White officials had assured him that 'the Natives are quite content' with the District Council or *Bhunga*, as it was known. But the *Bhunga* reminded him of Russia's pre-revolutionary *Duma*. He concluded

by reading a passage from his pamphlet *Imperialism in South Africa*, which, he informed the audience, was being sold for a shilling.<sup>31</sup>

Sidney later wrote that despite 'a running fire of white shopkeepers' jeers ... the big Native audience heard us gladly – never had they heard such a gospel, least of all from a white man.'<sup>32</sup> The event caused quite a stir amongst the authorities. On 12 March the trio were charged with contravening section 29 (1) of Act 38 of 1927 – the Native Administration Act. The basis of this charge was that 'the said accused, one and each or other or all of them, did wrongfully and unlawfully utter certain words, or did an act or thing whatever, with intent to promote feelings of hostility between Natives and Europeans'. The statements that the trio were alleged to have made included, amongst others, 'that the Natives were driven off the land by the Europeans and that the Natives were compelled to live in Locations and that important Chiefs were also compelled to go to Locations', that 'the Europeans would take the trousers off the Natives and take his balls as well', that 'General Hertzog should be thrown into the sea' and that 'the white man had no right in these Territories'.<sup>33</sup>

The witnesses at the subsequent trial concurred on the charge of racial hostility. The black witnesses, as local government employees, may have felt vulnerable to reprisals. John Wynne Ntshona, a council clerk in the Chief Magistrate's office, felt 'that the remarks made created hostility between the white and Native people'. African detective constable Philip Nomruca testified that he had heard both Sidney and Gana Makabeni say 'that General Hertzog should be thrown into the sea' – allegations that the two strenuously denied. Jacques Ntobongwana, an employee of the Court Messenger who had passed the third class teachers' examination, stated that he could not 'say what impression No. 1's remarks would have on an uneducated mind ... a person of low intelligence might be upset by what was said'.<sup>34</sup>

The white witnesses were without exception hostile. Henry Hermann Klette, an auctioneer, felt that 'the Natives ... did not wish these other ideas put into their heads', while Arthur Edwin Fowler, a sheep inspector and retired civil servant, described the meeting as 'jovial', but when questioned by Sidney added: 'I did not notice any excitement. I told you you should have been in a lunatic asylum and I adhere to that ... I can't say exactly what words you used but I understood you to say there would be no equal rights.' Astonishingly, he added: 'I did not pay any attention to large portions of your speech'. Alfred William Strachan, a farmer and a colonel in the Defence Force, told the prosecutor: 'The impression I had was that his remarks would cause great discontent among the Natives'. In a similar vein, Mayor Robert Henry Prestwich, recounted that while he could not recall 'the exact words used about the local Bunga', nonetheless, they 'were likely to cause dissatisfaction among the Natives'. Gana Makabeni later testified that he and their driver had met Klette and Fowler on 5 March, the day before the



meeting. Klette had told him in isiXhosa that ‘he was going to collect people to disturb the meeting and shoot Bunting if necessary’. Fowler had added: ‘We will give him a bad time’. Not surprisingly, Klette and Fowler denied this.<sup>35</sup>

The magistrate, W. J. Davidson, decided against the accused. If the statements made by Sidney Bunting and Gana Makabeni, together with the material distributed by Rebecca Bunting ‘find their way to the Native kraals within the Transkeian Territories and ... are accepted by the Natives as a true and correct statement of their treatment by Europeans’, argued Davidson, ‘then not only will there be a feeling of hostility between Natives and Europeans but disturbances will be created too dreadful to contemplate’. Sidney was sentenced to £50 or six months hard labour, while the other two accused were fined £30 or three months hard labour.<sup>36</sup> A notice of appeal was filed on 18 March; bail was granted at £50 each.<sup>37</sup>

Undaunted, the trio took advantage of the wait for the appeal to continue their campaign. They were fast becoming infamous. The *Daily Dispatch* of 5 March had already warned that the Communist threat was ‘a very real one, and not the product of the heated imagination of politician or journalist’, and that it would ‘necessitate counter-measures if peril is to be averted’.<sup>38</sup> News of their campaign spread to Natal. ‘There have been reports in the papers all this last week of the proceedings’, Jack moaned to Alfred, ‘and of course Sidney is trying to prove that he did not say exactly what the reporters say he did and so get off on a quibble’. Sidney’s ‘political “raison d’être”’, in Jack’s view, was ‘promoting ill-feeling between the natives and ourselves’. ‘All Governments out here are pretty severe on those who seek to stir up trouble of any kind amongst the natives’, he added, speculating that ‘they run a good chance of being deported if they are found guilty’.<sup>39</sup>

On 23 and 25 March the trio spoke at Ngqeleni; the first day they addressed a crowd of about 100 blacks and two dozen whites. Announcements reading ‘*Intlanganiso yo Nyulo: Ummumzana S. P. Bunting Isiteti se Komonisi Partie [sic] uyakuteta naba Nyuli base Tembuland*’ [Election meeting: Mr. S. P. Bunting, speaker of the Communist Party will be addressing voters of Tembuland] were distributed for meetings at Clarkebury on 28 March, Manzana on 29 March, Engcobo on 30 March and Cala in Xhalanga District on 1 April.<sup>40</sup>

At Clarkebury, or *Emgwali*, as it was also known, their reception was decidedly cool. Situated on the Mbashe River in Engcobo District, 14 miles from the Mnyu railway station, Clarkebury had been founded in 1830; King Ngubengcuka had ceded the land to Methodist missionaries five years earlier. By 1929 Clarkebury was an attractive thriving co-educational centre, presided over by the severe and uncompromising Reverend Cecil Harris. It comprised the mission church, a teacher-training school, a secondary school, a practising school offering three- and four-year training courses in carpentry and building,



Figure 7: A crowd waiting to hear Sidney Bunting speak during his 1929 electoral campaign in Thembuland. Courtesy of UWC Robben Island Mayibuye Archive.

shoemaking and tanning, tinsmithing and blacksmithing, and men's tailoring, and domestic sciences for girls. It also boasted a sports fields and tennis courts. Its motto, 'Lift as you Rise', spoke of the sense of social responsibility it sought to instil in its students.<sup>41</sup>

Sidney did not take to Harris. When the trio arrived they met with an African minister who took them to see Harris. The Reverend invited the Buntings to tea, but Gana Makabeni and the African minister had to wait outside. As soon as they left, Reverend Harris telephoned the Magistrate at Engcobo. 'There's your holy man of God!' Sidney later exclaimed.<sup>42</sup>

On 29 March, Good Friday, the trio held a meeting at the quiet rural settlement of Manzana, situated at the foot of a mountain a few kilometres south of Engcobo town and home of a Wesleyan mission station.<sup>43</sup> They arrived late – the Magistrate's office, Sidney claimed, had tried to prohibit the meeting. After seeking out the local headman, George Gcanga, who was visiting the kraal of sub-headman Vacuza Tshila, Sidney proposed that, with Vacuza's consent, they hold their meeting at his kraal. The driver was sent to collect people, who were attending a funeral. Close to fifty people came – including women, to the consternation of some of the men – but not before the police arrived.<sup>44</sup> Gana Makabeni read the Communist Party programme in isiXhosa, then Sidney spoke about the political persecution that they had been subjected to during their campaign. They hoped to 'hold out a hand of friendship and a hope of freedom to the Natives', he began. That was why 'these whites here, who want always to be boss, and you to remain Jim Fish for ever, are furious with us. That is why the authorities ... declare war on my election.' The CPSA, he told them, stood for 'the workers and the underdog'.

But some blacks also claimed that 'the Natives are quite content as they are', Sidney continued. 'These are mere flunkeys, blacking the master's boots and aping his talks', he added dismissively. 'Their minds have been dulled and enslaved in the Mission schools ... they have deserted the mass of their people' – an ironic statement given that Mission school graduates presumably figured amongst his potential voters. The Transkeian territories were reservoirs for cheap labour, he continued. 'That is why the Chamber [of Mines] grudges you a good harvest, that is why you have so little territory for so many people and cattle, and the grass is eaten down until it is like a gentleman's lawn.' Africans, he urged, must use 'modern and scientific weapons' – organization, political education and demonstrations – as well as 'political weapons' – their votes or 'paper *asegais* [spears]'.<sup>45</sup> The gathering ended with the singing of the African national anthem, *Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika* [God Bless Africa].

Over the weekend they camped on commonage near Vacuza's kraal. On Saturday 30 March Sidney addressed an audience of about 75 or 100 at Engcobo. 'Thanks to the publicity given to me by our recent case in Umtata I need little

introduction', he began. 'I doubt if any candidate for Parliament in any country calling itself democratic has ever toured his constituency under such extraordinary and insulting conditions and with such gross partiality against him on the part of the authorities.' Europeans – white people – may claim that Africans are too backward for the vote, Sidney continued. But 'a vote is the expression of a person's demands, and the most backward and ignorant and poor are just those who have the most urgent and fundamental demands and therefore need the vote most'. That was the meaning of democracy. Local whites resented the red flag on his van, but that was labour's flag, he explained, reciting two verses of *The Red Flag*. He was 'preaching a new gospel which the Europeans did not like', he told them, and 'they must stand together and make the hands of the clock go round the other way'. Africans could no longer resort to arms, but must learn modern protest methods: 'the real point is that you have too little land and grazing, too much congestion, such that the grass is cropped like a mown lawn.'

His message struck a chord. An African woman spoke enthusiastically when he finished. Nantiso Kula, a farmer from Manzana who was very interested in politics, noted that he 'was pleased with [Bunting's] speech. We are under hardships. I complain of the dipping permits.' Africans had complained about being forced to dip their cattle to protect against illness. Sidney was not opposed to dipping, but he was emphatic that: 'You have not a beast too many'. Unusually, Sidney even had a sympathetic white listener: an attorney named Mr Kilfoil agreed with Sidney, but did not see how one individual could influence parliament.<sup>46</sup>

They left Manzana on Sunday afternoon, arriving at Cala mid-morning on Easter Monday for an afternoon meeting at the Agricultural Show Grounds. It was a relatively small meeting, with no more than fifty people. Inadequate land and overcrowding had turned this area into a labour reserve for the Chamber of Mines, Sidney told them. 'You must organise in the I.C.U. or African Congress if honestly run', he urged, 'but if you have no existing organisation already, then best of all is the Communist Party ... Organisation, unity, is your great weapon, and this election, the vote.' When he finished, two African women from the audience made short speeches in isiXhosa.<sup>47</sup>

The next day, 2 April, they went to Lady Frere; on 4 and 5 April, they spoke at Mlungisi, just outside of the Transkeian territories – home of the Church of God and Saints of Christ, some of whose followers had been massacred by government troops at Bulhoek in May 1921. Two days later they went to Cofimvaba. A detective followed them into the local African church. His presence 'obviously embarrassed the parson and the people'. Sidney 'went out to relieve the situation', complaining of 'interference between myself and individual voters and of the conduct of other detectives intimidating people and taking from them paper which we had handed them'. One woman returned her paper to Gana, while

others 'said that they did not understand what the Detectives wanted and they were not inclined to stay'. Nonetheless, Sidney and Becky addressed an 'orderly' meeting, as reported by Detective Webber, attended by about six African men, seven or eight African women, a dozen Coloured people and a few whites, with the 'Native parson' listening from a distance inside the church yard. Afterwards, followed by a local constable, they went on to Engcobo, distributing papers to people along the roadside.<sup>48</sup>

The police tailed them ceaselessly. Gana Makabeni wrote that when the campaigners stopped, 'they watch us and see what kind of food we eat and how we go to bed. When we camp for the night, they have to do likewise. If we divide up our party, they do the same, one following Bunting, another following me.' In Queenstown, he recounted, 'I went up and down the same street ... so that the people could see what I was doing, and the C. I. D. man kept following me without any shame until the shop boys laughed at him.'<sup>49</sup>

On 10 April they returned to Umtata. The new *Bhunga* building had just opened two days earlier, and Sidney attended a meeting when they got back. Later that afternoon he addressed a crowd in Market Square. 'Since our last meeting here', he began, 'we have toured around the western portion of this constituency and come back to find a report spread that we were dead'. This rumour had 'spread not only here but at Engcobo and Ngqeleni', he went on. The Clerk of the Court had informed him that 'he had heard I was seriously ill with ... haemorrhage of the lungs!' These were attempts to prejudice his candidature, he explained. He had just been to the *Bhunga*, he told the crowd. It was 'more useless' and racist than he had imagined: 'On the floor the Natives sit round the outside of the horse-shoe, but the centre and directing positions are all occupied by white Magistrates and officials'. Even the gallery had a colour bar, and he and Gana had not been allowed to sit together. At least the Russian Duma had had some democratic aspects!<sup>50</sup>

As Sidney spoke, he made constant reference to the notes that he kept in a file under his arm. Despite the continual harassment to which they had been subjected, he said, 'the eagerness of the mass of the Native people to hear our message is overwhelming'. Colonization had been disastrous for Africans, he began. 'While science and invention forge ahead with seven-league boots, all they have done for the Africans is to give them stagnation, stunted development, poverty, deterioration, no water conservation or pumping in this land of big rainfall, no fuel, and a reproach of "too many cattle" not to mention appalling servility and corruption and spying on each other.' Africans must vote to change this state of affairs, he urged. Becky then described the hardship that they had seen on their trip. 'Women have to carry water on their heads up the hills; women also carry firewood on their heads for miles. Children have to spend their young days look-

ing after cattle ... They ought to be at school.' She hoped 'that in 5 years to come Tembuland will be represented by a black man'.<sup>51</sup>

The next day they addressed close to 100 people at the outspan near the Umtata Show Grounds. Sidney referred to the colour bar dividing its agricultural shows, where 'a black man's ox or pig or potato or cabbage could not be shown alongside a white man's', and the colour bar 'between the two agricultures'. There was no comparison between white and African farms, and one could not talk of cooperation in the face of such inequality, he stressed. 'You notice the contrast particularly as you thread your way, as we have been doing lately, in and out of the Native Territories', he told his audience.<sup>52</sup> He still had his keen eye for comparative detail. 'You cross some invisible boundary and find yourself in fenced country with plenty of grass still, with trees and plantations, pumps, dams and gardens, a broad expanse of land all belonging to one owner whose comfortable home you see among a clump of trees', he pointed out. 'Then you cross again into Native Territories and there you see the little unfenced plots with no trees or pumps and the grass eaten down and the huts like pill boxes, a thousand in a valley of a size often considered not too big for one European farm, and each containing perhaps a dozen people.'<sup>53</sup>

Thus the agricultural question, Sidney explained, was first and foremost a question of the equal distribution of land. About seven-eighths of the country's land was owned by the white minority, and only one-eighth by the African majority. 'Plunder is the order of the day', he charged. South Africa was 'like the temple of which Christ said: "It is written, my house shall be a house of prayer, but ye have made it a den of thieves", and he made scourge of thongs and whipped all the money changers out. The same will have to be done here.'

'In the past the pioneers of Empire were Missionaries', he continued. 'They used to say trade followed the flag, to-day it is rather the flag follows capital' – but whether American or British it would still be capitalism, with all its inequalities. His party, he told the audience, stood for equal rights, majority rule and a Black Republic. White bystanders were jeering: 'these problems are serious ones', he retorted, 'not a case for giggling like that noise I heard from behind – "hee, hee, hee"; it must be one of the Agricultural Show animals!'

Becky followed. Her husband's opponent, Mr Payn, 'said it would be a sad day for South Africa when the Native women stop working the land', she told the audience. 'But Mr Payn does not suggest that his party if it gets into power will be giving land to women to work on.' So, she told her listeners, 'if you vote for the Communist candidate you will be voting for an independent black S. African Republic with full rights for all minorities'.<sup>54</sup> The authorities had had enough. Two days later, on 13 April, the trio were again arrested.

Legal proceedings took place over the ensuing weeks. Preparatory examinations began on 18 April under Assistant Magistrate J. W. Sleight; the three

Communists were committed for trial on 3 May.<sup>55</sup> The case made the national press. In Johannesburg, Arthur and Brian heard about the proceedings. 'We are reading in the paper about your being arrested again on the same charge as before', Arthur wrote to them. 'What do you expect will happen this time?' Despite their parents' unconventional life, the boys' day-to-day lives were shaped by the routine of school. Arthur predicted he would keep his first place at school and asked if he could buy a tennis racket, enclosing advertisements of the latest models.<sup>56</sup>

Since the intention to promote racial hostility was central to the charge of contravening the Native Administration Act, Sidney based his defence on the denial of such intent. Communism, he told the court, emphasizes class divisions. As such, it 'cuts away the ground of mere racialism and makes it clear not all whites can be considered to be hostile to all blacks and that indeed the interests of the great majority of whites involve their taking up the cause of the Natives as a subject race'. Moreover, although he found the power of the authorities, the prejudice of local whites and the co-optation of local chiefs to be 'more unblushing' than he had expected, he also insisted that most of their meetings in Thembuland 'were less violent than many others' that he had addressed in Johannesburg.<sup>57</sup>

On the day the preparatory examinations began, the *Bhunga* was also deliberating the case. Councillor D. Dalindyebo moved 'the Government be respectfully requested to take immediate action against Mr. S. P. Bunting under the provisions of Act No. 29 of 1897 (Cape) as owing to the statements he is making at public meetings, he is dangerous to the public peace if left at large in the Transkeian Territories'. He was moving this motion, he explained, because 'the time has come when we should uplift the Native people. It appears now that peace has been reduced to nothing and is being trampled under foot.' He had heard about Bunting's campaign when he was in East London. 'When I returned on 30<sup>th</sup> March I called a meeting of the headmen and chiefs of Umtata; I told them plainly that I did not want a man of this kind among the Tembu people. When I came here I found his influence might result in his setting fire to the whole country.'<sup>58</sup>

A heated discussion ensued. Councillor E. Mda seconded the motion. Bunting 'is preaching to my people what is called Communism ... They are told in Xosa that they shall all be equal. Has that ever existed? ... Right away from the time when God created man and women he made them not equal. This man is preaching to us to-day that we should all be equal. I think that is impossible.' Councillor H. Makamba referred to the disturbances in Tsolo, when Dr Wellington's supporters had come to town. The people were very ignorant. 'If a Native had misled us in Tsolo, what will be the position when a white man does the same thing?' he asked the chamber. 'I am sure that if this man goes to Tsolo

the people will say the white American has now come, because people say that if you see a white American you will know that what he is speaking about is the truth.' Councillor Xakekile summed up the general feeling: 'I say he has already done harm ... Several Natives are siding with this man we are seeking to remove ... he is getting a following and the position should be dealt with.' The motion was carried unanimously.<sup>59</sup>

Their fears were not unfounded. When the trial took place, many of the black witnesses were indeed sympathetic to Sidney and his companions. Most of the Manzana witnesses had relied on Gana Makabeni's speeches; their own statements to the court were interpreted from isiXhosa. Vacuza Tshila, the sub-headman and, in his words, the 'chief man in that locality', gave the harshest testimony against the trio, claiming that he 'told the people not to say anything to accd. as they would get into trouble together with the white man'. Bunting said that he was 'asking for votes', he testified, yet no voters were present. He had not understood the expression 'paper assegais'. When questioned by Makabeni, he replied: 'I was not willing to let you address the people at my kraal. I was ashamed of the white man. If it were you only I would have driven you away'. Although acknowledging that the meeting had been 'orderly and not excited', when re-examined he added that he 'dispersed the meeting because ... I saw the accd's party being chased by the Police'. When questioned by the court he testified: 'I have never seen white strangers address people in our location. I thought it strange.'<sup>60</sup>

But other witnesses contradicted Vacuza. Ben Gxabagxaba, a farmer, and Zachariah Mantlaka, a Methodist preacher, testified that there had been voters present, and that they had not heard any objections to the meeting nor any references to violence. 'I was pleased with the accused's speech', Gxabagxaba told the court. 'The natives were quite pleased with the speech and they were not excited. I am not saying that I am being oppressed by the whites but I do not get the same wages. I believed all Mr. Bunting told me.' When re-examined, he added: 'I complain of European treatment in that we do not get proper education and [receive] small wages. I was not hostile to the Europeans before the meeting and did not feel hostile after the meeting.' Mantlaka added that when the meeting ended after singing and cries of 'hip, hip, hoorá', Vacuza and the others shook hands with the accused, and Vacuza told the party that they could stay in his kraal that night.

Other witnesses reported on the trio's speeches at Engcobo and Cala. James Bertram Clark of the Native Recruiting Corporation testified that Bunting said that 'the natives did not have too many cattle ... That the natives wanted more land. That the natives were entitled to as many cattle as they liked ... [that] what he preached was the truth.' After hearing this, Clark claimed, the African listeners became 'rather excited'. The black witnesses were more receptive to Sidney's



message. Jacob Samuel Dugane was a registered voter who, coincidentally, served as a clerk under attorney Kilfoil. Dugane attended the Engcobo meeting with Vacuza and recalled Sidney's comment that 'the red flag on his car was for the oppressed people'.<sup>61</sup>

Benjamin Tyamzashe, a noted musician and principal teacher at Higher Mission School in Cala, testified about the Cala meeting.<sup>62</sup> He was a registered voter, he told the court, but he did not see many others at the meeting. Bunting, recounted Tyamzashe, said Africans 'were told to keep just a few well bred cattle so that these would fall into the hands of the traders and that the natives would then be forced to leave their homes and go to the mines'. Bunting also said, Tyamzashe recalled, that 'blacks should have a share in the Government and that they should have a black republic. That the blacks should have blackmen in parliament.' Bunting lambasted the local missionaries as 'no better than the Governing bodies because when the black children went to their schools they came out no better than when they went in, that is they came out still servants and not good citizens'. According to Bunting, 'if they went to the Communist school they would be made better men and women and good citizens and that they would be able to do far more for the blacks and South Africa.' Bunting urged the women that they "could do a lot in this" and that their "services [would] be required". Tyamzashe said he asked Bunting 'if there was a possibility of driving the white man out of the country', and that Bunting had replied that 'there was none at present but their bullying would be got rid of'.<sup>63</sup>

Richard Nkomo, another registered voter, was a deputy messenger of the Cala Court. He thought there were 'a fair number of registered voters' at the Cala meeting. He recalled Bunting's reference to the widespread 'hope that aeroplanes would come from America to release us'. Instead, Bunting proposed, they should organize and vote. If he were elected, Bunting told the audience, 'the Government was bound to listen to him as he represented the majority. That if we voted for him the whole country would shake.' It was not an easy speech to follow, Nkomo stated. Gana Makabeni 'was at times eager to enlarge on what Accused No. 1 said'; but overall he 'gave a fair interpretation'.

The witnesses for the Umtata meetings were all white. Cecil George William Muggleston, an attorney, and Walter Henry Cleverley Taylor, a major in the South African police force and Acting Deputy Commissioner for the Transkei Division, were both struck by Sidney's scathing remarks about the *Bhunga* and by Becky's call for a black republic. Yet they reached opposite conclusions about the state of the crowd. Muggleston felt that the Africans 'were not excited'. But according to Taylor, the white speakers 'at both meetings shouted out remarks in English and Xosa and the natives retaliated. There was a certain amount of excitement at the end of the meeting on the 10<sup>th</sup>'. Arthur Fowler recalled that Becky Bunting told the audience that on election day 'all you electors and even

those who are not electors (at this stage Mr. Bunting intervened and told Mrs Bunting to say the women as well) demand your rights ... The majority must rule you people are in the majority and that the Communist party was out to fight for a Black Republic.' The meeting was 'very disorderly', Fowler claimed; 'there was a great deal of excitement due to the remarks made by Accused No. 2'.

Robert Mure, a Presbyterian minister at Ross Mission, thirteen miles from Umtata, was scathing about Sidney's speech. Bunting 'spoke sneeringly' about the chief magistrate and the magistrate at Engcobo, he told the court, and was sarcastic about Reverend Harris. Bunting 'said that the missionaries were creatures of the ruling classes ... and that we the missionaries were under the influence of the Chamber of mines'. Becky Bunting was even 'more unguarded than her husband', he thought. She spoke of 'white misrule' and said that 'this can only be put a stop to by a black South African Republic'. The speeches that day were well attended, with 'a fair crowd of natives and a good few Europeans', Mure said. 'I have never heard speeches like that before', he concluded. 'I noticed excitement amongst the people. I heard some of the natives making remarks of agreement with what the Accused had said.' Detective Sergeant Johannes Christoffel Naude was also upset. Struck by Sidney Bunting's claim that Europeans were turning the Transkei into a den of thieves and Becky Bunting's call that 'all the men and women and children should go to the voting places and demand the vote', two days later, Naude told the court, he arrested the trio.<sup>64</sup>

They again lost their case, but once more Sidney immediately launched an appeal, and the trio continued their campaign, even publishing a four-page political advertisement.<sup>65</sup> Sidney was completely caught up in the campaign with 'no time to write', he informed Eddie Roux from Umtata on 14 May. '[I]t needs a book to describe everything here ... We have got to live on less, but I quite take to mealie-pap (the natives can't afford even that) and the field, the scope, and among all except the good-boy voters the response is unlimited.' As usual he was dismissive of mission-educated African voters. The ordinary Africans welcomed them, he told Eddie, but they had no vote, and those who had the vote, he presumed, would support the South African Party.<sup>66</sup>

But the separation was difficult for his sons. 'How are you getting on with the cases?' Arthur wrote to his parents on 19 May. 'All that has been reported is that your appeal is postponed for June 28, after the election.' The lack of a predictable future was hard on the boys. 'Everybody we know is asking when you are coming back', Arthur pleaded. 'Uncle Wolfie & Aunt Sonia want to know, Grannie wants to know, even Mr. & Mrs. Stein want to know. James too. And also, we want to know.'<sup>67</sup>

On 31 May the trio were back at work in Western Thembuland, visiting African locations around the small, sleepy town of Lady Frere in the Glen Grey district, where the land had cracked open and was scarred with dongas – crevices



Figure 8: A crowd at one of Sidney Bunting's meetings during his 1929 electoral campaign in Thembuland. Sidney is seated to the left of the two main standing figures. Courtesy of UWC Robben Island Mayibuye Archive.

– due to soil erosion. Climbing the rocky road up the side of a mountain towards Macubeni location, they held a meeting at the store of a Mr Vogt, addressing a group of about fifteen Africans and two whites. They held another meeting at the kraal of headman Luke Tate at Mount Arthur, attended by about thirty-one Africans and three whites. A few days later, on 3 June they spoke at Bengu location, a small settlement spread out along the bottom of the mountain on the other side of Lady Frere. When the way was too treacherous for a vehicle, they proceeded on horseback. Finally, they were recommitted for trial on 3 July.<sup>68</sup>

In late April Jack had written to Alfred predicting that Sidney would soon feel the government's wrath. The Pietermaritzburg press had reported the Bhungas's resolution to the government. In the European areas, he told Alfred, the government was more tolerant about 'cranks' – political agitators – 'in the belief that the ordinary horse-sense of those who listen will enable them with fair accuracy to balance what they have got against what the speaker promises', but the government was more vigilant in the African areas. No doubt Sidney was starting to realize 'that he won't be allowed with impunity to go round stirring up disaffection and discontent amongst a vast population of an inferior race who are better off and more settled than ever they were before'. It was, after all, 'just a piece of cheek for Sidney to think he can go into those reserves and guarded districts and say what he likes'.<sup>69</sup>

But whatever harassment the trio were experiencing from the government, they were vindicated in June by their election results. Ominously, the National Party won the general elections outright, signalling the end of the National-Labour Pact; General Hertzog remained as Prime Minister, but Oswald Pirow replaced Tielman Roos as Minister of Justice. Sidney, however, fared better than expected, and far better than Douglas Wolton, despite the harder challenge. Of the 2,302 votes counted in the three-way Thembuland contest, Sidney received 289 or about 12.5 per cent of the total, and was able to keep his deposit; of the 3,082 votes counted in the four-way contest in the Cape Flats, Wolton received ninety-three or 3 per cent and lost his deposit.<sup>70</sup>

Reinvigorated with their relative success, Sidney and Becky left Umtata after their preparatory examination reopened in early July. They collected their car at Kingswilliamstown, 'where it had collapsed', then went to Queenstown to meet Douglas Wolton who, following his defeat, had finally decided to leave the country and was en route back to England with Molly. Sidney and Becky then picked up the boys and drove back to the Transkei. It was winter; the weather was awful. Brian, aged nine, was struck by the lanky Eddie Litshaba 'huddled over the wheel of the van'. One particularly murky night, as the van wound its way 'through the mist on a mountain pass', he pinned all his hopes on Litshaba as their 'prospective saviour'.<sup>71</sup>

The work carried on. Hoping to found ‘a non-party mass organisation on the basis laid down at our recent meetings at Johannesburg’, Sidney informed his comrades, they returned to Manzana, ‘where our best supporters were’. But they were ‘disappointed at the sluggishness of the response’. Nevertheless, they formed the ‘designedly innocuous’ League of Native Rights, whose main aims were ‘the preservation and extension of the native franchise and universal free education equal to whites’. Nantiso Kula was the chairman – ‘a good fellow’, Sidney thought.<sup>72</sup> Afterwards, the family drove through Phondoland to Natal in their ‘rickety van ... camping in tents’ until they reached Durban, where they stayed with their comrade, S. M. Pettersen.<sup>73</sup>

‘You will have seen the report on our successful appeal, though the version of the judgment I read last night seems rather cock-eyed’, Sidney wrote to his comrades. ‘I think our further prosecution under the Act *may* just possibly be dropped’, he speculated, noting ‘that the Judges had our programme & my “Imperialism” pamphlet before them and did not pronounce them illegal’. The Solicitor General might yet bring them to trial as a result of his ‘attack on the Magistrate’, Sidney conceded, though he himself did not think it defamatory. He planned to request that the case be tried at Grahamstown without a jury, rather than Umtata. ‘Meanwhile’, he concluded, ‘I can’t settle down to anything, I fear, and have no means of livelihood. I am not keen on starting law again.’<sup>74</sup>

Jack’s speculation to Alfred, earlier that March, that Sidney might get off ‘on a quibble’ was on the mark. The Solicitor-General, E. W. Baxter, decided not to prosecute the case. On 19 July the Eastern Districts Court allowed Sidney’s appeal and set aside their previous conviction and sentence. The Court’s conclusion vindicated Sidney’s decision to focus on the issue of intent. The Court noted that there was ‘little doubt that great mischief will be done to the Natives in the Territories by the circulation of Communistic speeches and pamphlets’. But it could not see how prosecution under the Native Administration Act would prevent such mischief. That Act ‘was not meant to apply to persons in good faith advocating the doctrines of the political party, to which they happen to belong, unless the doctrine, or the words used in advocating them or the circumstances under which they were uttered and published must necessarily have the effect of promoting hostility between Natives and Europeans.’<sup>75</sup>

In these circumstances, the Solicitor-General thought that it would be ‘extremely doubtful whether a conviction could be expected upon the main charges’ and that the evidence for the other charges was ‘not altogether satisfactory.’<sup>76</sup> The Secretary for Native Affairs, too, thought that ‘the scrappy nature of the evidence’ precluded ‘any further action.’<sup>77</sup> That September the Chief Magistrate of Umtata wrote to the Secretary of Native Affairs that the Solicitor-General’s decision not to prosecute meant ‘that Mr. Bunting and others would appear to be free to disseminate their doctrines and carry on their propaganda

with impunity'. The Communist Party was a tiny organization in 1929, even though its membership had been growing. But against the backdrop of militant ANC activity in the Western Cape, the ICU's successes and the recent protests in Durban, with which Communists were said to be involved, state officials were worried. 'The position here is becoming acute', continued the Chief Magistrate. 'There is no doubt Communism is spreading amongst the natives in these Territories and immediate steps should be taken to deal with Mr. Bunting.' In light of the Minister of Justice's proposed legislation regarding the expulsion of 'undesirables' from particular areas of the country, the Chief Magistrate recommended that action be taken against Bunting 'under the provisions of the Transkeian Territories, Tembuland and Pondoland Laws Act (No. 29/1897) on lines similar to those taken against "Dr. Wellington" (Proclamation No. 100/1927) who is by no means as dangerous as Mr. Bunting'.<sup>78</sup>

The matter finally reached the House of Assembly on 8 August, introduced by General Smuts, who noted that the case against Bunting 'broke down because the judge held that ... no intention had been proved'. He hoped that the government would tighten the law and the administration to prevent a repeat of such events. Prime Minister Hertzog replied that the Minister of Native Affairs was already aware of the need to take further legislative action, although 'not directly through an Act'. Oswald Pirow, the new Minister of Justice, expanded. He assured the House that 'communism in this country, as shown by police reports, is at present merely a nuisance'. Nonetheless, he warned, 'there is a possibility, even a probability, that within a short time it will become an absolute danger'. The Department of Native Affairs was considering the problem, but amendment of the Native Administration Act 'raises a legal difficulty which is almost insuperable', he continued. 'If the Act was so worded that the "intention" was material, I do not know if members on this or the other side of the House might not find themselves contravening the Act without knowing it or without intending to do so.' The difficulty was, he stated, that 'whilst on the one hand you want to suppress what is unlawful, on the other hand you do not want to introduce legislation which will unduly curtail the liberty of the subject'.<sup>79</sup> The law would continue to be paramount, even though its parameters were ever more constricted.

Notoriety was stressful, although electrifying, and the Buntings returned to Johannesburg emotionally exhilarated but physically exhausted. Much as he dreaded it, Sidney returned to law; he had to earn a living. He needed to spend time with his sons, whom he and Becky had left in the care of others during much of the past two years. But he threw himself once again into a whirlwind of political activity, planning the launch of the League of Native Rights that he had founded at Manzana.

## 13 FALLING FROM GRACE

It was the first day of August 1929. Two Communists, Ralph Levy and Fanny Klenerman, were speaking outside the Johannesburg City Hall addressing a large crowd of whites. Police spies were taking notes. Sidney showed up, 'at the head of a band of 150 natives who were carrying a red banner'. He was back in town and in fighting spirit. News of his Transkei journey and court battles had preceded him. 'He spoke on the usual Communist lines', reported one of the spies, 'and said the workers should put a stop to war by refusing to fight'.<sup>1</sup>

Five months in a caravan in the Transkei had left Sidney in poor shape, physically and financially. The Lidgetton estate was doing well, despite 'a lower average price for bark, higher native wages, intermittent rains and longer haulage to the siding', so Sidney could expect a healthy dividend that year.<sup>2</sup> But that was still to come, and worried about money, he moved the family to Bertrams, a suburb to the east of New Doornfontein that had begun to decline from its earlier days of prosperity. Their new home was 'a rather depressing semi-detached dwelling with more restricted facilities' than their old house on Regent Street. Sidney had grown accustomed to eating mealie-pap during the campaign, and now he even tried to get the family to eat mealie meal porridge and sorghum gruel for breakfast – ostensibly to economize. Arthur rebelled at that point; there were limits to going native.<sup>3</sup>

Sidney began planning how to restart up his legal practice. While he was away a teacher named Simon Nkona had written to him seeking work as a legal assistant or interpreter. Nkona was studying law by correspondence, he informed Sidney, and in the meantime was teaching at the Diocesan Training College in Pietersburg. Sidney now contacted him and enquired about his politics. Nkona assured him that it was his 'ardent desire' to promote 'the emancipation of my people' but the problem was finding 'the right channel constitutionally'. They arranged for him to start at the end of the upcoming school term.<sup>4</sup>

On 11 August, Sidney was back at the City Hall, speaking on the 'Tragedy of the Transkei'. Becky followed, telling the crowd 'that it only wanted a spark to set the Transkei alight as the people knew they were oppressed and were looking for a leader'. Albert Nzula, who was proving to be a superb orator, completed the session claiming that 'the people would sooner or later throw off the yoke'.<sup>5</sup>

Sidney was a regular speaker at the City Hall outdoor meetings over the next weeks, but his main political aim was to build the League of Native Rights. The league affiliated to the CPSA with the proviso that it had no intention of displacing existing organizations – an indicator of competition amongst African political organizations.<sup>6</sup> Membership was available on an individual and group basis; individual membership was one shilling, membership for local bodies was five shillings and for national bodies, one pound. The league called for the retention of the Cape African vote; the extension of the parliamentary franchise to blacks on the same basis as whites; universal free education for black children on the same basis as white children; and the abolition of the pass laws throughout the Union. More broadly, it aimed to protect African interests on all matters, to demand all rights to which Africans were entitled, and to train its members to hold meetings, demonstrate and send deputations to the government. It immediately launched a petition drive in support of those demands for presentation to the government. The idea behind the petition was that in canvassing for signatures organizers would be explaining the league's demands, a form of political education. Gana Makabeni became the league's rural organizer, basing himself at Maxaka's location in Libode in western Phondoland.<sup>7</sup>

On Sidney's return to Johannesburg, he set in motion the wheels for promoting the league on the Witwatersrand. African Communists in Johannesburg were hopeful about the league's prospects, although African politics were flux, and the 1929 election results forecast a gloomy outlook for black South Africans. But Communists could rely on ANC leader Josiah Gumede. His experiences in Brussels and Russia had drawn him close to the Party, and in early 1929 he had been a key mover in launching a South African branch of the League against Imperialism, although this never really got off the ground.<sup>8</sup>

Communists could not, however, count on the ICU. Aside from Clements Kadalie's resentment of Communists, the ICU was in a parlous state. Its rapid growth had been accompanied by organizational weakness and financial corruption, and it was fracturing. In Natal A. W. G. Champion was vying with Kadalie for control of the organization. Elsewhere, Doyle Modiagotla and Keable 'Mote – 'the "Lion" of the Orange Free State' – condemned Kadalie and called for a 'Clean Administration'; 'Mote led a secession of the ICU's northern Orange Free State branch. Kadalie recruited Scottish trade unionist William Ballinger to help sort out the organization's problems. Ballinger arrived in July 1928 but he and Kadalie soon fell out. In March 1929 Kadalie broke from Ballinger and formed the Independent ICU.<sup>9</sup> With the ICU's problems in mind and confident of Gumede's support, Sidney was sure that there was political space for the league.

A renamed League of African Rights (LAR), styled as a broad united front, was launched at an All-In-Conference at the Workers' Hall, Market Street,



Johannesburg on 25 August. Gumede was president; Modiagotla of Ballinger's ICU, vice-president; Sidney, chair, and Reverend N. B. Tantsi of the Transvaal ANC, vice-chair; Sidney and Charles Baker, treasurers; Albert Nzula and Eddie Roux, secretaries and Moses Kotane, S. M. Kotu, B. Molobi and William Thibedi constituted the committee. The league adopted a black, red and green flag and *Mayibuye iAfrika* [Let Africa Return] as its slogan; this became the name of its anthem.<sup>10</sup> It threw itself into the million-signature petition drive.

Back in Libode, Gana Makabeni faced a difficult task, although people had heard of Sidney even in that remote area. 'I have made very little progress as I had no materials in hand. I have concentrated my work on individuals and indoors,' he told Albert Nzula on 3 September. A meeting on the 31 August had been 'not so well attended' but nonetheless, 'quite a good no. of intellectuals were present and old men supposed to be citizens if the word "citizen" was well presented'. The audience was 'enthusiastic ... and most encouraging'. He had not yet been able to get the draft constitution typed, he informed Sidney the next day, hoping that Sidney would come down to hold a few meetings. The next week he began holding public meetings and thought 'the people seem to be greatly interested with the exception of the sneaks who pretend to be pleased while they are not'. Generally, though, he found the locals 'unjudgeable, but the fact is, that they all want to join Bunting's Party as they call it. They believe in Bunting.'<sup>11</sup>

In mid-September Sidney sent Gana a £1 postal order and a package of supplies. Sidney was surprised that sales of the paper were not that good; in his experience it 'sold like hotcakes'. The Party was in financial difficulty, and the sale of League badges was not going well, he told Gana. He was worried that rival organizations might 'take the wind out of the League's sails', unless they could be persuaded to cooperate.<sup>12</sup> Makabeni still faced tough going. In Umtata a certain Ntshona had distributed badges and petitions, and was now 'surprised' that the Party was asking for money for them. He now claimed the League was really a cover for the Communist Party, 'with its danger of bloodshed. That is how Mr Ntshona reasons the League', he recounted.<sup>13</sup>

By October Makabeni had still not formed any branches, 'owing to the confusion of people by organisation'. He was concentrating on Phondoland, attending concerts and churches to 'meet the intellectuals'. These, he found, 'all agree with the League's principles and quite appreciate it, but the problem is to get one to be active or to sign first'. Nonetheless, he thought the petition campaign was 'promising'; despite the widespread illiteracy, he found that illiterate people were 'the most attentive'. He had a number of meetings scheduled, but travel from one place to another could take one day on horseback or two days on foot. He sold an average of three dozen copies each of two issues of the *South African Worker*, he reported to Sidney, sending his 'heartiest greetings to comrade Mrs Bunting and her two sons.'<sup>14</sup>

Sidney was busy, but felt unsettled. The family was not comfortable in Bertrams. He unburdened himself to Jack, even though they were rarely in contact. He was planning to reopen his law office and moving closer to town. 'He does not refer to his political activities', Jack told Alfred, 'but can hardly hope that he has abandoned them'. Jack presumed correctly.<sup>15</sup>

Sidney did indeed restart his practice at 42–3 Asher's Buildings. And at some point the family moved – to 16 Highland Road in the leafy and rather more posh suburb of Kensington.<sup>16</sup> This house was more modern than their previous homes, and they were able to afford it because Becky – who had never practised as a midwife in South Africa – began 'taking in work as a dressmaker', sewing for her family and friends. Becky did all the cooking. The family employed a domestic worker who lived in an outhouse in the back next to a shed where Arthur, who was showing an interest in science, had set up a small laboratory. In addition to the housework, one of her tasks was 'to enter the house first thing in the morning and light a fire in the coal stove in the kitchen', where the family ate breakfast.

The house had no luxuries. It lacked a flush toilet, and they used 'the bucket system' out back. In the middle of the night the 'night-soil removers' would come and carry the waste away on a horse-drawn cart. Nor was there a refrigerator 'or even ice box', although someone – probably Arthur – had constructed 'a primitive cooler consisting of paraffin tins encased in sacking, one of top of another in a wooden frame surmounted by another paraffin tin filled with water but designed to leak slowly so that the sacking around the tins below was always wet'. Rather amazingly, 'this helped to keep cool the goods stored in the tins'. There was a garden, and Sidney did most of the gardening, 'growing not only flowers and fruit trees but also vegetables ... digging vigorously and getting into a real sweat on a hot day'. It helped him relax.

But there was music – 'always music' – in the house. They had 'a wind-up HMV gramophone which gave very poor reproduction', on which Sidney used to play Tchaikovsky and Wagner, his favourites. 'When you listen to Wagner', Sidney used to tell Arthur and Brian, 'don't concentrate on the singing but listen to the orchestra which has the most interesting things to say'. He still carried on his own father's tradition of family chamber music. He played the viola and piano, Arthur, the cello and Brian, the violin; they 'constituted a lively if not very proficient trio playing the simpler works of Mozart and Beethoven', and once, 'even tried some Reger'.

So despite the stresses of endless political activity – Sidney was booked to speak on behalf of the LAR throughout the latter part of the year, for instance – at home he was happy and could relax. On Sundays, Becky cooked a big mid-day meal. Afterwards, Sidney and the boys often walked across the mine dumps to the nearby African location of Prospect, where Gana Makabeni lived. Sidney

would address a residents' meeting on one of the street corners, and the boys would wander away 'to play with some of the township children or eat mealies roasted on braziers in the open air'. Sometimes, though, Arthur would stay at home, puttering in his lab out back, while Brian accompanied his father.<sup>17</sup>

LAR activities were proceeding apace in other parts of the country, with Sidney scheduled to speak in Kimberley and Kroonstad. Membership badges and petition forms for the 'Get a million signatures!' campaign were sent to local CPSA branches and other groups.<sup>18</sup> The league's first congress was set for 15 December in Johannesburg. This was the day before Dingaan's Day, which commemorated the Battle of Blood River on 16 December 1838, when Zulu chief Dingane and his army were defeated by Voortrekkers on the banks of the Ncome river in Natal, triggering a civil war in the Zulu kingdom. The league's secretaries, Nzula and Roux, called on 'lovers of African freedom' to make Dingaan's Day one of national protest against the oppressive measures proposed by Hertzog and Minister of Justice Pirow and urged that 'effigies of Mr. Pirow should be burnt in public'.

But leaders of the established political groups were reluctant to work with the LAR. These difficulties were particularly acute in Bloemfontein, a favoured venue for African political meetings because of its location at the crossroads of several railway lines. There, leaders of the ANC and Independent ICU were distinctly uninterested in associating with the league. Bloemfontein Communist Eddie Dambuza was in frequent contact with Sidney, who, he claimed, had 'broken down 3/4 part of that flying Inspiration of no confidence in a whiteman that was inspired by these misleaders to hate blindly'. In September Dambuza wrote to Albert Nzula about a rumour he had heard 'that the Ind I. C. U. has returned your letters in refusal of the "coming down" of Comrade Bunting'. But he was not particularly worried. 'All efforts are made for Comrade Bunting to hold a big meeting on Sunday in Bloemfontein,' he explained.<sup>19</sup> On the 23 September Bunting wrote to congratulate Dambuza about his successful meeting 'in spite of the attitude of the Independent I. C. U.' Sidney still thought 'that in time they will see that it is in the interest of all the people to make a success of this petition.'<sup>20</sup>

Another Bloemfontein Communist, Sam Malkinson, wrote to Sidney that 'the I.C.U. are trying to prevent the people coming to the meeting by the statement that it is a Communist organization'. Sidney counselled patience. He had just heard from one Mpose that the league was holding weekly meetings in Bloemfontein and thought 'there would seem to be life in the old dog yet'. Ballinger, too, was critical of the league. Sidney, quick to judge, thought it was 'due to cowardice. They funk even the very slight risk and effort of being parties to the petition campaign.'<sup>21</sup>

At a local ANC meeting on 24 October, the chairperson, Reverend Sandlana, asked those LAR members present to identify themselves and explain the 'reasons that caused them to join the League'. He then suspended the four members: Dambuza, Ndudula, Ntlonze and Mtyhala. A certain Umhlangala alleged that 'there is mutual agreement between the A.N.C. and Ind I.C.U. only to scandalize the League of African Rights'. The leaders of the two first organizations were 'becoming narrow-minded, their eyes are blind', he claimed, wondering 'where lies a sin in this organisation that Comrade Bunting has brought it with him, coming to give a hand or aid to the perplexed Bantu leaders'.<sup>22</sup>

In late October, in the midst of these squabbles, the CPSA received a cable from the ECCI ordering the league's disbanding on the grounds of possible fusion with reformist organizations. This reflected the Comintern's New Line: as the contradictions of capitalism's third stage intensified, Communists were to repudiate alliances with reformist and social democratic organizations.<sup>23</sup> Eddie Roux, the Party's general secretary, responded that canvassing for the petition entailed mass meetings and discussions, activities which threatened the white establishment and from which moderate black leaders generally remained aloof. 'In fact', Roux explained, 'the reformists have already taken fright at the petition and are boycotting it accordingly'. The LAR offered a means to build a broad anti-imperialist alliance and to spread Communist influence in country towns, which was imperative in the event that the Party was banned – the Communists were worried about political repression.<sup>24</sup>

The work continued. They were making progress at Bloemfontein, Malkinson told Sidney in late October. A woman comrade named E. Stein had arrived and 'accelerated' things – her gender and her outsider status attracted a crowd, if only because people were curious. Dambuza, Stein and Malkinson addressed a large, enthusiastic meeting at the African location, which, 'at its height ... must have numbered 400, and averaged between 200 and 300'. The ANC did not send a representative, but Moahluli, chair of the local Independent ICU, 'wholeheartedly supported our campaign for the 16<sup>th</sup> December'. A certain Gonyane – a teacher and member of the Native Advisory Board and Joint Council – 'spoke for himself', Malkinson wrote, 'as he belonged to no organisation, and was against this procession'. Gonyane counselled patience and indicated his worry about 'Pirow's guns and bombs ... Whilst he was speaking lots of voices shouted: Pull him off the chair, etc.' They broke up after singing *Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika* and two verses from the 'Red Flag'.<sup>25</sup> But, disappointingly, Moahluli soon disassociated himself from the LAR. 'Well comrade, this is BFN', wrote Malkinson. 'Every time I renew my enthusiasm I immediately get a setback.' True indeed. A few days later Malkinson conveyed to Sidney 'the unpleasant news that the ICU have backed out of the demonstration'.<sup>26</sup>

The Non-European Ministers' Association held a conference at Bloemfontein on 6 December. They feared that the state's increasingly repressive stance would culminate in violence against mass protests. For the most part, the CPSA scorned church leaders for their ostensibly apolitical stance. Very much like Sidney, Malkinson felt that 'the clerics ... are here too for the purpose of damping the rising native spirit, in regard also to the procession on 16<sup>th</sup> Dec'. Nonetheless, some religious leaders were cordial to Communists. In the run-up to the ministers' conference, Malkinson met with former ANC president Reverend Z. R. Mahabane, who informed him that he had convened 'a pure Bantu conference to see how they could come and act together and speak in one voice as a race'. Malkinson let Sidney know that he had apprised Mahabane that 'there will probably be delegates ... from the C. P. and also from the LAR, from JHB'. Mahabane agreed that Malkinson should be able to meet and discuss with the delegates.<sup>27</sup>

Other centres were plagued by organizational rivalry. A letter to the secretary of the Party's Vereeniging branch – presumably from Sidney, as it showed his moralistic tendency to question the integrity of his critics – noted that 'rival organizations of somewhat similar character are springing up with conferences in December and January, evidently with the object ... of trying to take the wind out of the League's sails'. He was very quick to dismiss those who would not support them: 'if they cannot agree with the objects of the League, then they are dishonest leaders, and their conferences are dishonest conferences'. It was all the more important 'to get the petition signed on a national scale ... and convince doubters that the greater the number of signatures, the less reason they have to be afraid of signing'. A similar letter was sent to Durban.<sup>28</sup> The LAR received an encouraging response from Vryheid in Natal. By contrast, a bishop from the Tembu Church rejected the LAR's call: 'I do not think that it would be advisable for me to interfere with political matters. My sole duty ... is to preach the gospel of the true living God', he wrote, returning the petitions and badges he had been sent.<sup>29</sup>

Sidney was very worried about violence – as were all the Communists. The spectre of Oswald Pirow's proposed legislation was looming over their heads. In late 1929 the Minister of Justice unveiled his plans to intensify attacks on black rights and on rights to protest generally through a proposed amendment to the Riotous Assemblies Act. This would give the Minister of Justice the power to banish any individual, black or white, from any territory if he believed that the individual's presence would foster 'feelings of hostility between Natives and Europeans'. On 8 November Parliament passed the amendment. This was a serious setback for activists campaigning for democratic rights. Following his prosecution for the Thembuland campaign, Sidney had successfully appealed his case all the way to the Supreme Court. This had maintained both that the government was obliged to demonstrate intent and that criticism of the govern-

ment or of white individuals was not in and of itself illegal. Pirow's amended law, therefore, took the decision-making power on this matter away from the Supreme Court as the final interpreter of law.

Two days later the ANC, CPSA, ICU and LAR held a joint protest meeting in Johannesburg; Pirow was burnt in effigy with great enthusiasm.<sup>30</sup> The sense of trepidation amongst Communists was intense. 'The tear gas bombs which have come in lately into this country for distribution amongst the Police is [*sic*], I believe, a preparation for these processions,' Sam Malkinson thought. 'As there are no masks, the result would be a dispersal?' he asked Sidney as they were planning demonstrations for Dingaan's Day.<sup>31</sup> 'I think there is some danger of it here as the Nationalist Party are organizing gangs to attack the demonstration,' Sidney replied, 'and possibly instead of suppressing them the Government will prohibit the meetings under the Riotous Assemblies Act.'<sup>32</sup>

After much preparation, the LAR's conference duly took place on 15 December 1929. Gumede, its president, appealed for united action against two anti-African bills – the Native Contract Bill and a revised Urban Areas Act – and condemned political organizations that wasted time 'quarrelling endlessly and vilifying one another'. The LAR, he argued, 'could fulfil its mission if only we are men and women enough with the mind to work for the liberation of the oppressed Africans'. The next day, Dingaan's Day demonstrations were held across the country; in Johannesburg a thousand people marched illegally in the streets. Sidney's presentiment of an organized attack was not unfounded. At Potchefstroom, a commotion broke out as two African Communists, Edwin Mofutsanyana and John Marks, were speaking before the crowd: a white man was aiming a gun at Mofutsanyana. Several shots were fired, mayhem ensued. One man – Hermanus Lethebe – died of his wounds a few days later.<sup>33</sup> Sidney spoke at the funeral: 'on the blood of the deceased,' he told the mourners, 'grows a seed of liberation.'<sup>34</sup>

News of the incident made its way to Lidgetton. 'The threatened general stoppage of all native labour which was planned for yesterday (Dingaan's Day) did not materialise and reports generally are that all was quiet,' Jack wrote to Alfred in London. He gathered that 'one Communist named Marks was arrested ... The Government is reaping the reward of its own folly'. Jack was fuming. For years 'any Russian, Czeko Slovakian [*sic*], Pole or other dago has been at liberty to come into the Union with a minimum of fuss ... whereas any Englishman has had to satisfy all the authorities that he has a job'. This 'dago crowd' had carried 'the Communist virus' into the country. Marks, he speculated, 'is probably a Russian or Polish Jew who finds life here too tame as there are no pogroms and he seeks to stir up the natives; if they ever rise, it will be hard to find Mr. Marks I'll bet.'<sup>35</sup>

Two weeks later, as 1929 ended, the CPSA held its eighth national conference. Throughout the year the Johannesburg headquarters had been beset by tensions reflecting the stressful political conditions and personal rivalries. The clash between Nzula and Thibedi marked the conference. Albert Nzula, a court interpreter and former teacher at the African Methodist Episcopal Mission School at Wilberforce, had joined the CPSA in August 1928, serving briefly in 1929 as the CPSA's first African general secretary. Thibedi, FNETU's general secretary, had vehemently opposed the Native Republic thesis. He had also fallen out with other comrades, including Bennie Weinbren, who chaired FNETU.

Thibedi had been accused of mismanaging trade union funds. He was suspended from the Party and then hurriedly expelled. 'I doubt if all who cast stones at him are without sin even of the same kind', Sidney wrote to Roux sometime after the conference. 'The "investigation" ordered by the Conference was a mere empty affair', he went on, adding that 'it could have been given some content, but they would not wait, & expelled him'. Sidney himself had 'very much opposed the scamping of a proper enquiry'. Nzula replaced Thibedi at FNETU; Weinbren resigned from the federation and moved to Cape Town.<sup>36</sup>

As the new year began, Sidney was very tired. He was almost fifty-seven. He was finding it more difficult to start up his legal practice than he had anticipated – Becky's dressmaking earnings were needed – and he was continually pressured by colleagues who did not understand this. But his cousin Jack understood, despite their political differences and was once again chiding him: 'I can't wish you anything better', he wrote for the new year, 'than that you should give up your political activities and stick to business. Martyrdom is not a particularly filling reward'.<sup>37</sup> But it was advice that Sidney chose to ignore.

Sidney tried to explain his predicament to Eddie Roux. In November 1929 Roux had moved to Cape Town to take a post in the Department of Agriculture, only to be dismissed three months later for political activities. With time on his hands, he proposed bringing the party organ to Cape Town, where it could be published far away from the tensions plaguing the Johannesburg headquarters. Sidney advised against it. His own experience as editor over many years had been 'gruelling', he now admitted. 'I have never recovered from it, and anyway I had to cut off *all* other party work, which you mustn't do at Capetown.' If Eddie's new job were time-consuming, it would be difficult to edit the paper as well. 'These shocks, or fits or chops & changes in the administrative and editorial life of the paper do it no good', he explained; 'it is not a tap to be just turned on and off'. People often told him he could cut down his legal practice and 'earn a proportionate amount of money accordingly'. No, he stressed – as if explaining it to himself, 'you can't play fast and loose with a legal connection like that ... nor can you I think with the running of a paper'.<sup>38</sup>

Pirow's Bills were worrying the Communists more than ever. The CPSA organized an All-in Conference in Johannesburg on 26 January to discuss them. To some delegates, the LAR still seemed viable: there were calls for it to lead a strike campaign against the proposed laws. Sidney was more cautious. There was no doubt a 'rising tide of interest in oppressor bills' along with an 'increased degree of cooperation among native organisations in protesting against them', he told Roux. But as to 'whether the cooperation comes under the LAR banner or not, I think it is more likely that it will not, for a good time yet'. The LAR was subjected to criticism from all sides: 'our Conference plus ECCI & CPGB hit the LAR very hard'.

And how to proceed in a climate of increasing repression? Sidney had no illusions that they would face 'greater persecution'. A pass-burning demonstration would demand 'a very long campaign of preparation' and entail 'wholesale gaol-ups', he presumed. 'We need not rely on the gaols being too full; they will make camps or islands for the prisoners as with Dutch India. The question is rather, will a really big number undergo the sacrifice? Hot air at a couple of meetings is no guide.' Yet he felt that the climate was auspicious for the Party paper. Both ICUs had suspended publication of their papers. This meant, Sidney speculated, 'that we have a clear field all over the Union except for Imvo and Abantu Batho and one or two in Natal'. Barring the impact of Pirow's laws, the Party should be able to increase its newspaper sales.<sup>39</sup>

In the meantime, conservatives in the ANC were mustering their forces, and Gumede was under increasing pressure. At a meeting of the ANC's executive committee on 5 January 1930 the conservative members resigned *en bloc*, objecting both to the ANC's affiliation with the League against Imperialism and to Gumede's Communist sympathies. To no avail, Gumede countered that the decision to affiliate with the League against Imperialism had been taken by the executive. 'As regards the LAR,' he pointed out, 'it was no more than the reincarnation of the old Funa Ma Lungelo – we seek our rights – movement'.

By April, the tide had turned against Gumede. He could still count on the support of African Communists, radicals from the Western Cape ANC and Champion of Natal. But his address to the ANC's annual conference in Bloemfontein that month caused an uproar, and he lost the presidency to Pixley ka Izaka Seme, fourteen votes to thirty-nine.<sup>40</sup> The Western Cape delegates bemoaned that 'bona-fide delegates from ... the Federation of Non-European Trade Unions, the League of African Rights, and the Communist Party, were deprived of the right to vote', and they called on the ANC to fight for 'the Native Republic of Town and Land Workers'.<sup>41</sup> Gumede's ousting as ANC president, combined with the ambiguous attitudes of the various ICU fractions, meant that the political space for the LAR was shrinking.



Sidney continued his weekly addresses outside City Hall. He was organizing the May Day demonstration that year – ‘the leading spirit’ in the venture, according to the Deputy Commissioner of the Witwatersrand Division of the South African Police. In expectation of a general strike, in March Sidney had appealed to the League against Imperialism in Paris for a strike fund in case of victimization. On 1 April he wrote to the leading black organizations asking for ‘co-operation among the various Non-European organisations’ in the hope ‘to celebrate May Day ... in Johannesburg with a demonstration on a scale unequalled in the history of South Africa.’ This demonstration would be ‘calculated to give the Government pause in its mad career of repression.’ Tens of thousands of flyers were printed for the occasion. Police spies on high alert speculated that the Communists were planning a pass-burning campaign.<sup>42</sup> But in the aftermath of the ANC’s conference and with the mounting tensions between the ANC and the various ICUs, on the one hand, and Communists, on the other, the turnout was far less than hoped.

Sidney’s notoriety exacerbated tensions with his cousin at Lidgetton. Jack was planning a trip overseas that year – including a visit to Appleton-le-Moors – and in light of Sidney’s high profile political activities, he had proposed that they both sign a power of attorney to enable Jack’s assistant to handle the plantation’s affairs in his absence. Sidney was not happy with this. He reminded his cousin that when Jack had gone overseas in 1921 cheques had been forwarded to Sidney for signature. That may have been feasible then, Jack explained to Alfred, ‘but now the Government are in the act of passing both Native Bills and a Riotous Assemblies Bill under which they admit that they intend to remove from the country any person spouting sedition and stirring up the natives ... if such person was not born in this country.’ This description was tailor-made for Sidney, Jack felt, and he wanted a plan in place so that he did not have to ‘run back’ should Sidney be arrested. So Jack’s proposal was accepted, and Sidney became even more distant from the estate’s activities.<sup>43</sup>

But he relied on the dividends, and the estate was doing well. They had ‘managed to secure the full supply of natives required’, and desertion was less of a problem. That year they had employed about 100 contract workers, twenty farm-based workers and ten Indians. Nonetheless, they faced competition from mining recruiters, and Jack feared that the mining industry ‘may bring about a shortage of labour for agricultural work in the future.’ By improving their ‘mechanical performance’, he suggested, they could minimize their need for labour in the event of scarcity.<sup>44</sup> Albeit slowly, the agricultural sector was facing up to the need for mechanization.

Pirow’s bills became law in May 1930. Jack went to Cape Town that month with other members of the Natal Provincial executive committee. ‘We saw several of our members of the House of Assembly’, he wrote to Alfred. They discussed

the Riotous Assemblies Bill, and 'one of them openly stated that the first person whom the Minister would keep an eye on once that Bill is passed would be one Bunting. So it is not only Sidney's surmise that he may have to alter his ways or get out.'<sup>45</sup> Sidney was very much in the government's spotlight.

He was also being openly criticized by the Comintern, which was increasingly unhappy with his continued support for the LAR. 'At a time when the natives are proving their revolutionary determination to struggle by openly violating the slave laws,' it remonstrated in early May, 'the Party, through the agency of the League, puts forward an extremely mild reformist programme'. The Comintern took Sidney's and Eddie Roux's attempts to justify the League as yet another example of their desire 'to lay a theoretical basis for reformist views' and 'to revive the theory of South African exceptionalism'. Sidney had well and truly aroused the ECCI's displeasure.<sup>46</sup>

But he continued to receive praise from Africans, especially those in the Transkei. In September *Umsebenzi* published an article called 'Chiefs in the Transkei' by Elliot Tonjeni of the Western Cape ANC. Tonjeni had travelled to the Transkeian Territories the previous year, in August 1929. He met 'an old blanket Native', who told him that after the Bunting trial, 'a meeting was called by the white lords of the Bunga who told the Natives not to allow agitators to walk among them. The old man described Comrade Bunting as a "real chief"', adding emphatically that "if he comes here, I will kill a fat sheep for him". Tonjeni's article ran alongside a piece on Trotskyism by Cape Town Communist John Gomas – an indicator of the Comintern's changing tone and its growing influence on the CPSA's political discourse. 'Trotskyism is like a dust-bin full of all sorts of political rubbish – right and "left" wing throw-outs from the Communist Parties', wrote Gomas. Some of his former white comrades, he charged, represented 'a new kind of rubbish from South Africa'.<sup>47</sup>

The Johannesburg office was plagued by problems – personality conflicts, personal rivalries and political differences. While Sidney had the staunch support of many African Communists, some of the Party's more recent African recruits were very critical. Sidney had very high standards and believed in personal sacrifice for the cause – a principle that he himself followed and expected others to do as well. His criticisms were meted out in a moralistic tone that irked some and angered others. Albert Nzula, amongst others, came in for Sidney's criticisms. Nzula had taken over as general secretary at Wolton's request when the Woltons left for England in 1929. Intelligent and an excellent public speaker, Nzula was also a very heavy drinker. At Party meetings he was often inebriated, once even falling asleep under a table. To top it off, he allegedly drank with an African detective; Sidney's hatred of detectives and spies was well known. Sidney reproached Nzula, to no avail. Finally, in February 1930, the Party removed him from the secretaryship. But this engendered seemingly endless antagonisms.<sup>48</sup>

The Thibedi affair lingered on. In August 1930 Nzula and Kotane called a meeting of FNETU ‘because the Trade Unionists demanded Thibedi’s return’ and the ‘workers could not see that Thibedi was a thief’. In September Thibedi was apparently unanimously accepted back in the Federation. He had applied for reinstatement to the Party, and Sidney had appealed on his behalf to the Executive. The Party had offered him an ‘olive branch’, but by all indications he never responded, and Sidney was quite irritated. But Thibedi had a following in the trade union movement, so the Party had to tread carefully to avoid being ‘denounced as an enemy of the workers.’<sup>49</sup>

The Bloemfontein branch was also in crisis. Malkinson and his comrade Ntela received ‘love-letters from Pirow’, prohibiting them from attending public meetings in Bloemfontein during November and December. Worried about deportation, they ‘decided to keep low’. Pirow had called the Bloemfontein Communists ‘White Kaffirs’, which had the effect of ‘giving a lead to the hooligans’. But in addition to the threat from the state, there was much antagonism between Malkinson and Nzula. The Bloemfontein branch needed support from the head office and had requested Makabeni. ‘I do not want to see Nzula here’, Malkinson informed Sidney. If Nzula came, he added, ‘I shall not be present.’<sup>50</sup> Animosity between comrades was growing. Sidney found himself at the centre.

Some of the relatively new members saw Sidney as an obstacle to change. Comintern communiqués criticizing him because of his past positions were undermining his credibility within the local Party. Moses Kotane, who joined the CPSA in 1929 at Nzula’s urging, detested Sidney. Kotane hoped that if Sidney were pressured to resign, that would ‘desist the Buntingites of their influence in the party as a whole ... My little intellect always brings me to the conclusion that Bunting was in the Party for creating a title for himself’, he wrote to one comrade. ‘It might perhaps be due to the fact that he is a solicitor of capitalist system or otherwise.’<sup>51</sup> A spate of letters criticizing Sidney found their way to Moscow in late 1930. By October 1930 there were concerted efforts to remove Sidney from the executive bureau, and he himself was thinking of resigning from the leadership.<sup>52</sup>

Despite the problems that beset the Johannesburg office, the CPSA seemed to be doing well. The Party paper had been transferred to Cape Town in April, and under Eddie Roux’s editorship it thrived. Roux renamed it *Umsebenzi* [Worker], added linocut cartoons and published articles in a range of African languages. It reappeared as a weekly, and circulation rose from 3,000 to 5,000.<sup>53</sup> ‘We have reached a stage now where, thanks to the paper, the Party has become widely known in the country districts’, Eddie informed the Party’s executive bureau. Now they needed to consolidate and strengthen the branches in areas where the paper was circulated, he advised. They had agents for *Umsebenzi* in Naauwport, De Aar, Pearston, Zuurbrak, Wynberg and Dysseidorp in the Cape,

Kingwilliamstown, Queenstown and Bell in the Eastern Province and in Port St Johns in the Transkei. Durban and Oudtshoorn were both receiving twenty dozen copies, while Pretoria was taking twelve dozen.<sup>54</sup>

Douglas Wolton arrived back in South Africa on 13 November 1930 – to the surprise of his comrades. While in England Douglas Wolton had helped organize black workers in Liverpool and assisted the CPGB's Colonial Department. In 1930 the Woltons went to Moscow to attend the Fifth RILU Conference, scheduled for August. Their application was rejected, with the CPGB's help, Douglas Wolton was allowed to attend the RILU discussions on the South African question and given a consultative vote. The Woltons assisted the ECCI in drafting two directives on the 'right-wing danger' in South Africa. In September 1930 Douglas Wolton was instructed to return to South Africa to promote the New Line while Molly remained in Moscow to attend the Lenin School.<sup>55</sup>

Sidney wrote to Eddie Roux shortly after Wolton's appearance. Wolton had brought two theses back from Moscow, Sidney apprised Roux, 'with the anticipated condemnation of me in particular and also of you, as chauvinists, social democrats, etc.' Yet despite this, and the animosity that Sidney sensed, Sidney gave Wolton political space. He had been thinking for several weeks of resigning as acting secretary, he told Roux, but had 'hesitated ... as there was really nobody to take over my jobs. But Wolton's arrival at once made it easy and he was appointed to take over my duties until the Party Conference.' Sidney also informed Roux that Wolton wanted the paper transferred back to Johannesburg.<sup>56</sup>

When Wolton arrived in Johannesburg, the CPSA was preparing for the upcoming Dingaan's Day demonstrations. In contrast to Roux's optimistic assessment, Wolton thought that the Party was 'in a very bad state'. Its membership had dropped to forty or fifty, he informed the Comintern, and 'the white chauvinist Bunting leadership was firmly entrenched in the leading positions'. Aside from 'occasional loosely organised mass meetings, no activities whatever were being conducted'.<sup>57</sup> Wolton remained aloof from the Dingaan's Day preparations, instead preparing for the CPSA's forthcoming annual conference, circulating the Comintern resolutions on the right-wing danger. This right wing, it was alleged, had opposed the Native Republic thesis and was now preventing Africans from playing a leadership role. It was a message that appealed to Nzula and Kotane, amongst others.

'Comrade Bunting informs me that he and I are condemned by the ECCI for racial chauvinism', Eddie Roux wrote on 18 November to the Party's executive bureau, asking for an explanation. Roux acknowledged having made 'certain slips' – notably his initial opposition to the Native Republic thesis and an 'unMarxist attitude towards the Pirow dictatorship' in an article in *Umsebenzi* the previous May. But he had 'tried to keep the policy of the paper as near to that of the Comintern as possible'. As for Sidney, 'any charge of racial chauvin-

ism directed against him is obviously ridiculous and the sooner the whole party protests against such a travesty of the truth the better.<sup>58</sup>

Sidney wrote to Roux again on 29 November. Wolton's attitude 'reminds me of the Conference of two years ago when he made a violent attack on me', he confided. Becky, for her part, had long felt that Wolton was jealous of Sidney and worried that Sidney's success in Thembuland had further antagonized him. Now, Sidney admitted, 'I cannot help thinking that under cover of theses, C.I. resolutions, etc., there is a long standing personal antipathy or jealousy – just as Thibedi ... used the cry of "white domination" to cover speculation'. He was not sure what he would do about Wolton's attacks on him, as he hated 'fighting for position'. Soon thereafter, he decided to leave the Party leadership and work 'as a rank-and-filer, especially on the founding of a miners' union'. Here was the same spirit of self-effacement through hard work that he had shown in taking on the Thembuland campaign.<sup>59</sup>

Wolton convinced Roux that the paper should be transferred back to Johannesburg under the control of the executive. Roux admired Wolton, who 'seemed to have just those qualities in which Bunting was lacking', thought Roux – 'a definite theory of revolution ... a clear-cut doctrine and a programme of action – all beautifully co-ordinated and tabulated. Next to him Bunting appeared a mere empiricist.'<sup>60</sup> In mid-December *Umsebenzi* published a Comintern policy statement attacking the defunct LAR and, by implication, Sidney. Only the African proletariat, supported by the most exploited section of the white proletariat could lead the struggle further, but it could not 'restrict its task only to the nationalist revolution' or be subsumed into 'a petty-bourgeois nationalist movement'. The CPSA had abandoned its leadership role to the LAR, with its 'extremely mild reformist programme ... from which the slogan of an Independent Native Republic is completely absent'. The Party thus gave up 'the right to criticise the reformists.'<sup>61</sup>

The Dingaan's Day demonstrations were more muted than the year before. The CPSA had organized a successful planning conference two months earlier in October. But just a week before Dingaan's Day Kadalie announced his opposition to the CPSA's pass-burning campaign. Only in Durban did the protests reach significant numbers. There, as people burnt their passes, Johannes Nkosi, one of the bright lights of the local Communist Party, climbed on a lorry and addressed a crowd of several thousand at Cartwright's Flats: 'The White man has built his civilisation on the banks of the Blood River where one hundred years ago the blood of my people mingled with its waters', he began. 'Our women are starving, and our children are dying of tuberculosis and other diseases. Our men are coughing up their lungs with phthisis as they dig gold for the rich. I say that enough blood has flowed down the waters of the Blood River.'

Police attacked with guns and assegais. According to one eye-witness, Johannes Nkosi, severely wounded, trailing blood, was taken first to the police station and then to the hospital. A wire was sent to Sidney in Johannesburg. Sidney wired back: 'Save Nkosi at all costs. Spare no expense'. But Nkosi died the next day.<sup>62</sup> In all, he and three others died; twenty were wounded. A wave of terror swept Durban. The next day Nkosi was buried. Sidney came down to speak at the funeral. 'Our struggle has been sanctified by the blood of our Comrade Nkosi', he began. 'We are troubled on every side yet not distressed; we are perplexed but not in despair; persecuted but not forsaken; cast down but not destroyed. Enough blood has flowed down the waters of the Blood River.'<sup>63</sup>

Two weeks later, from 26 to 28 December 1930, the Party's ninth conference took place at the Communist Hall in Johannesburg. Sidney and Becky brought the boys with them. The proceedings left their mark on Arthur, then thirteen; his father's name was on everyone's lips. The discussion, often heated, centred on two problems, the intense repression faced by Party activists, especially Africans, now that Pirow's laws were in force, and the seeming failure of the leadership – notably Sidney – to address the problem.

The leadership, argued Nzula, showed 'disbelief in the native masses having the spirit to fight for their rights'. This meant that the Party was lagging behind the masses. 'I was one of those who was in favour of the formation of this league of African rights', Nzula acknowledged. The Party was claiming 'the masses are despondent, the masses are not revolutionary ... Let's tell them to petition Pirow'. But now, he insisted, no one would argue for the League of African Rights. 'It was wrong.' The Party needed new tactics to deal with the changing times. 'Comrades, the old leadership has proved itself a complete failure ... We need a new leadership.' John Marks underlined the point: 'There is a lack of African leaders ... We must have some of our African leaders educated.'<sup>64</sup>

Sidney kept back for some time before responding. 'I do not feel called upon to reply now to the mere petty and mostly unfounded mudslinging at me which has prevailed so far at this Conference', he began. 'I confine myself to criticisms made in the name of the C.I.' There was no real revolt of the rank and file membership against the executive, he insisted. 'To a considerable extent such troubles, and indeed many of our party's shortcomings are in the last resort attributable to lack of finance', he argued, and 'discontentment and disappointment at slow progress breeds personal recrimination'.

He was being used as a scapegoat, he claimed, blaming Wolton for this "anti-Bunting" turn'. The Party's chronic lack of funds made it impossible to pay a secretary, and 'he made shift himself as a stopgap spare-time secretary and treasurer because no one else would or could do it gratis'. Yet 'Com. Wolton called that "driving out black to put in whites", "opposition to professional revolutionaries", "refusing to train cadres" etc'. Wolton had accused him 'of criticising

in blacks faults that he would overlook in whites ... Faith in the native masses', Sidney stated, 'does not mean that every black, any more than every white is a genius or a paragan [*sic*]'. He did not wish to be cut off from Party activity, but he would not shed tears 'if relieved for a time from the Executive as he could not work with Com. Wolton and some of the party wreckers'.

Gana Makabeni claimed that Nzula was only concerned with squabbles. '[I]s it wrong for a father to chastise his children', he asked – he clearly looked up to Sidney. There was 'no discipline at all in the Party', he continued; 'there are natives who are given work to do by the meeting and they do not do it'. Becky insisted that the CPSA had loyally followed the Comintern line. 'When mistakes were pointed out', she noted, 'those mistakes were corrected ... The leadership is only a reflection of the state in which the whole country is in, politically and economically ... our industries are at a primitive stage', she contended. 'How can we talk of nuclei in factories. The system in the mines is peculiar to a colonial country. The Executive ... tried its best to get into the compounds.' But whatever it attempted, 'the wreckers were against it.'<sup>65</sup>

The Comintern's chief interpreter prevailed. Wolton's nominations for a Presidium were accepted. The Presidium, in turn, determined the membership of the credentials, control, panel commission and the trade union commissions. The panel commission's recommendations for the twenty-four members of the central committee were, similarly, approved. This now included nineteen blacks and four whites. As Eddie Roux recalled, Wolton's request that the list of names he submitted 'be voted for *en bloc*' came 'with a broad hint that anyone who voted against the list was disloyal to the Party and the Comintern.'<sup>66</sup> Nzula, supporting Wolton, insisted that if Communist policy meant anything, 'it means that everybody has to agree to it, if everybody does not agree to it then it means there is no discipline'. Wolton became the new general secretary. Eddie Roux was on the committee, but the 'rightwing elements' – Sidney and Sam Malkinson – were excluded.<sup>67</sup>

Several months later, in March 1931, Sam Malkinson found himself expelled by the Party's political bureau. Douglas Wolton claimed that Malkinson 'did not accept the new line'. When pressed, he added that Malkinson had 'some vagueness about it'. The political bureau appealed to the Bloemfontein branch to 'detach itself' from Malkinson, 'to recant and isolate disruptive elements within the Party and to align itself with the Leninist leadership of the Party'. But the local branch stood firm. It had 'nothing to recant on', it replied, was 'disgusted' by the threat to dismantle the local leadership and alarmed at 'the Mussolini-like attitude adopted by the PB'. The political bureau never replied.<sup>68</sup>

Malkinson believed that his own predicament stemmed from a power struggle between the 'Nzula-ites' and the 'Buntingites'. The trouble began in September 1930, he claimed, when Party meetings in Johannesburg degener-

ated into a 'hooligan state of affairs'. Nzula came to meetings drunk, and 'used to interrupt, shout and generally make the meetings look ridiculous'. He also promoted anti-Semitic attitudes. 'Epithets were flung by the Nzula-ites against the Jewish members of the Party', and while there was 'no corresponding retaliation ... fights were threatened, with hammers, etc'. Malkinson acknowledged that white chauvinism was 'probably not sufficiently realised' and criticized Sidney, as acting treasurer, for not adequately remunerating Nzula and Charles Baker. Not surprisingly, once Malkinson made these claims his relationship with Nzula broke down. Wolton removed him from the leadership, he insisted, 'because Nzula was against me, and Wolton had to support him'.<sup>69</sup> His pleas fell on deaf ears.

Throughout 1931 the new leadership busied itself with Bolshevizing the Party and implementing the New Line. There were some success stories. Issy Diamond, a hairdresser who had joined the Party in the mid-1920s, led a demonstration of both black and white unemployed workers – a first for South Africa. Quite a good number turned out and marched down Commissioner Street, Sidney and Becky amongst them. When the demonstrators gathered outside the Carlton Hotel on Eloff Street, Diamond – who put their numbers at 600 – exclaimed: 'Here we are at the gates of the rich. They have plenty while you are starving. What are you going to do about it?', he asked. 'We are hungry. We want food!' people shouted. The crowd proceeded to the Rand Club and stood outside its entrance on Loveday Street. But the police clamped down, charging Diamond and several others with violence and incitement to violence. Sidney began preparing the defence.<sup>70</sup>

Compliance – not theory, as Roux naively believed – was the order of the day. Wolton's right-hand man was a recent young Latvian émigré named Lazar Bach, the son of a factory owner who had evidently been sentenced to death during the Russian civil war. Bach had been in the Latvian Communist Party before coming to South Africa in 1930, when he joined the local CPSA and the Leather Workers's Union. Bach was a master of Comintern doctrine and fluently cited chapter and verse to any who dared question. The two men were joined by Molly Wolton after her return from Moscow in 1931.<sup>71</sup> She was, in Roux's estimation, the Party's 'most gifted orator, brilliant in repartée so that hecklers thus made to look foolish soon came to have a wholesome respect for her'. But she had a strong authoritarian streak and 'could not endure contradiction, not even in the smallest detail. She had to be right, always right.' To a young socialist with Trotskyist leanings named Charlie van Gelderen, Molly Wolton was 'the real boss', of whom they were all terrified.<sup>72</sup>

Sidney became the target of a vicious personal campaign. 'Buntingism' – support for Sidney or his views – became a new dirty word. The Wolton-Bach leadership relied on the support of the Jewish Workers' Club, whose members



were recent immigrants from Eastern Europe, fervent Communists or sympathizers with little knowledge of the CPSA's internal dynamics or of South African politics. 'They were told by Bach that Bunting was a traitor', Roux observed, 'and that was enough for them.'<sup>73</sup>

Benny Sachs attended one Party meeting that turned into 'a veritable Witches' Sabbath – with everybody shouting Bunting down and calling him "Lord" Bunting ... An elderly woman, whom Bunting had befriended over years, turned her posterior towards him with her dress lifted high.' Sachs was baffled at the woman's behaviour: she was only one of the Party's 'strays' and clearly not motivated by self-advancement. 'But somehow', he speculated, 'she caught the infection and it dehumanised her'. She was not the only one. Arthur used to accompany his father to these meetings; on one occasion Cissie Barendregt, the daughter of one of his father's old comrades, 'got up in the front row' and showed her backside 'as evidence of her contempt' for his father. 'Take little note of it', Sidney told his son. 'They are only fools.'<sup>74</sup> But the events impressed themselves deeply on the boy.

The leadership continued to worry about Sidney's influence. On 4 July the central committee discussed Sidney and his Party work. Avoiding the government's wrath was becoming more and more difficult in the aftermath of the Riotous Assemblies Act, and Sidney was handling several legal matters for the Party. Wolton warned that Sidney's approach revealed a right danger that bordered on counter-revolutionary. During Sidney's defence of unemployed prisoners, he had appealed to the Magistrate to 'have vision and view the unemployed question in broad light'. Moreover, his organizing efforts revealed a left danger, Wolton continued, pointing to the May Day campaign and activities for the unemployed. John Marks added 'that as long as we have elements like Bunting the Party will not make headway'. Roux suggested that the Party 'send a number of agitators on tour through the territories and impress upon people of Transkei that Party is not merely Bunting'. It was necessary to 'campaign against reformist influence of Bunting', he contended, even though in the Transkei, the 'Party is known as Bunting's Party'.<sup>75</sup>

That same month Arthur went down to Lidgetton. The boy needed a break from the tensions of his father's life. He was becoming interested in botany; Lidgetton was an ideal environment to learn about this first-hand, and during his stay he wrote an essay on the plantation.<sup>76</sup> But on his return to Johannesburg, the boy found the attacks on his father continuing. There was no respite.

In late August and early September 1931 Sidney was preoccupied with the defence for Issy Diamond, amongst others, who had been charged with violence and incitement to violence at demonstrations on 21 March, 1 May and 31 May. The concluding sessions and sentencing took place in the first few days of September at the Rand Criminal Sessions. C. C. Jarvis was the Crown Prosecutor,

and M. Franks acted for the defence, instructed by Sidney, who along with his wife was also a witness. The trial made the papers.

On 2 September Sidney was due to testify. The prosecutor asked him whether he was a member of the Communist Party. 'I understand that to-day I am not a member', he replied. He had learned of this that very day when he 'saw a notice'. When questioned why he was no longer a member, he asked 'whether it was necessary, as a test of his credibility, to answer this question'. It was, he told the prosecutor, 'an intimate affair'. Was it because he was too peaceful on May Day, the prosecutor asked? No, replied Sidney. 'I have been arrested for inciting to violence.'

He carried on with his testimony. Diamond had neither incited nor engaged in violence, nor had the crowds been in any way disorderly, he stated, describing the May Day events. 'We got to the Rand Club, which has long been a stopping place for such processions ... As far back as 1907 I can remember they have always stopped at the Rand Club to give a boo or to offer execration ... I was struck, not by any signs of violence or force', he told the courtroom, 'but rather by the immobility of the people.' The object of the May Day demonstration, he explained, 'was to shake the complacency of the comfortable and moneyed classes, who were doing nothing for the unemployed'. The Rand Club, he continued, 'was one of the abodes of the property class, an institution of the rich and comfortable'. Having lived in South Africa for three decades, and 'as a South African', he did not see any danger in allowing blacks and whites to assemble together. On numerous occasions, by contrast, the police engaged in 'very scandalous violence', while 'the administration of native affairs in this country is a mass of injustice.'<sup>77</sup>

Mr Justice de Waal, the Judge-President, was not convinced. The court room was filled to capacity and a queue of people stood outside as the judge began the sentencing on 4 September. He maintained, on police testimony, that Diamond had called for retaliation against the police if any of the demonstrators were killed – five to ten police for every unemployed who died. 'Now, in a country like ours, where we have a large predominating black population, I cannot imagine anything more calculated to lead to serious and grave danger than for a white man in addressing a mixed crowd of whites and blacks to use such words.' Diamond was sentenced to one year for incitement to violence, and two others, to eighteen months for violence. A woman from the public gallery jumped on a bench and began singing the 'Red Flag', urging others on. About two dozen people began moving towards the dock. Mrs Diamond fainted. The room was cleared.<sup>78</sup>

Sidney had indeed been expelled from the CPSA – along with Bill Andrews, C. B. Tyler, Solly Sachs, Fanny Klenerman and Bennie Weinbren. *Umsebenzi* ran the story on 4 September. All were experienced activists, ousted for alleg-

edly using reformist and social democratic methods. Sidney was charged with 'factional activities against the line of the Party'. He had appealed for leniency while defending unemployed demonstrators arrested at the May Day rally; he had persuaded Issy Diamond, charged with contempt, to apologize to the court; he had sought Thibedi's reinstatement to the Party; and he had appeared on the same platform as the ICU and ANC, thus 'compromising' the Party. His use 'of sabotage work, of opportunism in practice, of fractional activity reveals an ever-widening deviation from the line of the Party and has now reached the stage when disciplinary action becomes immediately necessary', reported the Party organ.<sup>79</sup>

The news was picked up by the leading papers. 'Not "Red" Enough: Communists Expel Old Leaders', proclaimed the *Rand Daily Mail* on 8 September. Its reporters called the Bunting home, asking for a photograph of Sidney to run with those of the others.<sup>80</sup> Becky refused. Sidney was 'different from them', she told the reporters. 'I don't want his photo along with theirs.' The expulsion had been a profound shock. The public humiliation was devastating.<sup>81</sup>

## 14 A WEARY SOUL

He came back fighting. He fought with logic, like the lawyer he was, carefully refuting with evidence, one by one, each charge against him. That same month, September 1931, he typed up a sixteen-page letter to the 'Comrades of the Communist Party'. In the end, though, he decided not to send this to his South African comrades, but to the Comintern. He began the missive with the question: 'who is responsible for the expulsions?' Responsibility, he baldly stated, lay chiefly with Douglas Wolton, 'who ... came from Europe last year with the mission of putting me out of "leadership" and eventually, it seems, membership'. The only others voting for the resolution, Sidney had learned, were Moses Kotane and Lazar Bach. The latter's 'membership of the "Political Bureau", of the Party Executive, or even of the party, I for one, and I think most of you, had never heard before, indeed his authority to vote expulsions calls for investigation'. But the remaining members of the political bureau and the Central Executive members, '*knew nothing of the expulsions*'. Under the Party constitution, Sidney observed, 'no such body as a Political Bureau is provided for, certainly not with powers of expulsion – that seems perhaps a matter to be brought up rather by rank and file members in the branch or group'.

And 'what was the manner of the expulsions?' Sidney queried. 'Was I ever notified of the charges or given an opportunity to answer them? Was the party membership ever consulted? No: these excommunicators do their work secretly and behind the back and without the knowledge of their comrades.' They could not even accuse their victims to their own face or before a tribunal: 'the first that a victim, or his comrades, learns of his "crimes" is after he has been "executed" for them'. The members are then instructed to 'bow to the resolution of the "superior body" on pain of expulsion themselves'. This method, he charged, '*smacks more of Pirowism than of Bolshevism*'.

The matter played in his head, over and over, like a record whose needle had gone off track. 'Com. Wolton's campaign against me is of long standing, and has become an increasing obsession with him since he gained the ear of powerful allies oversea [*sic*]'. Surely others could understand this. Several months before Wolton's departure from Moscow, he explained, 'there broke out in the Johan-

nesburg branch ... a most venomous attack on, chiefly, me'. It was led by Nzula, Kotane, Baker and others who supported Thibedi's reinstatement to the Party. Evidently, Thibedi was embittered against Sidney and 'became the ... *stalking horse of this ... "anti-Bunting" push*'. Although Sidney had criticized Thibedi's expulsion in 1930 as 'premature', he was subsequently 'attacked as the arch obstacle to Thibedi's reinstatement'. Some of those involved had been in touch with the Woltons in Moscow and supported them on their return.<sup>1</sup>

On and on Sidney went, refuting the allegations against him. In October he penned a much-abridged one-page letter and circulated this, published in English, isiXhosa and Sesotho, to his local comrades. This again blamed Wolton for the 'frame up'. Sidney did not aspire to leadership, he assured his comrades. Over the past year, he had 'worked hard as a rank-and-filer, especially on the founding of a miners' union', he stated, 'and should have been content so to continue'. After considering the facts, he hoped that their 'verdict should be, *not guilty!*' If his comrades believed that he should be reinstated, he appealed in conclusion, 'I beg you not to be indifferent or inactive, not to be bluffed or intimidated, but to assert yourselves by insisting on the conference being held and the matter properly placed on the agenda, and by sending delegates definitely instructed to cancel the expulsion resolution'.<sup>2</sup> But the battle that was being fought could not be won by logic or appeals to evidence.

Gana Makabeni fought for Sidney. In November 1931 he and other members of the Johannesburg branch convened a meeting at the Party Hall and invited the political bureau. They charged the leadership with 'having taken a holiday in organising the oppressed, exploited and voiceless masses in South Africa ... while considering who should be expelled in the next issue of *Umsebenzi*'. Some of the expulsions, they pointed out, had not even been 'reported in *Umsebenzi* because of their unimportance ... or because they are mostly Blacks'. A fight broke out. The branch members threw out those from the political bureau. Sidney, in the meantime, convened a private meeting at Inchcape Hall on Sunday 27 December.<sup>3</sup>

This, too, was far from peaceful. A few of the Party leaders found out about the meeting and rearranged a meeting of the *Ikaka labaSebenzi* [Workers' Shield – or Labour Defence] to begin an hour earlier at the same venue. By the time Sidney, Gana Makabeni and others arrived, the *Ikaka* meeting was well underway. Once again, a fight erupted – Eddie Roux thought it was 'chiefly between some of the Jewish workers and the Africans'. Finally, the Hall's owner cleared everyone out.<sup>4</sup>

The Central Committee was enraged. It met the next day, for a three-day conference from 28–30 December. The vitriolic condemnation of Sidney continued. But now the popular Gana Makabeni was a key target.<sup>5</sup> 'Makabeni, a man who was trusted as an honest member, has shown himself in his true col-

our', began Joseph Sepeng. 'Makabeni thinks that because Bunting formed the Party ... therefore he should not be expelled.' After Bunting's expulsion, Makabeni kept him informed. When Bunting's supporters raided the Party office, Sepeng claimed, 'Makabeni played an important part'. Some of those involved in the raid had been expelled, but Makabeni, the 'main engineer', had not been touched, Charles Baker complained. 'To say that because he is a native, he should [sic] be dealt with leniently is wrong ... He is a traitor.' Josie Mpama echoed the sentiment: 'Anyone who does wrong should be expelled', she argued, 'no matter what his colour is'.<sup>6</sup>

The next issue of *Umsebenzi* ran the headline: 'Buntingites Smash up Ikaka Conference'. The 'Bunting clique', it alleged, 'had organised groups of renegade Communists' and were preventing the exposure of prison brutalities.<sup>7</sup> But a report by Makabeni and other dissidents castigated Wolton and the other Party leaders for autocratic methods. Those controlling the Party machinery 'would do anything ... in order to keep their positions regardless of consequences', the report claimed. Racism was rife: 'Native masses are not only neglected and no agitation is carried in their localities, but [they] are abused by the officials of the Party of being barbarians "from the long grass" ... black comrades [are] expelled for daring to hold any views of their own.' As a result, the CPSA had become 'mainly a white man's affair, almost completely in the hands of the Jewish Workers Club (mostly petty bourgeois)'. Many of the original white members had left the Party when it embraced black workers, claiming 'that it was not time yet, to combine with natives'. But now, those whites were 'resuming their old seats in the Party because probably "kaffirs" have been swept away'. The problem lay with the local leaders, not the Comintern, the group believed. They sent a report to 'Headquarters' in Moscow 'in full confidence in the International'. In the meantime, it was decided, 'no opposition of any nature must be carried or allowed to prevail in the Party'.<sup>8</sup>

Next, in early 1932, the Party leadership's venom against Sidney and his supporters penetrated the Friends of the Soviet Union, an organization that sympathized with the CPSA. On one occasion, Sidney rode to a meeting with some comrades only to see them distribute leaflets denouncing him after they had all arrived. When he mentioned this, he was censured for using the meeting as a forum for airing his problems with the CPSA. During the heated discussion, Sidney leaned over to Winifred Lunt, a young English woman recently arrived in South Africa and a newcomer to Party circles, and asked: 'Do you think I am an imperialist bloodsucker?' 'No', she replied, 'it's ridiculous!' Nonetheless, feeling pressured, she voted for Sidney's censure. Sidney and his sympathizers were marginalized and expelled from the Friends of the Soviet Union.<sup>9</sup> Makabeni, in the meantime, who chaired *Ikaka*, was stripped of his office without notice and

allegedly beaten up by John Marks when he demanded an explanation. In March he was expelled from the Party.<sup>10</sup>

William Thibedi, in the meantime, had made contact with Leon Trotsky and his overseas supporters. In April Thibedi formed a group called the Communist League of Africa, which produced an ephemeral organ called *Maraphanga*.<sup>11</sup> Six months later Eddie Roux was entering the office of the printer who handled the Party's publication, when he bumped into Sidney, who was just leaving. Inside, Roux saw a membership card for the Communist League. He told the other members of the political bureau. Almost immediately *Umsebenzi* began spinning a tale of Sidney's supposed alliance with the Trotskyists.<sup>12</sup>

The events were too painful for Sidney. He continued to practice law at his office in Asher's Buildings, but increasingly came to believe that Wolton's animus against him made it impossible for him to consider returning to the Party.<sup>13</sup> Late in 1932, on 13 November, a small group of Communists met at Albert Street Hall. In addition to Gana Makabeni, these included Andries Slambat, who was in the Clothing Workers Union with Makabeni; I. Morake and G. Solundwana, respectively the chair and secretary of the Brakpan branch; Paul Radebe, secretary of the Vereeniging branch; and Lucas Malupi, Frans Mopu, John Noko and a certain Nuse from Western Township. Sidney had asked to come, 'as he felt himself the origin of the trouble'. He was there with Becky, along with I. Stein. Thibedi had heard of the meeting and wanted to attend but had been turned down because, the others decided, the meeting concerned 'those who had always been against forming any opposition organisation'.<sup>14</sup>

Morake chaired the meeting. Makabeni gave the report of the delegates who had been appointed at the Inchcape Hall meeting the previous December, his presentation in isiXhosa interpreted by Morake into Sesotho. Radebe stated that 'black people who walk in darkness welcome all who come to our aid', yet the present Party leaders 'are keeping us in darkness and those who help us are called bad names'. He asked Sidney 'to continue to work for our people without regarding the slanders against him'. Noko argued that since Sidney's expulsion, 'our party work has gone to the dogs. The head office sent out people to try and put a bad spirit of discord among our members'. Morake replied: 'Never mind Wolton or Bunting who may die tomorrow. They have shown us the way, now let us do the work ourselves, not stop because of their quarrels.' But Solundwana argued that it was vital to 'have a centre at which branches can meet and give or obtain advice. We can't work with head office', he pointed out. 'It fights against us.'

Sidney still clung to the belief that Wolton's desire to oust him was the root of all the troubles. He asked the group to cut him out and 'to carry on as if he did not exist'. But he adamantly opposed forming a new organization outside the Party. Could his obstinacy on this point, even now, be traced back to that summer at Grindelwald three decades earlier? Was the vision of a united insti-

tution dedicated to social upliftment something so close to his heart that he could not relinquish it? 'The C.I. and its sections rightly claim a monopolistic position – there can be only one machine, and isolated groups only confuse the masses', he argued. Thus, it was important that they enter the Party and simultaneously report back to the Comintern about the problems they experience. 'You do not go in just to be doormats', he cautioned, 'but with colours flying to assert yourselves ... The party needs strengthening all the more because of Pirow's spectacular deportations, and because of the unprecedented dissatisfaction of the masses everywhere.' He insisted that his presence in the Party would only cause problems: 'although I have already been out nearly two years', he pointed out, 'the party paper still bristles with lies and malice about me, and a condition of party position is to be a good anti-Buntingite'.

Becky remained silent. Stein argued that Sidney's suggestion would 'result ... only in justifying the leaders' mistakes. Let us organise separately', he proposed, 'and see who is right'. Makabeni opposed going back to the CPSA 'pending reply from Moscow. We Africans are flouted by the white members of the party. We must organise ourselves as a race.' They should not rejoin the Party 'until it is put in order. Rather let us thrash those who have spoilt it. The natives at head office are not champions of the black man, they are there only for their pay and have to say and do what they are bid.' Although the group was disappointed that the Comintern had never replied to their earlier letter and felt this was 'a slight on the African People', they still decided to send Moscow the report that Makabeni had presented. A decision as to whether or not to continue working within the Party was postponed 'pending reply from the C.I.'. Apparently, the Comintern never replied.<sup>15</sup>

Sidney and Becky needed a break from these tensions. At the start of 1933 they went down to Durban, where they had honeymooned years earlier. Jack met up with them there. He took them to Lidgetton where they had lunch – a memento of earlier years – before setting off by train for Johannesburg.<sup>16</sup> Whether intended or not, the trip marked a turning point: Sidney finally stopped fighting the Communist bureaucracy.

In the end, Sidney's body let him down. He had atherosclerosis, a slowly-developing cardiovascular disease, and most likely some degree of hypertension. He was also suffering from acromegaly and arthritis. The acromegaly – a hormonal disorder caused when the pituitary gland produces excess growth hormone – had led to the enlargement of his fingers that had made him switch from the violin to the viola decades earlier.<sup>17</sup> Nonetheless, he still liked to walk and cut 'a firm figure ... not in any sense obese or overweight'. But around 1933, nigh on sixty, he set up a joint law practice with Philip Diamond as a prelude to retirement. He was trying to cut down on legal work for health reasons – the doctor advised him to avoid stress. And the practice could be stressful. His office wait-



ing room in Asher's Buildings was 'crowded with Africans waiting to see him, most of them 'poor and ill-clad'. It was gruelling and thankless work that brought in very little income.<sup>18</sup>

The family continued to receive a few friends. Gana Makabeni often dropped by. When he stayed late, the boys walked back with him to Prospect location – an African man out on his own after dark risked arrest, but the presence of a white boy by his side would generally satisfy the authorities. And Sidney's old flame, Beatrice Stewart Marx, up from Cape Town, came to visit on his sixtieth birthday. She was a hit with the boys – Arthur thought her a 'delightful, lively, benign, wrinkled-apple-cheeked charmer'. But Becky, insecure after all those years, was not happy to see her.<sup>19</sup>

Without the earnings from his law practice, Sidney now faced the dilemma of how to support his family. Becky, of course, was still taking in dressmaking work; her reputation had grown, and her customers now extended beyond her circle of family and friends.<sup>20</sup> But Sidney needed to bring in income and was searching around for something to do. Thinking about research, he got in touch with Agnes Winifred Hoernlé, who had founded the Anthropology Department at the University of the Witwatersrand, located at Milner Park. Mrs Hoernlé was very concerned with social justice issues and critical of the prevailing racial laws – she and her husband Alfred Hoernlé were leading figures in the Joint Council movement. She informed Sidney that grants were available for research in African Studies. So in mid-August Sidney wrote to J. D. Rheinallt Jones about a grant. Rheinallt Jones had been a key figure in the Joint Councils movement of the 1920s and now headed the South African Institute of Race Relations, a body founded in 1929 to promote research on race relations and better communication between black and white. In July 1933 the Institute of Race Relations had been contacted by the International Institute of African Languages & Cultures in London regarding the training of individuals in the field of African Studies. The research appealed to Sidney, and he was keen to put in an application.<sup>21</sup>

African Studies was a subject of growing importance, both overseas – given Britain's colonial presence in Africa – and in South Africa. The Inter-University Committee for African Studies, a body representing the main South African universities, had recently produced a short paper on 'Teaching and Research in African Studies', hoping to convince the government to support work in this area. 'In recent years there has been growing recognition of the importance to South Africa of the study of the life, languages and laws of the Native races and of the effects of European civilisation upon them', the paper began. Some progress had been made, notably the launch of the journal *Bantu Studies*. But the depression meant that funds were very tight. Research was strapped for funding as a result of government cutbacks. In 1931 South African universities decided

to co-operate in an attempt to raise their own funds. Hence, the link with the International Institute in London.

There was general agreement 'that Native graduates should be trained to undertake investigations among their own people', but that it was not yet possible to do this in South Africa because of the rudimentary and under-funded resources. The Native Economic Commission argued that if its proposed method 'of dealing with Natives in the Reserves ... is adopted, it will be necessary to devote more attention to the scientific study of the Natives than has hitherto taken place'. Hence, it suggested 'that steps should be taken to facilitate co-operation between officials dealing with Natives and scientific investigators, to enable the results of such work to be used to assist in dealing with administrative questions dependent on a knowledge of Native customs.'<sup>22</sup>

That August Sidney submitted an application to the International Institute. He was retired, received no salary and had an annual income of about £80 from other sources – obviously dividends from Lidgetton – he noted on his application. Of African languages, he had 'only a "nodding acquaintance"', having 'made some study of Zulu some years ago'. But he had much experience relevant to African Studies, notably '30 years' practice as solicitor at Johannesburg, largely among natives during last ten years'. Moreover, he had been in close 'contact since 1915 with political and industrial movements of natives in chief centres of Union' and had 'experience of teaching in a private school for natives' – presumably the CPSA night school! He was also well-versed in politics. In addition to his membership of the Transvaal Provincial Council between 1914 and 1917, in 1929 he had 'spent five months as Parliamentary candidate among the native people of the Transkeian Territories'. He had published various pamphlets and articles over the years – most of them dealing with the conditions facing black people in South Africa. Copies were, unfortunately, 'not available'. In Sidney's rush to highlight the social injustices of the day, he had neglected to keep orderly records of his own writings.

His proposed subjects of research were, firstly, 'the various societies and organisations, political, industrial, national, mutual benefit etc found among the African population on the Witwatersrand (or, in the chief urban centres of the Union) and to what extent they have [*sic*] been affected by European contact'. Alternatively, he would be willing to produce a study on 'Types of social and family life in a native township on the Witwatersrand (e.g. Prospect Township or Germiston Location)'. He had chosen these proposed topics, his application stated, because of his long experience working with Africans: 'As a result of political interest and also legal practice I am well enough acquainted with the above subject matter and well and favourably enough known among the people concerned as their friend to be able to gather accurate information'. Moreover,

his location in Johannesburg would facilitate research in urban areas. He was available immediately.

Sidney's referees – F. A. W. Lucas, KC; F. H. P. Creswell, House of Assembly, Capetown; and Miss V. M. L. Hodgson at the University of the Witwatersrand – were certainly respectable, and he was very keen.<sup>23</sup> He wrote again to Rheinallt Jones on 31 August expressing concern that he may not 'have grasped the precise scope of the investigations promoted by the Institute' and indicating that he would be prepared to research other topics, such as 'an enquiry into the reaction on the African peoples of European political ideas, how far these have penetrated etc'. In the meantime, the Committee had endorsed two other applications, that of Miss Monica Hunter, who planned to study 'the effects of missionary work on native society', and Miss Hilda Beemer, whose application was supported by Professors Seligman, Malinowski and Firth at the London School of Economics.<sup>24</sup> Sidney's references were never taken up. He was finally notified in late October that 'the Committee had found itself unable to endorse the application' to the International Institute.<sup>25</sup>

No matter. Another setback, and he was again pounding on his typewriter, working on an essay called *An African Prospect and Appeal to Young Africa, East, West, Central, South*. It opened with an attack on Sir Ernest Oppenheimer, whose address at the annual meeting of the Anglo-American Corporation earlier that year on 19 May had 'dwelt particularly on the benefit to unemployed natives "absorbed" by the industry'. Sidney castigated Oppenheimer's 'implied plea' that the gold and diamond mining industry 'is intentionally or unintentionally a philanthropic institution, exploiting the country's assets for the country's benefit'. Poor health and political misfortune had certainly not led him to moderate his views.

The essay was full of ideas about the future economic development of Africa, predicated on the vision of a united Africa and drawing on the rapid modernizing experience of the Soviet Union. 'We will imagine that some sort of Pan-African "State Planning Commission" and "Supreme Economic Council" has been created', he proposed. These bodies would need to attract the best technical expertise so that the government could run the continent's mines. The foundation for a socialist agriculture, he expanded, 'exists in the sugar, cotton, coffee, rubber, wattle and other plantations of Africa. There will be an immediate call for a hydrographic [*sic*] survey on a continental scale, leading to comprehensive rain-producing, drought-combating and irrigation plans ... a Pan-African Rain and Water Board based on the last word of science.' While the 'division of the land among the peasantry and labourers as private property' would enable them to increase their standard of living and allow them 'personal freedom from virtual serfdom', it would not lead to any 'great increase of production'. That would depend on collective farming.

This vision of African development could be realized through ‘Socialist co-operation of white with black’. Africans, he was convinced, would accept ‘European co-operation provided it is honest and based not on patronage, sabotage, hidden exploitation or hostility or a desire to “win” them to the imperialist side’. Of the moral rectitude and certainty of this vision, Sidney had no doubt at all: ‘The demands of a nation of a hundred and twenty million human beings for release from their chains must some day sweep the length and breadth of the whole African continent like a tidal wave’, he concluded; ‘the mightier its sweep, the more irresistible its power and the speedier and more bloodless its victory.’<sup>26</sup>

*An African Prospect* was finally completed and published as a pamphlet at the very end of December 1933. Arthur, who was sixteen and on the verge of starting university, had followed his father’s progress closely. He was very taken with the pamphlet, especially its appeal to youth and its outlook on the future, and secretly felt that his father had written it with him in mind. After all, he was set to read chemistry and botany at university, and these were prerequisites for the promotion of agricultural development. Arthur began his studies early the next year and made a new friend, a medical student named Harding le Riche, from the Orange Free State. The two became pals, and Harding became one of the family. Sidney and Becky still had callers, and they introduced Harding to their musical friends and even to some of the Communists, ‘the really devoted ones’, as well as ‘the fashionable rich ones who talked a lot but took no risks.’<sup>27</sup>

But Sidney could not provide for his family through research or pamphleteering, so he turned to music to earn his living. He spent hours practising viola and landed a spot in the orchestra of the African Theatres Trust, which managed most of the country’s cinemas. The orchestra would often perform before the showing of a film.<sup>28</sup> Sidney’s new job entailed touring the country, which he did not find easy. ‘Dear Brian’, he wrote to his younger son from Cape Town on 6 July 1934. ‘Thank you for your birthday letter: really I am much too old to celebrate birthdays, though when I told a member of the orchestra I was 61 he didnt [*sic*] believe it!’ He was staying with the Bobrows, old friends who lived on Rugby Road. It was a cacophonous household. ‘They have a better class of Malay girl here’, he apprised Brian. This one ‘has been presented with the family gramophone and some jazz records, while the Bobrows have a wireless and play about with it like all the other; so you can imagine the din sometimes’. On top of that, he continued, ‘the little girl interrupts all other conversation all the times, and Mr Bobrow doesn’t really understand English, so meal times and other times in their company are rather trying’. Moreover, the Bobrows tended to ‘go to bed very late and get up very late, but the life doesn’t suit me and I am longing for a week of bed at 10 o’clock – and a comfortable bed and pillows which I don’t get here; still, I sleep 6 hours and also in the afternoons a little.’<sup>29</sup>

The travelling did allow him to do some political work. In Cape Town a Lenin Club with Trotskyist leanings had been formed in 1933, and it invited him to speak. He still had no interest in opposition groups outside the Communist Party. But, impressed with the Soviet stance on multinational societies and with what he felt were its developmental achievements, he took the opportunity to put forward his views on the prospects of a continental federation of autonomous African states.<sup>30</sup>

But he suffered from Cape Town's torrential winter rains. The weather was 'horribly wet and cold ... raining every five minutes, with sunshine now and again for a minute and then wet again with hail'. To top it off, he complained, 'I have no umbrella, and my overcoat is soaked and won't get dry, and there are no fires in the houses, so one feels this is no place to be in in [*sic*] July'. Oh, he moaned, 'I have had enough of Capetown, it's too damp, rather rheumatic, and I am having headaches: I thought they were better, and cancelled an appointment with an oculist here, but immediately they came on badly again and now I must ask for another appointment to see what can be done: I don't know whether it is eyes that are at fault, or glasses or what'. Sidney kept attributing his headaches to eye strain.

Brian was a good student but had failed Afrikaans, and Sidney chided him on the imperative for discipline. Afrikaans might indeed be 'a silly subject', Sidney acknowledged, 'but still you have to do it, just as I have to play the National anthem daily'. Although, he added slyly, 'I have never played it yet; I use the opportunity to tune the viola, but there it is, the end of the performance, so it is no use tuning it for that day: still one or other of the three chords CG, GD and DA suits nearly every note in the "Godsers" (God *Shave* the King, as the "two jolly trumpeters" in the orchestra say) so practically I do play it'. As far as the Afrikaans was concerned, he suggested, perhaps Brian could get 'a tutor or go to a Grammars for matric'. After all, he was 'taking it young', and it would be useful to get it over and done with, 'and a bursary if possible; and then consider what to do after that: I have written to Mummy about that'.

He recounted all the musical intrigues and gossip. Brian's old teacher Rosenberg, 'who did some roadying when we had our £2 a week cut off, is unpopular with the orchestra: and yesterday there was an advertisement that he, "a violinist of repute now touring with Walles from Vienna," would be available to examine any violins etc brought to him, at 10/6 a time, the proceeds to go to charity. So there is great hilarity among his enemies, especially the trumpeters. For my part, I don't think too much of any of these', although perhaps he would ask one of them 'for quartets when we get back'.

It was a tight and demanding schedule, he grouched: Cape Town in early July, leaving for Natal around the 15, in the train till the 18, Maritzburg till the 20, then Durban. While they were playing at Maritzburg, he would presumably

stay with Jack at Lidgetton rather than at a hotel, he anticipated. But in Durban he was partial to the Seaside Hotel. Was there any chance that Brian and his mother could come down and meet him there, he asked – Becky sometimes joined him for a brief spell on his travels. If they could, he would send them some money, he promised, signing off as ‘Your loving father S P Bunting’.<sup>31</sup>

He did indeed stay with Jack, arriving on 18 July. By 1 August he was up in Pretoria at the Belgrave Hotel. He had felt ‘a bit off colour yesterday, and still feel rather weak’, he wrote to Becky. But these things ‘are nothing to worry about, slight interferences with digestion’, perhaps, or just as likely, ‘a bit of disappointment yesterday after our happy meeting on Monday’. Becky herself was under stress. Sidney was concerned that she had let all the political problems get on her nerves ‘for a long time past’. He was not sure if he would even have a part to play in the upcoming tour of Wild Violets, he told her. ‘I went to the rehearsal of it this morning and there was no viola player, but there was a piano instead, and they had the new people from Johannesburg over for this rehearsal, so I think the orchestra was practically complete. It sounds to me a bright and silly jazz piece.’ In any case he was tired. He might not even go into Pretoria town unless she let him know whether she would be joining him. ‘I am not very vigorous and should perhaps rest’, he admitted. They would be back in Johannesburg on Sunday. Presumably, the train would have ‘a special for all the company’. He would be able to ‘manage about luggage at this end, the hotel boy will carry it’, but hoped she would meet him at Jeppe station.<sup>32</sup>

As passionate as always about politics, Sidney was following the government’s continuing efforts to whittle away the remaining rights of black South Africans. The year 1935 saw an escalation of African protest. In May 1935 two bills were tabled in Parliament: the Representation of Natives Bill and the Native Trust and Land Bill – dubbed the Hertzog Bills. The first bill aimed to curtail the Cape African franchise – the Cape African votes that Sidney had campaigned for six years earlier. It proposed the creation of a Natives’ Representative Council with solely advisory status on so-called Native concerns. The second bill reasserted the existing restrictions of black landholding rights to scheduled areas. In response, Reverend Mahabane called for a national convention to launch a campaign against these bills. The next months saw much activity amongst black political activists in preparation.<sup>33</sup>

Overseas, Abyssinia grabbed international attention as Italy, led by the Fascist Benito Mussolini, rattled its war chains and threatened to invade that proudly independent African country. Black South Africans followed the events avidly: the issue symbolized the black freedom struggle against white imperialism. Sidney, too, followed the developments closely. In June *Umsebenzi* urged black dock workers: ‘Refuse to Ship Goods to Abyssinia! Defend the Last Independent Native State in Africa from the Attacks of Italian Imperialism!’ The appeals

continued over the ensuing months, generating great enthusiasm. *Umsebenzi's* sales shot up to 7,000 a week, and from June to August black dock workers at Durban and Cape Town refused to load goods onto Italian ships. The League against Fascism and War organized protest meetings and a Friends of Abyssinia committee was launched in September under the leadership of William Thibedi, now apparently back in the Party. Overseas, the League of Nations proposed sanctions against Italy, a proposal supported by the Comintern.<sup>34</sup>

Local Communist politics intervened once again in Sidney's life that year. The CPSA was still being pulled from all sides by factions in the Party who were vying with each other for Moscow's support. In September Eddie Roux, Moses Kotane and Ngedlane Josiah were expelled from the political bureau, and Issy Diamond's membership was suspended. In order to quell dissatisfaction, the political bureau found it necessary to call a meeting to justify the expulsions. This was held at the Jewish Workers' Club. Curious, Sidney decided to go. He had a pleasant surprise. Roux decided to use the occasion to publicly acknowledge and apologize for his complicity in Sidney's expulsion and for his silence during all the attacks on his former friend. Some days later he and Sidney met. 'We were glad to hear your confession', said Sidney, as ever the moralist. They spoke about the Party's prospects. Sidney still maintained that 'nothing good would come of it until the "bad elements" were removed'. There was some rapprochement between the two men; Sidney wouldn't – or couldn't – hold a grudge against Roux.<sup>35</sup>

That October, Italy invaded Abyssinia, consummating a threat that had been lingering on the international horizon for months. Massive demonstrations were held across South Africa. The issue even generated support from Sidney's erstwhile political critics. Jack Lidgett was pleased with the re-election of the Conservative government in Britain that November, he wrote to Alfred on 19 November, and hoped 'that the approved sanctions will have the effect hoped for and the war be brought to an end'. He found it 'somewhat surprising', in fact, 'that the Abyssinians have not made any stand worth the name'. South Africa was not going through easy times, he added; things were 'little better off than during the depression'.<sup>36</sup>

In December British foreign secretary Sir Samuel Hoare and French premier Pierre Laval agreed to concede most of Abyssinia to Mussolini in exchange for an end to the war. The plan provoked a public outcry. Jack was sorry to learn that the two politicians had 'drawn up a plan under which Italy will be given al[1] of Absinia [*sic*] which she has already overrun and the Ethiopians will be allowed to retain the really difficult country which is likely to break the Italians before they take it'. He was clearly disappointed that the Tories had reneged on their promise, leading to the collapse of collective security: 'If this is true, evidently the aggressor is to be rewarded and you might as well say goodbye to the League

of Nations. I can't believe it.' Sidney, of course, had held no illusions about British imperialism.<sup>37</sup> Black South Africans were still hopeful that Abyssinia could fight off the Italians. Their own political leaders were busy organizing against the Hertzog Bills, and in mid-December Pixley ka Izaka Seme of the ANC and Professor D. D. T. Jabavu convened an All African Convention in Bloemfontein to consider the way forward.<sup>38</sup>

Sidney's life on the road proved too strenuous, and he finally faced the fact that he had to give up his work in the orchestra. Marc Obel, leading American-influenced Art Deco architect, and friend and political sympathizer, helped Sidney and Becky find work as caretakers in a block of flats. In February 1936 the family left Kensington and moved into a ground floor flat at the brand new Circle Court, located on Clarendon Circle at the bottom of Twist Street. Circle Court was one of a number of important Art Deco buildings erected in Johannesburg during the 1930s, when the style was quite the rave. It was 'an imposing example of eclectic townscape', designed by the firm of Marc Obel and his brother Louis and financed by a syndicate, as were many architectural projects of 1930s Johannesburg. The building's exterior may have been sober. But this highlighted its 'magnificent entrance doors' with 'decorative aluminium pull handles'. The entrance foyer reflected all of Art Deco's sumptuous modernity: 'figured timber veneers' on the walls, 'patterned travertine floor-tiles ... black, pink and green marble inlays ... white Cubist light fittings ... ribbed chrome trim'.<sup>39</sup>

It was not a bad position. Sidney had been a fan of modernist art and architecture since the days of the Russian revolution. The flat, comprising living-dining room, one bedroom, bathroom and kitchen, was a tight fit for four people. During the day, 'the traffic raged round the circle', while at night, by contrast, it seemed 'unnaturally quiet'. Nonetheless, it was comfortable and modish and a reasonable exchange for looking after the other flats in the block. The location was conveniently close to the university, where Arthur was now in his third year and Brian just starting his first year. Conveniently, Arthur's university pal Harding le Riche lived quite close by and spent a great deal of time at the flat; he often had meals there. Nonetheless, the move represented a major break with the family's past, and their dog had to be put down.<sup>40</sup>

Sidney wrote to Jack on 6 February to let him know he had found something that he hoped would bring in about £30 a month. 'It sounds a curious job for you', Jack replied, 'but I believe these things are very much sought after in Joh'burg and your getting it is a matter for congratulation. It should be very convenient for the boys.' As for income from Lidgetton, this was much reduced this year. The previous year had been very poor indeed. In fact, Jack found Sidney's remarks about the situation 'very mild'. 'Really I do not know what accounting is coming to', he moaned. The accountants 'make out that they cannot show a



profit on last year's work and have put the fear of death into Alfred about declaring a dividend at all.<sup>41</sup>

Sidney battled on although his health was deteriorating. At some point he suffered a stroke. When he stayed at home, he would walk around the flat in a dressing gown, as if resting or even convalescing. His atherosclerosis was in an advanced state, and the acromegaly and arthritis meant that he was finding it difficult to play even the viola. Sometimes, he felt, his fingers just wouldn't do what his brain ordered. By early May, it was a real problem. His doctor advised him to avoid strenuous activity. Yet in his new position at Circle Court he liked helping the African workers with their various tasks. Once Arthur chanced to see him helping a workman push a heavy cart, seemingly oblivious to the impact on his own health.<sup>42</sup>

He bumped into Eddie Roux at a political meeting at the start of the month and complained about being unable to play viola. But as always, he was following politics, which looked ever more gloomy. In April and May 1936 the Hertzog Bills became law, cramping even further the possibilities for democratic protest in South Africa, while the defeat of Abyssinia seemed imminent. On 5 May Italian troops captured the capitol of Addis Ababa, and the two men contemplated Abyssinia's collapse. What a pity it was, Sidney told Eddie, that Africa did not have a continent-wide Communist Party 'to unite ... all the scattered anti-imperialist forces in a common front against oppression'. Then the two men went their separate ways.<sup>43</sup>

Sidney had written to his sister Dora in Southampton, about his move to Circle Court. 'Dear Sid,' she wrote to him on 3 May. She wanted to know how he was finding his new work. His accommodation sounded 'posh but limited, but perhaps the boys are out so much you don't feel crowded. Do you have to see after a communal garden? or does space not run to that.' She chattered on about Evelyn's new flat in London, their cousin Hilda Lidgett, and their 'two fascinating kittens ... The trouble of kittens,' she told her brother, 'is that they grow up + have to have jobs found for them'. She received his latest letter just as she was finishing hers and was relieved that he seemed to like his new post: 'I was afraid the flats would not be your sort'. And she was pleasantly surprised to find out that they were actually in agreement about Abyssinia!<sup>44</sup>

Another stroke on 24 May. He was taken to hospital. In the bed next to his was Gideon Botha, one of his old comrades from the ISL days. The next day Sidney's condition worsened. Nurses placed screens around his bed. Botha became agitated. 'Bunting. Comrade Bunting,' he cried out. 'I did not vote for your expulsion from the F.S.U. Believe me, I did not.' There was no reply. During the night of 25 May, Sidney died of severe cerebral haemorrhage. The post-mortem – Arthur's friend Harding le Riche was present – described the cause of death

as a rupture of the Circle of Willis, the circle of arteries that supply blood to the brain.<sup>45</sup>

Arthur was eighteen and wanted to take charge of his father's funeral arrangements. He tried very hard to keep the Communist Party away – without success. Bennie Weinbren took over. The funeral took place on 27 May, starting at Doves Funeral Parlour and moving on to the Braamfontein Crematorium, where Sidney's remains were buried, a hammer and sickle marking his gravestone. It wasn't a normal funeral, thought Harding le Riche – 'It was a red funeral'. The entire left spectrum was there, from the CPSA to the Lenin Club. It was packed – 'crowded with the hypocrites who had joined in' his father's expulsion, Arthur reflected bitterly. Many in the CPSA and in the socialist movement had uneasy consciences, worried that the vicious treatment had broken Sidney's health and led to a premature death. 'We all went to the funeral: old trade unionists and members of the I.S.L. long since outside the Party, the African trade unionists, and the Party itself, both expellers and expelled', recalled Eddie Roux. 'There was a red flag, draped in black, and among the pall-bearers were three Africans, as was fitting.'

Weinbren, controlling the proceedings, permitted four speakers. Officially, Eddie Roux represented the Party and Willie Kalk, the Leather Workers' Union, but in fact Roux spoke for the opposition and Kalk for the leadership. Roux spoke bitinglly of the way the Party had treated Sidney. Kalk presented the 'Party line' – Sidney was to be honoured for bringing black workers into the Party. C. B. Tyler spoke for the Communist 'old guard', and Gana Makabeni for the African workers. 'We have lost comrade Bunting', began Gana. 'We cannot have him back again.' But he could not carry on.<sup>46</sup>

Jack had come up. He was relieved that the family would by all indications be able to stay on at Circle Court. Becky told him that the tenants were very sympathetic and hoped that she could carry on, he wrote to Evelyn, and 'most certainly Arthur spoke as if that was practically arranged'. Jack met one of the directors of the syndicate that owned the flats. He 'seemed almost one of the family', and spoke very appreciatively 'of the way Sidney and Becky had thrown themselves into the work'. Back in Lidgetton, Jack threw himself into the plantation work. By mid-July he was feeling guilty about his silence and wrote to Becky to find out how she and the boys were getting on.<sup>47</sup>

For a long time after, Becky remained in shock, 'indifferent to everything and everybody'. Sidney's sister Evelyn sent her some of the sympathy letters that she had received, and in July Becky passed on some of hers to her sister-in-law. She had received many letters of condolence, 'but what is the good of that?', she asked Evelyn. 'Why do people appreciate the good in one after his death? What a terrible time Sidney has lived through when the Communist party expelled him and made his name mud. Why did not all these people come forward then and

defend him? I can't understand the human mind. It is quite beyond me.' She could find only one photo of Sidney, a snapshot of him addressing a meeting. She had had several enlargements made and was sending copies to Evelyn, for her, Dora and Sheldon. 'Do you know that all our married life we never had a photo taken, and this is the only thing I have of Sidney.'<sup>48</sup>

There were, in fact, other photographs – portraits of Sidney and Becky taken in Moscow in 1922 for their children, a snapshot of the family when the boys were small sitting on a lawn at a beauty spot, a photo of Sidney and Becky with the Woltons and other comrades in happier days, pictures of the Thembuland campaign. But those she did not remember just then.

## NOTES

### 1 To Save Souls

1. C. W. Sutton, 'Jabez Bunting' (*DNB*); W. R. Ward, 'Jabez Bunting' (*ODNB*); Kenneth G. Greet, *Jabez Bunting* (Peterborough: Foundery Press, 1995); E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968), p. 387.
2. Thompson, *English Working Class*, pp. 40–2.
3. C. W. Sutton, 'William Maclardie Bunting' (*DNB*); C. W. Sutton, rev. by Tim MacQuiban, 'William Maclardie Bunting' (*ODNB*).
4. Maurice Amos, 'Reminiscences for my Children' (unpublished: 1924), pp. 12–13.
5. Thomas Percival Bunting, *The Life of Dr Bunting* (London, 1887); J. E. G. de Montmoreny, 'Sir William Percy Bunting' (*DNB, Supplement 1901–11*); J. E. G. de Montmoreny, rev. by Tim MacQuiban, 'Sir William Percy Bunting' (*ODNB*); Thomas S. Legg, 'Sheldon Amos' (*ODNB*); Amos, 'Reminiscences', pp. 13–15.
6. Alan Turberfield, *John Scott Lidgett: Archbishop of British Methodism?* (Peterborough: Epworth Press, 2003), p. 10.
7. Jan Marsh, 'Votes for Women and Chastity for Men: Gender, Health, Medicine and Sexuality', in John M. Mackenzie (ed.), *The Victorian Vision: Inventing New Britain* (London: V & A Publications, 2002), pp. 97–123; 101–2; Robert Moore, *Pit-Men, Preachers and Politics: The Effects of Methodism in a Durham Mining Community* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), pp. 11, 140–68.
8. J. Scott Lidgett, *My Guided Life* (London: Methuen, 1936), p. 74; Turberfield, *Lidgett*, p. 8.
9. Ellen M. McDougall, *Lady Bunting: In Memoriam* ([London, c. 1920]); J. Scott Lidgett, *Reminiscences* (London: Epworth, 1928), pp. 7–12.
10. Guano was used by British farmers as fertilizer. 'Appleton Hall, Appleton le Moors, North Yorkshire' (n.p., n.d.); Elizabeth S. Lidgett, 'A Sketch of Mrs Joseph Shepherd, née Mary Hyett (1806–91)', p. 3, both courtesy of Shirley Brooke; Margaret Allison, *History of Appleton-le-Moors: A 12th Century Planned Village* (Appleton-le-Moors, 2003), p. 182; Lidgett, *Guided Life*, p. 6.
11. *Hull Advertiser*, 13 April 1849.
12. *Hull Advertiser*, 12 January 1849, 10 May 1850, 25 May 1849.
13. Elizabeth Camp, 'Early Lidgettton: Heritage Outing – September 2000', paper prepared for Lions River Heritage Society, p. 1; Alan F. Hattersley, *The British Settlement of Natal: A Study in Imperial Migration* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1950), pp. 117–18, 154, 256; Lidgett, *Guided Life*, pp. 6–7.

14. London, Family Records Centre (FRC), Census for 1871, RG 10/220, fols 65–73.
15. Amos, 'Reminiscences', pp. 14–15, 33, 38, 16; Philippa Levine, 'Sarah McLardie Amos (née Bunting)' (*ODNB*).
16. The law was finally repealed in 1886.
17. Amos, 'Reminiscences', pp. 36, 34.
18. Amos, 'Reminiscences', pp. 42, 38; P. H. Winfield, 'Sir (Percy) Maurice (Maclardie) Sheldon Amos' (*DNB, Supplement, 1931–40*); Marie-Louise Legg and Thomas S. Legg, 'Sir (Percy) Maurice Maclardie Sheldon Amos' (*ODNB*).
19. Amos, 'Reminiscences', pp. 48, 44, 53.

## 2 God and Gladstone

1. *Manchester Guardian*, 24 July 1911; Amos, 'Reminiscences', p. 16.
2. *Daily Telegraph*, 24 July 1911; *Daily News*, 24 July 1911.
3. FRC, Census for 1881, RG 11/0188, folio 96, p. 14; Christopher Oldstone-Moore, 'The Forgotten Origins of the Ecumenical Movement in England: The Grindelwald Conferences', *Church History*, 70:1 (March 2001), pp. 73–97; 77.
4. Jonathan Schneer, *London 1900: The Imperial Metropolis* (New Haven and London: Yale, 1999), p. 122; Marsh, 'Votes for Women', pp. 102–3.
5. Amos, 'Reminiscences', p. 16.
6. McDougall, *Lady Bunting*.
7. Turberfield, *Lidgett*, pp. 24, 8; Lidgett, *Guided Life*, p. 75.
8. McDougall, *Lady Bunting*.
9. 'Sir William Percy Bunting' (*DNB, Supplement 1901–11*); Lidgett, *Guided Life*, pp. 74–5; Oldstone-Moore, 'Forgotten Origins', p. 76.
10. Paul Greenhalgh, 'The Art and Industry of Mammon: International Exhibitions, 1851–1901', pp. 265–79; 268 and Anthony Burton, 'Small Adults: Education and the Life of Children', pp. 75–97; 91, both in Mackenzie (ed.), *Victorian Vision*.
11. 'Appleton Hall'; Lidgett, *Mrs Joseph Shepherd*; Allison, *Appleton-le-Moors*, pp. 125, 107, 183, 1–2, 108.
12. Lidgett, *Guided Life*, pp. 24–5; Turberfield, *Lidgett*, pp. 10–11. Lidgett dates the laying of the foundation stone as summer 1863.
13. Richard Aldrich, *School and Society in Victorian Britain: Joseph Payne and the New World of Education* (New York and London: Garland, 1995), pp. xv, 37–8; Christopher Stray, *Classics Transformed: Schools, Universities, and Society in England, 1830–1960* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), pp. 86, 167–83.
14. Christopher Cookson, 'Sixth Form Teaching in a Day School', in Christopher Cookson (ed.), *Essays on Secondary Education by Various Contributors* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1898), pp. 65–95.
15. Edward Roux, *S. P. Bunting: A Political Biography* [1944], ed. and introduced by Brian Bunting (Bellville: Mayibuye, 1993), p. 59; London, Bunting Family Papers, *Sir Percy Bunting: Obituaries, Contemporary Review* (n.d.), *Advance*, September 1911.
16. Aldrich, *School and Society*, pp. xv, 37–8; Stray, *Classics Transformed*, pp. 86, 167–83.
17. Aldrich, *School and Society*, p. xvi; *Times*, 24 July 1911.
18. H. J. K. Usher, C. D. Black-Hawkins and G. J. Carrick, *An Angel without Wings: A History of University College School, 1838–1980* ([London]: University College School, 1981), Foreword and pp. 25, 50, 53; Bernard Wasserstein, *Herbert Samuel: A Political*

- Life* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), pp. 9–10. Herbert Samuel, future Liberal Party leader, entered University College School the same year as Sidney.
19. Usher et al., *Angel*, pp. 40, 20, 44–5, 51–2, 54.
  20. Amos, ‘Reminiscences’, pp. 64–5; McDougall, *Lady Bunting*.
  21. Andrew Mearns, *The Bitter Cry of Outcast London: An Inquiry into the Condition of the Abject Poor* (1883); *Pall Mall Gazette*, 23 October 1883, 6–8, 10 July 1885; *Sir Percy Bunting: Obituaries*, William T. Stead in *Contemporary Review* (n.d.); Turberfield, *Lidgett*, pp. 37, 86.
  22. Amos, ‘Reminiscences’, p. 66.
  23. *University College London School Register*, v. 9, 1880–81 to 1889–90 (University College London, Records Office), pp. 368, 426, 506, 532, 557, 583, 634, 659, 685, 711, 734; Aldrich, *School and Society*, p. xvi; *Manchester Guardian*, 24 July 1911.
  24. London, British Library, W. E. Gladstone Papers, T. E. Sherlock, ‘England’s “Grand Old Man”’, Add. 44499, fol. 72.
  25. Amos, ‘Reminiscences’, p. 27; *Review of the Churches*, 3, 13, 15 October 1892, p. 388.
  26. Gladstone Papers, Percy Bunting to W. E. Gladstone, 6 October 1886, Add. 44499, fol. 78, 11 May 1887, Add. 44500, fols 295–6; Chicago, University of Chicago Library, Special Collections Research Center, Sir Percy William Bunting Papers, W. E. Gladstone to Percy Bunting, 10 May 1887.
  27. Gladstone Papers, Bunting to Gladstone, 21 May 1887, Add. 44501, fols 31–2.
  28. Gladstone Papers, Bunting to Gladstone, 6 October 1886, Add. 44499, fol. 78.
  29. Amos, ‘Reminiscences’, pp. 68–9; 61, 72–3.
  30. McDougall, *Lady Bunting*; Turberfield, *Lidgett*, p. 13; Lidgett, *Guided Life*, pp. 23, 75.
  31. Amos, ‘Reminiscences’, p. 17.
  32. Elisabeth Brewer to author, 17 October 2003.
  33. Amos, ‘Reminiscences’, pp. 60, 59, 36, 27.
  34. Mary H. Krout, *A Looker-on in London* (London: B. F. Stevens & Brown, 1899), pp. 19–20.
  35. Gladstone Papers, Bunting to Gladstone, 22 June 1888, Add. 44504, fols 33–4.
  36. Gladstone Papers, Bunting to Gladstone, 24 June 1888 and 3 July 1888, Add. 44504, fol. 39, fols 73–4; Amos, ‘Reminiscences’, p. 27; Roux, *S. P. Bunting*, p. 59. Amos thought this took place when he was ‘a very green undergraduate at Cambridge’. Unless Gladstone came to dine more than once, this is unlikely.
  37. University College London School, *Honour List*, August 1889, London, pp. 15, 16, 20, 25, 42; *University College School Magazine*, n.s. 34 (April 1889), pp. 160–1.

### 3 A Classical Boy

1. Aldrich, *School and Society*, pp. xv, 37–8; Stray, *Classics Transformed*, pp. 86, 167–83.
2. Sally Mitchell, *Daily Life in Victorian England* (Westport, CT and London: Greenwood, 1996), pp. x, 182, 223–4; North London Collegiate School for Girls Application for Admission, Dora Elizabeth Lidgett Bunting.
3. A ‘clerihew’ by Edmund Clerihew Bentley, in A. H. Mead, *A Miraculous Draught of Fishes: A History of St Paul’s School* (London: James & James, 1990), p. 97; E. Clerihew Bentley, *The First Clerihews* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 17, n. 1.
4. Robert Barlow Gardiner (ed.), *Admissions Register of St Paul’s School from 1876 to 1905* (London: George Bell, 1906); Stray, *Classics Transformed*, p. 180.

5. V. M. Coutts-Trotter, 'Mr Walker, High Master: At the New School, 1884–1905' and 'Frederick William Walker', in R. B. Gardiner and John Lupton (eds), *Res Paulinae: The Eighth Half-Century of St Paul's School* (London: St Paul's School, 1911), pp. 101–16, 116–47; Michael F. J. McDonnell, *A History of St Paul's School* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1909), pp. 426–53.
6. Mead, *Miraculous Draught*, pp. 97–8.
7. Stray, *Classics Transformed*, p. 49; Aldrich, *School and Society*, pp. 74–8.
8. Henry Pelling, *Social Geography of British Elections, 1885–1910* (London, Melbourne and Toronto: Macmillan and New York: St Martin's Press, 1967), p. 41. See also Mead, *Miraculous Draught*, pp. 3–4; R. C. Seaton, 'St Paul's School and the Charity Commission', in Gardiner and Lupton (eds), *Res Paulinae*, pp. 148–93, 154, 176–7.
9. G. K. Chesterton, *Autobiography* (London: Hutchinson, 1937), p. 74.
10. *Pauline*, 8:38 (November 1889), p. 10; Mead, *Miraculous Draught*, pp. 72, 83.
11. Mead, *Miraculous Draught*, pp. 80–3; Coutts-Trotter, 'Mr Walker', p. 105; William Nichols Marcy, *Reminiscences of a Public Schoolboy* (London: Elkin Mathews and Marrot, 1932), p. 29.
12. Mead, *Miraculous Draught*, p. 77; E. C. Bentley, *Those Days* (London: Constable, 1940), p. 57; Chesterton *Autobiography*, pp. 70–1; Hugh Mead, 'Bentley and St Paul's' in Bentley, *First Cleribews*, pp. ix–xiv, ix; Gardiner (ed.), *Admissions Register*, introduction.
13. Marcy, *Reminiscences*, pp. 49–50; Bentley, *Those Days*, p. 54; Mead, *Miraculous Draught*, p. 86.
14. Cyril Picciotto, *St Paul's School* (London and Glasgow: Blackie and Sons, 1939), pp. 124–5; Marcy, *Reminiscences*, pp. 51, 64.
15. Marcy, *Reminiscences*, pp. 51, 54, 28–9.
16. Stray, *Classics Transformed*, p. 86.
17. Bentley, *Those Days*, pp. 59–60; Chesterton, *Autobiography*, pp. 70–1; Bentley, *First Cleribews*, p. 8, n. 3; Gardiner (ed.), *Admissions Register*, introduction; C. H. Bicknell, 'The Cadet Corps and Officers' Training Corps', in Gardiner and Lupton (eds), *Res Paulinae*; Picciotto, *St Paul's School*, pp. 122–3; Stray, *Classics Transformed*, pp. 180–1, 183.
18. Coutts-Trotter, 'Frederick William Walker', p. 147.
19. Christopher Cookson, 'Sixth Form Teaching in a Day School', in Christopher Cookson (ed.), *Essays on Secondary Education by Various Contributors* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1898), pp. 65–95, pp. 85, 81, 75–6, 84; Coutts-Trotter, 'Mr Walker', p. 110.
20. Marcy, *Reminiscences*, p. 63–4; see also Stray, *Classics Transformed*, p. 187.
21. Bentley, *First Cleribews*, p. 16; Chesterton, *Autobiography*, pp. 57–8.
22. Mead, *Miraculous Draught*, pp. 77, 86.
23. Coutts-Trotter, 'Mr Walker', pp. 141–2.
24. Marcy, *Reminiscences*, pp. 66, 67.
25. St Paul's School Library, London, report of class Lviii for half-year ending Christmas 1889 [A. M. Cook]; report of class Lviiia for half-year ending July [A. M. Cook].
26. St Paul's School Honours and Distinctions obtained by Past and Present Paulines from Michaelmas, 1889, to Michaelmas, 1890, in *St Paul's School Apposition's 1875–1922; Pauline*, 8:44 (October 1890), p. 211; Amos, 'Reminiscences', p. 63.
27. FRC, Censuses for 1871, RG 10/220, folio 65–73; 1881, RG 11/0188, folio 96, p. 14; 1891, RG 12/119, folio 89–94.
28. Gladstone Papers, Bunting to Gladstone, 23 November 1890, Add 56448, ff 90–3; Oldstone-Moore, 'Forgotten Origins', p. 79.

29. W. T. Stead, 'Programme', *Review of Reviews*, January 1890; Oldstone-Moore, 'Forgotten Origins', pp. 79–80.
30. Coutts-Trotter, 'Mr Walker', pp. 110–11.
31. Coutts-Trotter, 'Frederick William Walker', pp. 143–4.
32. Report of form Mviii for half-year ending Christmas 1890 [Christopher Cookson]; Report of class Uviii for half-year ending July 29<sup>th</sup> 1891 [F. Carter].
33. *Pauline*, 10:53 (February 1892), pp. 45, 43; Picciotto, *St Paul's School*, pp. 120–36, 120–1. There is no record of Sidney on any school team.
34. *Pauline* 9:47 (March 1891), p. 86; 10, 53, February 1892; Picciotto, *St Paul's School*, pp. 125–6.
35. *Pauline*, 10:55 (June 1892), pp. 119–20.
36. *Pauline*, 9:45 (November 1890), pp. 51, 53; 9, 47, March 1891, p. 92.
37. 'Apposition, Wednesday, July 29, 1891', *St Paul's School Apposition's, 1875–1922*; *Pauline*, 9:49–50 (July 1891), p. 152; 9: 51 (October 1891), pp. 213, 215.
38. 'Appleton Hall'; Lidgett, *Mrs Joseph Shepherd*; Allison, *Appleton-le-Moors*, pp. 107, 183.
39. *Pauline*, 10:52 (November 1891), pp. 12, 17.
40. *Pauline*, 10:53 (February 1892), p. 48; Pelling, *Social Geography*, pp. 16–17.
41. *Pauline*, 10:55 (June 1892), p. 120.
42. Marcy, *Reminiscences*, pp. 95–6. Marcy apparently uses the actual initial of each person mentioned in his book. In his last year, 1891–2, three boys whose surnames began with B were in the upper eighth; of those Sidney was the highest on the form list and the only person whose surname began with B who received an Oxford scholarship for 1892. See Report of class Uviii for half-year ending July 29<sup>th</sup> 1892 [F. Carter]; 'Apposition, Mid-summer 1892', *St Paul's School Calendar*; and List of Freshmen, *Oxford Magazine*, 19, 26 October, 2 November 1892, pp. 14, 36–7, 58. Coutts-Trotter, 'Mr Walker', p. 136, refers in very similar terms to what is evidently the same incident.
43. Report of class Uviii for half-year ending July [27?] 1892 [F. Carter].
44. *Weekly Dispatch*, 24 April 1892, in Pelling, *Social Geography*, pp. 55, 37–8.
45. *Pall Mall Gazette*, 24 July 1911, *Islington Daily Gazette*, 26 July 1911. The nursery rhyme ran: 'Baby, Baby Bunting, your father's gone a-hunting, to catch a rabbit skin, to wrap his Baby Bunting in.'
46. Pelling, *Social Geography*, pp. 17, 37, 56. Pelling argues that Nonconformity's influence even in constituencies where it was seemingly strong was not statistically significant.
47. Marcy, *Reminiscences*, pp. 104–5; *Pauline*, 10:57 (October 1892), p. 176; Chesterton, *Autobiography*, p. 71; Bentley, *Those Days*, p. 59.
48. Marcy, *Reminiscences*, p. 105; *Pauline*, 10:57 (October 1892), p. 176.
49. 'Apposition, July 27, 1892', *St Paul's School Apposition's, 1875–1922*; Marcy, *Reminiscences*, p. 105.

#### 4 Imperial University

1. Oldstone-Moore, 'Forgotten Origins', pp. 80–1; *Review of the Churches*, 2:7 (14 April 1892), pp. 28–31, 28–9 and 1:6 (15 March 1892), pp. 404–7, 406.
2. Oldstone-Moore, 'Forgotten Origins', pp. 80–6, 84.
3. The London School of Medicine for Women was formed in 1874; women won the right to become licensed physicians in 1876; the University of London began admitting women for medical and other degrees in 1878; Mitchell, *Daily Life*, pp. x, 197.



4. Compton Mackenzie, *Sinister Street* [1913] (London: Penguin, 1960), pp. 372–8, 378. The main character in *Sinister Street* studied at Magdalen – or St Mary’s in the novel. See Compton Mackenzie, *My Life and Times*, octave 3 (London: Chatto and Windus, 1964), on his Magdalen years, 1901–4.
5. *Oxford Magazine*, 23 January 1895, p. 167. For another view of Rhodes see Apollon Davidson, *Cecil Rhodes and his Time* (Pretoria: Protea Book House, 2003).
6. Richard Symonds, ‘Oxford and the Empire’, in M. G. Brock and M. C. Curthoys (eds), *The History of the University of Oxford: Vol. 7, Nineteenth-Century Oxford, Part 2* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), pp. 689–716, 690; *Oxford Magazine*, 5 February 1895, p. 196.
7. Symonds, ‘Oxford and the Empire’, pp. 689, 691, 693; John S. Galbraith, ‘Cecil Rhodes and his “Cosmic Dreams”: A reassessment’, *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 1 (1972–3), pp. 173–89, 173.
8. Jane Howarth, ‘“In Oxford but ... not of Oxford”: The Women’s Colleges’, in Brock and Curthoys (eds), *University of Oxford*, pp. 237–307, 238–40; *Oxford Magazine*, 26 February 1896, pp. 213, 214–15. Women were not able to study for degrees until 1920.
9. *Our Magazine* (North London Collegiate School for Girls), 51 (July 1892), pp. 80–1.
10. Symonds, ‘Oxford and the Empire’, pp. 696–8.
11. Goldwin Smith, *The Reorganization of the University of Oxford* (Oxford and London: James Parker, 1868), p. 66.
12. M. G. Brock, ‘A “Plastic Structure”’, pp. 3–66, 3–4, and M. C. Curthoys, ‘The Colleges in the New Era’, pp. 115–57, 132, in Brock and Curthoys (eds), *University of Oxford*.
13. Stray, *Classics Transformed*, p. 178; Curthoys, ‘Colleges’, pp. 119, 122–6.
14. Curthoys, ‘Colleges’, pp. 127–8, 152, 155; H. S. Jones, ‘University and College Sport’ in Brock and Curthoys (eds), *University of Oxford*, pp. 517–43, 526; *Oxford Magazine*, 1 March 1893, p. 259, 8 March 1893, p. 278.
15. Brock, ‘Plastic Structure’, pp. 50, 3–5; Curthoys, ‘Colleges’, pp. 124, 132–3. These tensions are deftly captured in A. D. Godley, *Aspects of Modern Oxford by a Mere Don* (London: Seeley, 1894).
16. Mackenzie, *Sinister Street*, pp. 375, 382. Accounts of Magdalen in the 1890s include Sir Harold Morris, Q. C., *Back View* (London: Peter Davies, 1960), pp. 94–101 and John Vincent (ed.), *The Crawford Papers: The Journals of David Lindsay, Twenty-Seventh Earl of Crawford and Tenth Earl of Balcarres, 1871–1940, during the years 1892–1940* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), pp. 10–23.
17. Oxford, Magdalen College Archives (MC), *Rooms, 1867–97*, CP/2/60 (a); the inventory valuation for Sidney’s room in New Building was £28.19.
18. MC, Thomas Loveday, ‘Extracts taken from a tape-recording made in 1963’, MSS. 968, p. 1; Mackenzie, *Life and Times*, pp. 59–60.
19. Morris, *Back View*, pp. 94, 96.
20. Christopher Platt, *The Most Obliging Man in Europe: Life and Times of the Oxford Scout* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1986), pp. 29, 60, 67.
21. *Isis*, new series, 29 November 1892, p. 77.
22. Mackenzie, *Sinister Street*, p. 397; Platt, *Most Obliging Man*, p. 58; Mackenzie, *Life and Times*, p. 87; Dessert in Magdalen JCR, 1890, photograph, Magdalen College.
23. Morris, *Back View*, pp. 94–5, 97; Mackenzie, *Life and Times*, p. 58; Richard Sheppard, *The Gunstones of St Clement’s: The History of a Dynasty of College Servants at Magdalen*, Magdalen College Occasional Paper 6 (Oxford: Magdalen College, 2003).

24. Sheppard, *Gunstones*, pp. 22–3; MC, P. V. M. Benecke, *Some Remarks Suggested by Laurie Magnus's Book 'Herbert Warren of Magdalen'*, p. 173, MS 407; Morris, *Back View*, p. 95; Mackenzie, *Life and Times*, pp. 107–9; Mackenzie, *Sinister Street*, p. 477.
25. Roger Hutchins (comp.), *'Well Rowed Magdalen!' A History of Magdalen College Boat Club, 1859–1993* (Oxford: Magdalen College, 1993), plate 2; Mackenzie, *Sinister Street*, pp. 390–1, 545–50.
26. Mackenzie, *Life and Times*, p. 59; MC, *President's Note Book*, September 1895–June 1898, PR/2/12, p. 325 indicates that the average annual batells as of July 1897 was £39.10 for commoners and £30 for demies, exhibitioners and clerks.
27. *Oxford University Calendar*, 1893, p. 441.
28. *President's Note Book*, January 1893–August 1895, PR/2/11, p. 170; *Oxford Magazine*, 2 November 1892, p. 58.
29. Loveday, 'Extracts', p. 1; *President's Note Book*, January 1891–October 1892, PR/2/10, pp. 197–8; Mackenzie, *Life and Times*, p. 87.
30. Of the other demies, one came from Oxford High School, one from Ripon, one from Bradford, one from Magdalen School and one from Bedford School, an inexpensive public school near London – in other words, from families of modest incomes but with social expectations for their sons. *Oxford Magazine*, 2 November 1892, p. 58. MC, *J. C. R. Accounts Magd. Coll.*, 2 vols, 01/94; *Rooms, 1867–97*.
31. *Rooms, 1867–97*.
32. Mackenzie, *Sinister Street*, p. 395.
33. Cyril Bailey, 'Sir Thomas Herbert Warren' (*DNB, Supplement 1922–30*); Cyril Bailey, rev. M. C. Curthoys, 'Sir Thomas Herbert Warren', (*ODNB*); *Oxford University Calendar*, 1893, p. 442; Laurie Magnus, *Herbert Warren of Magdalen: President and Friend, 1853–1930* (London: John Murray, 1932), pp. 27–32; T. H. Warren, *College Unity* (Oxford: 1885); Curthoys, 'Colleges', p. 130; H. S. Jones, 'University and college sport', in Brock and Curthoys (eds), *University of Oxford*, pp. 517–43, 527–8.
34. Richard Jenkins, 'Classical Studies, 1872–1914', in Brock and Curthoys (eds), *University of Oxford*, pp. 327–31, 327–8; see also W. H. Walsh, 'The Zenith of Greats', pp. 311–26, same volume.
35. Stray, *Classics Transformed*, pp. 122, 205, 117.
36. The Reverend John Fisher, Senior Fellow of Magdalen, was just such a gentleman fellow. *President's Note Book*, September 1895–June 1898, PR/2/12, p. 121; *Oxford Magazine*, 3 June 1896, p. 380.
37. *Isis*, 24 November 1894, pp. 90–1.
38. Godley, *Modern Oxford*, pp. 109, 111, 117–18.
39. MC, Notebook of H. W. Greene, MS 817 (i).
40. *President's Note Book*, January 1893–August 1895, PR/2/11, pp. 170, 175–6, quote p. 176.
41. *Oxford University Calendar*, 1896, pp. 364–5.
42. MS Oxford, Bodleian Library, Eng. Misc. e1142, C. C. J. Webb Diaries, 12 December 1894, p. 123; *President's Note Book*, September 1895–June 1898, PR/2/12, p. 210.
43. Sheppard, *Gunstones*, p. 27; Mackenzie, *Life and Times*, pp. 86–90, 98, 119–20.
44. Sidney is not listed as a member of the Russell Club, a Liberal essay society whose records date to 1894, nor is there any indication of his involvement in the Oxford Union. Communication from Oliver House, Bodleian Library, Oxford, 2 March 2005. Sidney's lack of political involvement contrasts markedly with that of Herbert Samuel, who went up to Balliol College as a scholar in 1889, joined the Liberal and Radical Association, the

- Society for the Study of Social Ethics and was elected to the Russell Club. See Wasserstein, *Herbert Samuel*, pp. 16–18.
45. Curthoys, 'Colleges', p. 156.
  46. Peter Hinchliff, 'Religious Issues, 1870–1914', in Brock and Curthoys (eds), *University of Oxford*, pp. 98–112, 103.
  47. Lord Balcarres's diary at Magdalen makes an oblique reference to Methodism: an expression of resentment that a letter in a radical Wigan paper had insinuated that his father had not included a Methodist or dissenter in his festivities; see Vincent (ed.), *Crawford Papers*, p. 22.
  48. Cowley, Oxfordshire Records Office, Nonconformist Records: Oxford Methodist Circuit, e.75, Oxford University John Wesley Society Minutes, 1889–1900; Nonconformist Records: Oxford Methodist Circuit, c.21, Rev. F. C. Wright, 'Wesley at Oxford', *The Guild*, n.d., pp. 207–10, in F. W. Nix's materials for a history of Oxfordshire Methodism.
  49. John Wesley Society Minutes, 1889–1900. By Hilary term 1894 Sidney was not on the membership list. Turberfield, *Lidgett*, pp. 29–30, 84–6.
  50. *Musical News*, 14 September 1895, p. 212 in *President's Note Book*, January 1893–August 1895, PR/2/11, p. 450; *Isis*, 18 November 1893, p. 74.
  51. P. C. Buck, J. H. Mee and F. C. Woods, *Ten Years of University Music in Oxford* (Oxford: W. R. Bowden, 1894), p. 1; Susan Wollenberg, *Music at Oxford in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 174–7.
  52. *Isis*, new series, 4 November 1893, p. 45.
  53. Buck, Mee and Woods, *Ten Years*, pp. xiii, 1, 8, 10, 12, quote p. 8; E. S. Kemp and J. H. Mee, *Ten More Years, 1894 to 1904, of University Music in Oxford* (Oxford, 1904), pp. xv–xvi, xiii. The OUMU subsequently moved to the Holywell Music Room.
  54. Oxford, Bodleian Library, *Suggestions, O. U. M. U., 1894–99*, esp. 13 December 1896.
  55. A. H. Bunting, 'Memorials of my Father', in Brian Bunting (ed.), *Letters to Rebecca: South African Communist Leader S. P. Bunting to his Wife, 1917–34* (Bellville: Mayibuye, 1996), pp. 34–49, 37; *Oxford Magazine*, 9, 23 November 1892.
  56. Oxford, Bodleian Library, *O. U. M. U. Photograph Album*; Buck, Mee and Woods, *Ten Years*, pp. 18, 38, 43; *Oxford Magazine*, 8 February 1893, p. 212; 15 February 1893, pp. 232; 22 February 1893, p. 250; 8 March 1893, p. 284; 15 March 1893, p. 299; 7 November 1894, p. 67; 13 February 1895, p. 225; 13 March 1895, p. 298; 15 May 1895, p. 355.
  57. Jones, 'University and college sport', pp. 525, 519; *Oxford Magazine*, 15 November 1893, p. 71. My thanks to Hugh Christensen for information on beagles at Oxford.
  58. Roux, *S. P. Bunting*, pp. 60–1; *Oxford Magazine*, 15 November 1893, p. 71.
  59. Jones, 'University and College Sport', pp. 520–1, 526; Hutchins (comp.), *Well Rowed Magdalen!*, pp. 9–10, 20–1; W. E. Sherwood, *Oxford Rowing: A History of Boat-Racing at Oxford from the Earliest Times with a Record of the Races* (Oxford and London: Henry Frowde, 1900), pp. 138–40, 168. Sherwood, p. 44, dates the Torpids from 1827.
  60. MC, Magdalen College Boat Club – Secretary's Book, 1888–1907, pp. 137, 151, 153–4, 163, quote p. 139.
  61. Webb Diaries, Eng. Misc. d 1105, 13 February 1895, p. 17; Eng. Misc. e1141, 15 February 1894, p. 85.
  62. Webb Diaries, Eng. Misc. e1141, January–February 1893, pp. 1, 9, 28; 4–5 December 1893, p. 68; Eng. Misc. e1142, March 1894, pp. 1–3; MSS Oxford, Bodleian Library, C. C. J. Webb Letters to his Mother, Eng. Lett. e180, 18 February 1894, p. 7; on Webb see also Curthoys, 'Colleges', pp. 143–4.
  63. Loveday, 'Extracts', pp. 2, 6.

64. The former Magdalen College School building is now the new library. *Rooms, 1867–97*; the inventory valuation for the two St Swithun's rooms was £56.1.
65. Webb Diaries, Eng. misc. e1142, 10 May, 1, 16 June, 8, 15 November, 12 December 1894, pp. 17, 25, 30, 105, 109, 123; Webb Diaries, Eng. misc. d1105, 11, 18, 27 February, 4, 11, 13 March, 3, 11 May 1895, pp. 17, 21, 26, 29, 32–3, 61, 65. Hilary Term ran from January to early April and was also known as Lent Term.
66. Webb Diaries, Eng. misc. d1105, 7 August 1895, p. 109; Gardiner and Lupton (eds), *Res Paulinae*, p. 104; F. H. B. Dale, a Balliol scholar, became a Merton fellow in 1894 and won several classical scholarships. See Morris, *Back View*, pp. 93, 96 on coaching.
67. Stray, *Classics Transformed*, p. 188; *President's Note Book*, January 1893–August 1895, PR/2/11, pp. 178–9, 313; Stray, *Classics Transformed*, p. 217. At the time of his appointment, Cookson had already co-published *The Principles of Sound and Inflection as Illustrated in the Greek and Latin Languages* with J. E. King.
68. Webb Diaries, Eng. Misc. d1106, 23 January 1896, p. 33; Eng. Misc. d1105, 16 February 1895, p. 20.
69. Mackenzie, *Life and Times*, pp. 59–60; Morris, *Back View*, pp. 98, 100; *Rooms, 1867–97*; Sidney was not on the rooms list during 1895–6.
70. Webb Diaries, Eng. Misc. d1106, 1–2 January 1896; Thomas Pakenham, *The Boer War* [1979], London, Abacus, 1992, pp. 1–5.
71. Webb Diaries, Eng. Misc. d1106, 25 January, 21, 23, 24, 25 March, 7 April, 9, 16 May, 1896, pp. 34, 59–60, 66, 85, 87.
72. Notebook of H. W. Greene; *Oxford Magazine*, 25 April 1894, p. 277.
73. Webb Diaries, Eng. Misc. d1106, 1 August 1896, p. 116; *Oxford University Calendar*, 1899, pp. 293–4.
74. E. P. Thompson, *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary*, rev. ed. (London: Merlin Press, 1977), p. 636.
75. Webb Diaries, Eng. Misc. e1143, 9 October 1896, p. 15.
76. In each of the previous two years, only one Magdalen student had succeeded in the Indian Civil Service Competition. *Oxford Magazine*, 28 October 1896, pp. 27–9; *President's Note Book*, September 1895–June 1898, PR/2/12, p. 163.
77. *President's Note Book*, September 1895–June 1898, PR/2/12, pp. 159, quote 176a, 224. This mentions the examiners' meeting, but not the college meeting at which the fellows made their decision. Page 176a has been pasted into the note nook; the original page was cut out. The 1896–7 records of the Vice-President's Note Book, *Registrum Collegii B. M. Magd, 1886–1913*, MC, VP1/A1/5, were not kept.
78. Webb Diaries, Eng. Misc. e1143, 14, 15 October 1896, pp. 19–20.
79. Webb Letters to his Mother, Eng. Lett. e180, 18 October 1896, p. 144.
80. Webb Diaries, Eng. Misc. e1143, 22 October 1896, pp. 24–5.
81. S. P. Bunting, *Res Nautica apud Antiquos: Oratio Latina*, Chancellor's Latin Essay, 1897 (Oxford: Blackwell, 1897); *Oxford University Gazette*, 27 May 1896, p. 501. The length was set at 30–5 printed pages, and submissions were anonymous; candidates distinguished their essays through a motto. My thanks to Richard Ashby for Latin translations.
82. Webb Diaries, Eng. Misc. e1143, 2 May 1897, pp. 172–3.
83. Webb Diaries, Eng. Misc. e1144, 22 June 1897, p. 14.
84. *President's Note Book*, September 1895–June 1898, PR/2/12, pp. 283, 323; *Oxford University Calendar*, 1899, pp. 55, 58.
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## 5 Fighting for Empire

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28. Turberfield, *Lidgett*, p. 87; Pakenham, *Boer War*, pp. 87–8; Searle, *New England?*, p. 287.
29. Bunting, *Dominion*, pp. 307–8.
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38. Bunting, *Dominion*, pp. 307–8.
39. Amos, 'Reminiscences', p. 18.
40. Robin Darwall-Smith to author, 7 April 2004.
41. Searle, *New England?*, p. 284. Sidney is not on the lists of the Inns of Court, Artists' Rifles or City Imperial Volunteers; Denis Durkin, Inns of Court and City Yeomanry, to author, 8 December 2004; Emma Armstrong, National Army Museum, to author, 17 December 2004; City Imperial Volunteers Archives, 10.191–10.205, 10.207, and extracts from diaries, MS 17631/c–d. He first appears in the *Official Army List*, October 1900, pp. 1365–6.

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50. *Official Army List*, October 1901, p. 1677j and January 1902, p. 1677j. This was the last time Sidney's name appeared in the *Official Army List*.
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52. Pakenham, *Boer War*, pp. 534–5. The 'Return of Corps of the South African Mounted Irregular Forces' indicates that the amalgamated Johannesburg Mounted Rifles disbanded in Johannesburg on 4 April 1902. But Stirling, *Colonials*, pp. 267–70, states that they crossed the Vaal River in May 1902 and skirmished in the Frankfurt district of the Orange Free State shortly before the end of the war. According to the *Star*, weekly edition, 12 July 1902, in July the remaining troops were camped at Yeoville.
53. *Star*, weekly edition, 2 June 1902.
54. Pakenham, *Boer War*, pp. 572–3; Carver, *Boer War*, pp. 250–2. Stowell Kessler estimates that over 21,000 Africans died in concentration camps alone. Stowell Kessler to author, 21 July 2005.
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## 6 An English Gentleman in Johannesburg

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6. Bunting Family Papers, Certificate of admission, Supreme Court of the Transvaal, 27 November 1902; *Donaldson and Hills Transvaal and Rhodesia Directory*, 1903, p. 809.
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8. L. E. Neame, *The Rand Club* (Johannesburg: Rand Club, 1957), pp. 70–8; Rand Club secretary to author, 22 August 2001.
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  29. Hattersley, *British Settlement*, p. 279; Edgar H. Brookes and Colin de B. Webb, *A History of Natal* (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal, 1965), p. 251.
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  32. Jack to Aunt Lizzie, 4 March 1907; Sidney and Jack to Alfred, 14 December 1906; Brookes and de B. Webb, *History of Natal*, p. 258.
  33. Alfred to Aunt Lizzie, 25 March 1907 and 25 April 1907, Lidgett letter books; University of the Cape of Good Hope, *Calendar, 1917–18*, p. 217; Herma van Niekerk to author, 7 July 2005; Janine Dunlop to author, 14 December 2004.
  34. W. M. MacMillan, *The South African Agrarian Problem and its Historical Development* (Johannesburg: Council of Education, Witwatersrand, 1919), p. 8.
  35. Neame, *Rand Club*, p. 97; Roux, *S. P. Bunting*, p. 63.
  36. Wasserstein, *Herbert Samuel*, p. 82; Allison Drew, *Discordant Comrades: Identities and Loyalties on the South African Left* (Pretoria: Unisa, 2002), p. 24. By 1910 the last contract had expired and virtually all Chinese workers had been repatriated.
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50. Evelyn Bunting to John Lidgett, 26 June 1908 in Camp, *Two Centuries*, pp. 74–5; *London Gazette*, 27 July 1908; *Sir Percy Bunting: Obituaries, Christian World* (n.d.).
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53. Davin, 'Imperialism', in Samuel (ed.), *Patriotism*, vol. 1, pp. 203–8, 215–17; Davin, 'Imperialism', in Cooper and Stoler (eds), *Tensions of Empire*, pp. 103–5.
54. Davin, 'Imperialism', in Cooper and Stoler (eds), *Tensions of Empire*, p. 120, 118; Davin 'Imperialism', in Samuel (ed.), *Patriotism*, vol. 1, p. 225.
55. Camp, *Two Centuries*, p. 78; Lidgetton Diaries, 10, 13 November 1908. Rand Club records indicate that Sidney joined in 1902 and list him as a 'town' member or Johannesburg resident on 1 July 1908 and 13 April 1909 but as an absentee member living overseas on 1 October 1909; Rand Club secretary to author, 22 August 2001.
56. Roux, *S. P. Bunting*, p. 64; Lidgetton Diaries, April, September 1909, 12–14 November 1909; Rondebosch, University of Cape Town Libraries, Manuscripts & Archives, Sir Patrick Duncan Papers, 'White expansion of the land' (Outline of Capt. C.A. Madge's paper to be read at a public meeting of the White Expansion Society at the Public Library, Johannesburg on 23 November 1909 at 8.15 p.m.).
57. Roux, *S. P. Bunting*, p. 64.
58. Amos, 'Reminiscences', p. 18; Bunting, 'Memorials', p. 39.

## 7 A New Gospel

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3. Ivan L. Walker and Ben Weinbren, *2000 Casualties: A History of the Trade Unions and the Labour Movement in the Union of South Africa* (Johannesburg: SATUC, 1961), pp. 285–6; Simons and Simons, *Class and Colour*, pp. 104–9; 141; Johannesburg Public Library, African Studies, Frances Hunter, 'Who was Pickhandle Mary?' (unpublished: n.d.), pp. 4–13, 18–19 and E. B. Hughes-Nagelgast, 'Four Women in Africa' (1969), pp. 12–13.
4. Cope, *Comrade Bill*, pp. 97, 115; Jonathan Hyslop, *The Notorious Syndicalist: J. T. Bain – A Scottish Rebel in Colonial South Africa* (Johannesburg: Jacana, 2004) p. 182.
5. Lidgerton Diaries, 22–5 June 1910; Jack to Directors, 31 August 1910.
6. Roux, *S. P. Bunting*, p. 64; Callinicos, *Working Life*, pp. 68–9; Hyslop, *Notorious Syndicalist*, pp. 182, 189.
7. Brookes and de B. Webb, *History of Natal*, pp. 286–7.
8. Jack to Directors, 31 August 1910; Jack to Sidney, 16, 19 August 1910.
9. Lidgerton Diaries, 26–8 January 1911; Jack to Sidney, 15 March 1911; Brookes and de B. Webb, *History of Natal*, p. 251.
10. McDougall, *Lady Bunting*; Will of Sir Percy William Bunting, 27 June 1873; York, Court Service, Probate Registry, Notice of death of Sir Percy William Bunting, 26 August 1911; Arthur Bunting, 'Memorials', p. 36.
11. Jack to Directors, 30 October 1911; Jack to Sidney, 16 October 1911; Lidgerton Diaries, 25–8 October 1911.
12. Jack to Sidney, 16 October 1911.
13. Jack to Sidney, 20, 16 October 1911.
14. Jack to Directors, 12 November 1911; Brookes and de B. Webb, *History of Natal*, p. 251.
15. Camp, *Two Centuries*, pp. 190–1.
16. Simons and Simons, *Class and Colour*, p. 172.
17. Jack to Directors, 31 March 1912; Lidgerton Diaries, 5–8 April, 11 July, 23 September and 21 December 1912.
18. Lidgerton Diaries, 20–3 March 1913.
19. Jack to Directors, 2 April 1913; Brookes and de B. Webb, *History of Natal*, pp. 251, 258. Eucalyptus trees were first imported into Natal in 1877. Both wattle and gum trees are now considered to be invasive alien species. My thanks to Adrian Koopman for the isi-Zulu terms.
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21. See, *inter alia*, W. H. Andrews, *Class Struggles in South Africa: Two Lectures Given on South African Trade Unionism* (Cape Town, 1941), pp. 23–4; Elaine N. Katz, *A Trade Union Aristocracy: A History of White Workers in the Transvaal and the General Strike of 1913* (Johannesburg: African Studies Institute, University of the Witwatersrand, 1976), pp. 411–14; Robert Davies, 'Mining Capital, the State and Unskilled White Workers

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  23. *Rand Daily Mail*, 26 May 1936; *Star*, 26 May 1936.
  24. *Illustrated Star*, 12 July 1913; Hunter, 'Pickhandle Mary', pp. 26–32; Johannesburg Public Library, African Studies, John Campbell and J. Raeburn Munro, *The Great Rand Strike: July, 1913* (Johannesburg: published by the authors, n.d. [c. 1913]); Hyslop, *Notorious Syndicalist*, p. 219.
  25. *Evening Chronicle*, 9 July 1913; Baruch Hirson and Gwyn A. Williams, *The Delegate for Africa: David Iwon Jones, 1883–1924* (London: Core, 1995), pp. 119–20.
  26. Johannesburg Public Library, *Worker*, 10 July 1913, microfilm; Roux, *S. P. Bunting*, p. 66, is wrong when he states that the article of 10 July concluded: 'And so ended the first act of South Africa's working class revolution, whose end is not yet'. This phrase, along with others, is inserted in Sidney's handwriting on the microfilm copy.
  27. *Worker*, 10 July 1913; Hunter, 'Pickhandle Mary', pp. 32–3; cf. Hyslop, *Notorious Syndicalist*, pp. 220–1.
  28. According to A. H. Bunting, Sidney probably resigned from the Rand Club in protest over the shooting from the balcony. Roux, *S. P. Bunting*, p. 66, states that Sidney resigned from the Rand Club immediately after the 5 July events. But club records indicate that Sidney's resignation on 30 September was minuted at the Committee Meeting on 3 October 1913; Rand Club secretary to author, 22 August 2001. See also Sidney P. Bunting, Letter to the Editor, *New Statesman*, 30 August 1913.
  29. *Illustrated Star*, 12 July 1913, pp. 1–2; Pretoria, National Archives of South Africa (NASA), *Report on Rand Club affair by Mr Hershenson*, Johannesburg, 8 July 1913, SAP 1/185/13, vol. 8.
  30. Lidgerton Diaries, 5–7 July 1913; Jack to Sidney, 8 July 1913.
  31. *Illustrated Star*, 12 July 1913; Simons and Simons, *Class and Colour*, p. 160.
  32. Katz, *Union Aristocracy*, p. 324.
  33. Brian Willan, *Sol Plaatje: South African Nationalist, 1876–1932* (London, Ibadan, Nairobi: Heinemann, 1984), p. 163; Davenport and Saunders, *South Africa*, p. 273; Drew, *Discordant Comrades*, p. 33.
  34. *Worker*, 31 July 1913.
  35. Jack to Sidney, 10 July 1913; Lidgerton Diaries, 13–19 July 1913.
  36. *Illustrated Star*, 12 July 1913; Bonner, 'Black Mineworkers' Strike', pp. 274–5; Frederick A. Johnstone, *Class, Race and Gold: A Study of Class Relations and Racial Discrimination in South Africa* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1976), p. 169.
  37. Charles Mallet, *Herbert Gladstone: A Memoir* (London: Hutchinson, 1932), p. 259. By 1913, economic deterioration in the reserves meant that for most families the mining wage was no longer merely a supplement to agricultural production. This was reflected in a shift from individual protest – generally desertion – over wages and working conditions to collective boycotts and strikes. W. M. MacMillan, *Africa Emergent: A Survey of Social, Political and Economic Trends in British Africa* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1949), p. 308; P. L. Bonner, 'The 1920 Black Mineworkers' Strike: A Preliminary Account', in Belinda Bozzoli (comp.), *Labour, Townships and Protest: Studies in the Social History of the Witwatersrand* (Johannesburg: Ravan, 1979), pp. 273–97; Alan H. Jeeves, *Migrant*

- Labour in South Africa's Mining Economy: The Struggle for the Gold Mine's Labour Supply, 1890–1920* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University and Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University, 1985), pp. 28–9.
38. NASA, GG/62/330, Viscount Herbert Gladstone to Lewis Harcourt, 20 July 1913, p. 2.
  39. Simons and Simons, *Class and Colour*, p. 160; Hirson and Williams, *Delegate*, p. 129. Founded in 1902, the African Political Organisation – later the African People's Organisation – sought to extend the legal and political rights held by coloureds in the Cape Colony to blacks in other parts of South Africa.
  40. Simons and Simons, *Class and Colour*, p. 159; Roux, *S. P. Bunting*, p. 76. See also Katz, *Union Aristocracy*, pp. 425–6; Campbell and Munro, *Rand Strike*, p. 22; Hirson and Williams, *Delegate*, p. 132; Drew, *Discordant Comrades*, pp. 33–4.
  41. *Worker*, 21 August 1913.
  42. *Worker*, 25 September, 20, 13 November 1913; Davenport and Saunders, *South Africa*, pp. 276–7.
  43. Roux, *S. P. Bunting*, pp. 66–7; Lidgetton Diaries, 2–3 January 1914.
  44. Jack to Directors, 12 August 1913; Jack to Alfred, 17 November 1913.
  45. *Weekly Gazette*, Daily Strike Edition, 12–13 January 1914; Wilfrid H. Harrison, *Memoirs of a Socialist in South Africa, 1903–47* (Cape Town, 1948), pp. 45–6; Andrews, *Class Struggles*, p. 25. Hyslop, *Notorious Syndicalist*, pp. 229–30, puts the date of the general strike as 13 January.
  46. Salford, Working Class Movement Library, Tom Mann Papers, *Under Martial Law*, Johannesburg, 21 January 1914; Hyslop, *Notorious Syndicalist*, pp. 231–3.
  47. 'Letter from the Cape Labour Party to James Ramsay MacDonald, 12 August 1908'; in Drew (ed.), *Radical Tradition*, vol. 1, p. 43; Drew, *Discordant Comrades*, p. 35.
  48. Chushichi Tsuzuki, *Tom Mann 1856–1941: The Challenges of Labour* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), p. 169; Dora Montefiore, *From a Victorian to a Modern* (London: E. Archer, 1927), p. 179; Hyslop, *Notorious Syndicalist*, pp. 235–65.
  49. Roux, *S. P. Bunting*, p. 67; Andrews, *Class Struggles*, pp. 25–6; Eddie Roux and Win Roux, *Rebel Pity: The Life of Eddie Roux* (London: Rex Collings, 1970), pp. 7–8; Simons and Simons, *Class and Colour*, p. 172; Neame, *Rand Club*, p. 97; Hyslop, *Notorious Syndicalist*, p. 241; *Donaldson and Braby's Transvaal and Rhodesia Directory*, 1914, p. 237.
  50. Jack to Sidney, 9, 20 February 1914.
  51. Jack to Sidney, 20 February 1914. *Togt* is an Afrikaans term for a casual worker hired or paid by the day.
  52. Jack to Alfred E. Lidgett, 27 February 1914.
  53. Simons and Simons, *Class and Colour*, p. 173.
  54. Roux, *S. P. Bunting*, pp. 68, 185, n. 9; University of the Witwatersrand, William Cullen Library, Historical Papers, S. P. Bunting Papers, A949, Correspondence, P. R. R[oux] to Eddie [Roux], 16 October 1943.
  55. Roux, *Rebel Pity*, pp. 1–7, 15; Roux, *S. P. Bunting*, pp. 67–8.
  56. South African Labour Party, *Executive Report to the Annual Conference at East London*, 28 December 1914, p. 6.
  57. Roux, *S. P. Bunting*, p. 67; Lidgetton Diaries, 24–7 April 1914; Jack to Sidney, 13 June 1914.
  58. Harrison, *Memoirs*, p. 51.
  59. Simons and Simons, *Class and Colour*, pp. 179–80; Roux, *S. P. Bunting*, p. 70.
  60. Jack to Directors, 15 August 1914; Brookes and de B. Webb, *History of Natal*, p. 287.

61. McDougall, *Lady Bunting*; Elizabeth Lidgett to John and Mollie, 14 August 1914, in Camp, *Two Centuries*, pp. 78–9.
62. Roux, *S. P. Bunting*, p. 70; P. R. R. to Eddie, 16 October 1943.
63. Roux, *S. P. Bunting*, pp. 70–1; *Donaldson and Braby's Transvaal and Rhodesia Directory*, 1915, p. 469.
64. Peter Ward Jones to author, 14 July 2003.
65. On Wade see Hyslop, *Notorious Syndicalist*, pp. 267–8; on Jones, Hirson and Williams, *Delegate*.
66. Roux, *S. P. Bunting*, p. 71; Brian Bunting (ed.), *South African Communists Speak: Documents from the History of the South African Communist Party* (London: Inkululeko, 1975), pp. 1–3; Hyslop, *Notorious Syndicalist*, 268.
67. Roux, *S. P. Bunting*, p. 64; P. R. R. to Eddie, emphasis in the original.

## 8 'The Star in the East'

1. Johannesburg Public Library, *War on War Gazette*, microfilm, no. 1, 14 September 1914. The final quote is from Browning's poem, *Rabbi Ben Ezra*: 'This rage was right i' the main, That acquiescence vain: The Future I may face now I have proved the Past'.
2. Roux and Roux, *Rebel Pity*, p. 8.
3. *War on War Gazette*, no. 1, 14 September 1914.
4. Jack to Sidney, 13, 26 October 1914.
5. Jack to Sidney, 25 November 1914; Lidgett Diaries, 22 December 1914; 'Baby Bunting', in *The Nursery Song Book*, preface by H. Keatley Moore, illustrated by May Sandheim, n.d., pp. 26–7, possession of Elizabeth Camp.
6. *International*, no. 1, 10 September 1915; F. A. W. Lucas to James Ramsay MacDonald, 15 October 1915, in Drew (ed.), *Radical Tradition*, vol. 1, pp. 44–5. On the *International* see Premesh Lalu, 'The Communist Party Press and the Creation of the South African Working Class: 1921–36' (paper presented to the Africa Seminar, Centre for African Studies, University of Cape Town, 11 August 1993).
7. On the ISL see 'Report on the general meeting of the International Socialist League (SA)', *International*, 24 September 1915, in Bunting (ed.), *South African Communists*, pp. 16–18; Sheridan Johns, 'The Birth of the Communist Party of South Africa', *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 9:3 (1976), pp. 371–400, 373; Jonathan Grossman, 'Class Relations and the Policies of the Communist Party of South Africa, 1921–50', PhD (University of Warwick, 1985), pp. 28–90; Lungisile Ntsebeza, 'Divisions and Unity in Struggle: The ANC, ISL and the CP, 1910–28', BA Honours (University of Cape Town, January 1988), pp. 22–34; Gideon Shimoni, *Jews and Zionism: The South African Experience (1910–67)* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1980), p. 84; E. A. Mantzaris, 'Radical Community: The Yiddish-speaking Branch of the International Socialist League', in Belinda Bozzoli (ed.), *Class, Community and Conflict: South African Perspectives* (Johannesburg: Ravan, 1987), pp. 160–76; 161; Lucien van der Walt, 'The International Socialist League and Revolutionary Syndicalism in South Africa, 1915–20', *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 19:1 (1999), pp. 5–30; Hyslop, *Notorious Syndicalist*, pp. 272–3.
8. *International*, 24 September, 8 October 1915; Roux, *S. P. Bunting*, p. 72.
9. 'The Parting of the Ways', *International*, 1 October 1915, in Bunting (ed.), *South African Communists*, pp. 18–21; *International*, 29 October 1915; Roux, *S. P. Bunting*, pp. 74–5.

10. Hirson and Williams, *Delegate*, pp. 15, 94, 67–88, 89.
11. *International*, 26 November 1915; Simons and Simons, *Class and Colour*, pp. 216, 263–4.
12. *International*, 28 January 1916; Harrison, *Memoirs*, pp. x, 58–61; Drew, *Discordant Comrades*, p. 37.
13. Simons and Simons, *Class and Colour*, p. 150; Hirson and Williams, *Delegate*, p. 151.
14. *International*, 26 November 1915; Roux, *S. P. Bunting*, p. 75; Harrison, *Memoirs*, pp. 54, 60–2.
15. Jack to Directors, 29 July 1915; Jack to Sidney, 24, 30 December 1915; Jack to Alfred, 5 January 1916.
16. *International*, 15 October 1915.
17. *International*, 14 January 1916; Bunting (ed.), *Letters to Rebecca*, p. 12; Roux, *S. P. Bunting*, pp. 73–5, 60; Simons and Simons, *Class and Colour*, p. 193.
18. *International*, 18 February 1916.
19. Bunting Family Papers, Documents of Mikhla Rivka Tsykovna Notelevich. My thanks to Dennis Pennington for Russian translations.
20. Bunting Family Papers, Arthur Bunting to Brian Bunting, 31 March 1992, 9 October 1996; all correspondence between Arthur and Brian Bunting is from these papers. Brian Bunting to author, 16 December 2003; Bunting (ed.), *Letters to Rebecca*, p. 23; *Sechaba*, 5:2 (1971).
21. *International*, 18 February 1916; Roux, *S. P. Bunting*, pp. 186–7, n. 15.
22. *International*, 31 March 1916; Lalu, 'Communist Party Press', pp. 5–6.
23. Hyslop, *Notorious Syndicalist*, pp. 275–7, 325.
24. *International*, 7 April, 19 May 1916.
25. *International*, 7 April 1916; Roux, *S. P. Bunting*, p. 76; Simons and Simons, *Class and Colour*, p. 193.
26. Jack to Alfred, 1 August 1916.
27. Jack to Directors, 15 August 1916.
28. *International*, 4 August 1916.
29. Roux, *S. P. Bunting*, p. 80; Jack to Sidney, 26 August 1916.
30. *International*, 1 September 1916. The quote is from Robert Browning's 'Prospice'.
31. *International*, 8, 22 September 1916.
32. *International*, 6, 20, 27 October 1916.
33. Roux, *S. P. Bunting*, pp. 186–7, n. 15, p. 40; *International*, 12 January 1917. 'Peruvian' referred to Eastern European Jewish immigrants of modest means; see Charles van Onselen, *Studies in the Social and Economic History of the Witwatersrand 1886–1914*, 2 vols (Johannesburg: Ravan, 1982), vol. 1, p. 74.
34. Bunting (ed.), *Letters to Rebecca*, p. 20, writes that Sidney and Becky began married life at the bungalow, but the *Donaldson and Braby's Transvaal and Rhodesia Directory*, 1917–18, p. 439, lists the Jutta Street residence; cf. Mariam Basner, *Am I an African?: The Political Memoirs of H. M. Basner* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1993), pp. 31–2.
35. *International*, 9 March 1917; also 4 May 1917.
36. *International*, 11 March 1917.
37. *International*, 20 April 1917.
38. *International*, 8 June 1917, 31 January 1918. Until 1917 Russia used the Julian Calendar, according to which the first revolutionary uprising occurred between 23–7 February 1917; following the Gregorian calendar used elsewhere, this was 8–12 March.
39. Roux, *S. P. Bunting*, pp. 76–7; Drew, *Discordant Comrades*, p. 39.

40. Sheridan Johns, *Raising the Red Flag: The International Socialist League and the Communist Party of South Africa, 1914–32* (Bellville: Mayibuye, 1995), p. 78; *International*, 1, 15 June 1917; Bunting (ed.), *Letters to Rebecca*, pp. 18, 181.
41. Jack to Chairman and Directors, 13, 14 August 1917.
42. Sidney to Rebecca, 23 June 1917, pp. 17–18; Jack to Sidney, 26 February 1917, 22 March 1917.
43. NASA, JUS 255, 3/527/17, part 1, Wilfred Jali, *Report of an International Socialistic Meeting* [hereafter *Report*] [19 July 1917], p. 2.
44. Jali, *Report* [26 July 1917], pp. 9–10; [9 August 1917], p. 19.
45. Jali, *Report*; NASA, JUS 255, 3/527/17, part 1, Willie Mtembu, *Report on Meeting of International Socialists in Johannesburg* [16 August 1917], pp. 25–8.
46. Jali, *Report*, and Mtembu, *Report*, [23 August 1917], pp. 36–9.
47. NASA, JUS 255, 3/527/17, part 1, R. Moorosi to Det. Hd. Const. Hoffmann, 3 September 1917, pp. 48–51, 49.
48. NASA, JUS 255, 3/527/17, part 1, Jali, *Report* [6 September 1917]; R. Moorosi to Detective Head Constable Hoffmann, 12 September 1917, pp. 55–6, 61–2.
49. Jali, *Report*, 14 September 1917, pp. 67–8.
50. NASA, JUS 255, 3/527/17, part 1, Andrew Watson and D. Ivon Jones, *To the Trades Union and Labour Movement, S.A.*, 25 September 1917, p. 103.
51. *International*, 21 September 1917; Roux, *S. P. Bunting*, p. 79.
52. Jack to Sidney, 1 October 1917.
53. NASA, JUS 255, 3/527/17, part 1, Jali, *Report*, 28 September 1917, p. 81; R. Moorosi to Detective Head Constable Hoffman 3 October 1917, p. 83; Jali, *Report*, 5 October 1917, p. 98; Jali, *Report*, 12 October 1917, p. 108; R. Moorosi to Detective Head Constable Hoffman [11 October 1917], p. 118; Secretary for Native Affairs to Secretary for Justice, 2 November 1917, p. 126. On the IWA see Frederick Johnstone, ‘The IWA on the Rand’, in Bozzoli (comp.), *Labour, Townships*, pp. 248–72; 261; Roux, *Time Longer*, p. 154; Simons and Simons, *Class and Colour*, pp. 203–4; P. L. Wickens, *The Industrial and Commercial Workers’ Union of Africa* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 26; Hiron and Williams, *Delegate*, pp. 161, 171–4; Bunting (ed.), *Letters to Rebecca*, pp. 22–3; Lucien van der Walt, ‘Revolutionary Syndicalism and African Workers in South Africa: A Preliminary Account of the Industrial Workers of Africa, 1917–21’, paper presented to the European Social Science History Conference (Amsterdam, Netherlands, 12–15 April 2000).

## 9 ‘The Earth is the Workers’

1. *International*, 16, 32 [sic], 30 November 1917; Simons and Simons, *Class and Colour*, p. 201; Roux and Roux, *Rebel Pity*, p. 14.
2. Johnstone, ‘IWA’, p. 265.
3. *International*, 18 January 1918.
4. Bunting (ed.), *Letters to Rebecca*, p. 20; *United Transvaal Directory*, 1919, p. 609; Bunting, ‘Memorials’, p. 41; Arthur Bunting to Brian Bunting, 19 March 1992, p. 1.
5. Jack to Sidney, 8 February 1918.
6. *International*, 8 February 1918.
7. Sidney to Rebecca, 18 February 1918, in Bunting (ed.), *Letters to Rebecca*, pp. 21–2. All letters from Sidney to his wife are from this book.
8. Sidney to Rebecca, 19, 24 February 1918, pp. 23–4, 26–7.



9. Sidney to Rebecca, 23, 21 February 1918, pp. 25–6, 24–5.
10. Jack to Sidney, 11 March 1918.
11. *International*, 1 March 1918; Hirson and Williams, *Delegate*, pp. 180, 188; NASA, JUS 267/3/1064/18, part 1, S. P. Bunting to D. I. Jones, 20 February 1919 and 2 March 1919, pp. 151–2.
12. *International*, 3 May, 15 March 1918; *Umsebenzi*, 7, 2, May 1991, pp. 16–17.
13. Hyslop, *Notorious Syndicalist*, pp. 279–83.
14. *Times*, 11 July 1918; *International*, 26 July, 30 August 1918, p. 1; NASA, JUS 267, 3/882/18, K. R. Vachell, Deputy Commissioner, C. I. D., Transvaal Division to Deputy Commissioner, I/C Transvaal Division, South African Police, 21 October 1918, pp. 5–6.
15. *International*, 26 July 1918.
16. Sidney to Rebecca, 8, 13 July 1918, pp. 29–31.
17. *Times*, 12, 23 July 1918; Bunting (ed.), *Letters to Rebecca*, p. 32; the *United Transvaal Directory*, 1920, p. 616, still lists the bungalow as the residence.
18. Sidney to Rebecca, 31 August, 1 September 1918, pp. 31–4.
19. Jack to Chairman and Directors, 30 August 1918. Brookes and de B. Webb, *History of Natal*, p. 287, note that a small amount of voluntary repatriation to India took place during the war, but that this was counteracted by natural population increase.
20. Jack to Alfred, 26 August 1918.
21. Sidney to Rebecca, 1 September 1918, pp. 32–4; Jack to Sidney, 26 August 1918.
22. *International*, 6 September 1918; Roux, *S. P. Bunting*, p. 78.
23. NASA, JUS 267, 3/882/18, S. P. Bunting to Minister of Justice, 10 October 1918, pp. 7–8 and W. E. Bok, Secretary for Justice to S. P. Bunting, 28 October 1918, p. 1.
24. Johns, *Red Flag*, p. 93; *International*, 23 August 1918.
25. *International*, 15 November, 1918; emphasis in original.
26. Jack to Sidney, 21, 23 December 1918.
27. *International*, 10 January 1918; Johns, *Red Flag*, pp. 96–7; Roux, *S. P. Bunting*, p. 82.
28. NASA, JUS 267/3/1064/18, part 1, S. P. Bunting to D. I. Jones, 20 February 1919, pp. 151–2.
29. Jack to Sidney, 15, 26, 20 February 1919.
30. Jack to Alfred, 20 March 1919.
31. Roux, *S. P. Bunting*, p. 83; Johns, *Red Flag*, pp. 94, 99.
32. Roux, *S. P. Bunting*, p. 83; Johns, *Red Flag*, p. 101; Hyslop, *Notorious Syndicalist*, pp. 285–8.
33. *International*, 11 April 1919; Roux, *S. P. Bunting*, pp. 84–6; Johns, *Red Flag*, p. 99; cf. Hyslop, *Notorious Syndicalist*, pp. 290–1.
34. *International*, 25 April 1919; the reference is to Mearns, *Bitter Cry of Outcast London*.
35. Jack to Sidney, 21 March, 14 April 1919.
36. McDougall, *Lady Bunting*.
37. *International*, 29 August 1919.
38. Jack to Chairman and Directors, 22 September 1919.
39. Jack to Alfred, 5 June 1919; Drew, *Discordant Comrades*, p. 47.
40. McDougall, *Lady Bunting*; Evelyn Bunting to John Lidgett, 19 November 1919, in Camp, *Two Centuries*.
41. *International*, 2 January 1920; Roux, *Time Longer*, pp. 154–5; Johns, *Red Flag*, p. 95.
42. *International*, 6 January 1920, 19 December 1919, 2 January 1920.
43. Johns, *Red Flag*, p. 104; *International*, 23 January 1920.

44. *International*, 30 January 1920; Jack to Alfred, 26 January, 2 February 1920; Lidgetton Diaries, 2 February 1920.
45. Roux, *Time Longer*, p. 132, states that over 40,000 workers went on strike; Reader's Digest, *Illustrated History of South Africa: The Real Story*, 3rd edn (Cape Town, London, New York, Sydney and Montreal: Reader's Digest, 1994), p. 311, claims 71,000; Drew, *Discordant Comrades*, pp. 49–51.
46. Roux, *S. P. Bunting*, p. 88; Johns, *Red Flag*, p. 99.
47. Camp, 'Lidgetton', p. 4.
48. Johns, *Red Flag*, p. 105.
49. Jack to Sidney, 22 May 1920.
50. Jack to Chairman and Directors, 25 September 1920.
51. Kevin McDermott and Jeremy Agnew, *The Comintern: A History of International Communism from Lenin to Stalin* (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan, 1996), pp. 1–2, 220–3.
52. 'The Twenty-one Points – Conditions of Admission to the Communist International' as adopted at the second Comintern congress in 1920 and appended to the constitution of the Communist Party of South Africa by its founding conference in 1921, in Bunting (ed.), *South African Communists*, pp. 58–62; 60; McDermott and Agnew, *Comintern*, pp. 226–8.
53. *Bolshevik*, October 1920, p. 1; Johns, 'Communist Party', pp. 382–3, 388.
54. Johns, *Red Flag*, pp. 111–23, 112; Simons and Simons, *Class and Colour*, pp. 244–70.
55. Johns, *Red Flag*, pp. 97–8, 103–4; *International*, 17 December 1920, 7 January 1921; *Rand Daily Mail*, 3 January 1921.
56. Johns, 'Communist Party', pp. 386–93; Shimoni, *Jews and Zionism*, p. 175; E. A. Mantzaris, 'The Promise of the Impossible Revolution: The Cape Town Industrial Socialist League, 1918–21', *Studies in the History of Cape Town*, 4 (1981), pp. 145–73, 164; Durban Social Democratic Party, 'Socialist Unity in South Africa', *Communist Review*, 1:4 (August 1921), pp. 73–6.
57. Roux, *Time Longer*, pp. 135–9; Martin Chanock, *The Making of South African Legal Culture 1902–36: Fear, Favour and Prejudice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 4–6; discussion with R. S. Canca, 5 September 2003, Mlungisi, Eastern Cape.
58. Harrison, *Memoirs*, pp. 74–6; Johns, *Red Flag*, pp. 123–7.
59. Sidney to Rebecca, 27 July 1921, p. 35.
60. Sidney to Rebecca, 28, 29 July 1921, pp. 36–7. Indeed, the case was eventually dropped on appeal. See Harrison, *Memoirs*, pp. 77–80; Chanock, *South African Legal Culture*, pp. 144–5.
61. Sidney to Rebecca, 31 July 1921, p. 38; Harrison, *Memoirs*, p. 71.
62. Johns, 'Communist Party', pp. 397–9; Simons and Simons, *Class and Colour*, pp. 260–1, 647, n. 56; Drew, *Discordant Comrades*, p. 54.
63. See also W. M. MacMillan, 'The Truth about the Strike on the Rand', *New Statesman*, 19:474 (13 May 1922), pp. 145–6; Edward Roux, '1922 and all that', *Trek*, 11 February 1944, p. 12; Robert Davies, 'The 1922 Strike on the Rand: White Labor and the Political Economy of South Africa', in Peter Gutkind, R. Cohen and J. Copans (eds), *African Labour History* (Beverly Hills and London: Sage, 1978), pp. 80–108; Rob Davies, 'The 1922 strike and the political economy of South Africa', in Bozzoli (comp.), *Labour, Townships*, pp. 298–324; Grossman, 'Class Relations', pp. 78–82; Baruch Hirson, 'The General Strike of 1922', *Searchlight South Africa*, 3:3 (October 1993), pp. 63–94; Jeremy Krikler, 'Women, Violence and the Rand Revolt of 1922', *Journal of Southern African*

- Studies*, 22:3 (September 1996), pp. 349–72; Drew, *Discordant Comrades*, p. 58–68; Jeremy Krikler, *White Rising: The 1922 Insurrection and Racial Killing in South Africa* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2005).
64. New Haven: Yale University Library, Manuscripts and Archives, African Collection (South Africa), Box 37, folder 683, *The story of a crime, being the vindication of the Transvaal Strike Legal Defense Committee in connection with the Great Strike on the Witwatersrand in 1922*, 28 May 1924.
  65. Simons and Simons, *Class and Colour*, p. 278.
  66. *Through the Red Revolt on the Rand: A Pictorial Review of Events, January, February, March, 1922*, compiled from photographs taken by representatives of *The Star*, 1st and 2nd edns (Johannesburg: Central News Agency, 1922). The slogan ‘Workers of the World Fight and Unite for a White S.A.’ was not a CPSA slogan, nor is there any evidence that Communists supported it.
  67. Roux, *Time Longer*, p. 148; Cope, *Comrade Bill*, p. 244; Krikler, *White Rising*, pp. 55–61, 66, 159–60.
  68. Moscow, *Rossiiskii tsentr khraneniia i izucheniiia dokumentov noveishei istorii* (RGASPI), Communist International Archives, 495.64.9, quoted in D. I. Jones, *Re General Strike in South Africa*, n.d.; see also Krikler, *White Rising*, pp. 109–10.
  69. Roux, *S. P. Bunting*, p. 92; Bunting, ‘Memorials’, p. 42.
  70. Jack to Sidney, 20 January 1922.
  71. Jack to son, 23 January 1922, in Camp, *Two Centuries*, pp. 128–9, 129.
  72. “‘White South Africa’. Two Voices’. *International*, 27 January 1922, in Drew (ed.), *Radical Tradition*, vol. 1, pp. 48–50.
  73. ‘The Fight to a Finish’, manifesto issued by the Communist Party to the striking workers of the Witwatersrand on January 30 1922, in Bunting (ed.), *South African Communists*, pp. 68–9, 69.
  74. Jack to son, 22 February 1922, in Camp, *Two Centuries*, p. 129; Krikler, *White Rising*, p. 167.
  75. Krikler, *White Rising*, pp. 130–50, 170–4; cf. Roux, *Time Longer*, pp. 149–50.
  76. Simons and Simons, *Class and Colour*, p. 294; Drew, *Discordant Comrades*, p. 61.
  77. Krikler, *White Rising*, pp. 174–289, charts the rise and fall of the insurrection.
  78. Roux and Roux, *Rebel Pity*, p. 23; Drew, *Discordant Comrades*, pp. 61–2; Krikler, *White Rising*, pp. 285–6; RGASPI, 495.64.159, F. to Ivon Jones, 16 March [1922]; a scrawled comment on F’s letter claims Spendiff and Fisher were killed by shrapnel.
  79. *Rand Daily Mail*, 13 March 1922.
  80. F. to Ivon Jones; Hirson and Williams, *Delegate*, pp. 207–10; Simons and Simons, *Class and Colour*, p. 264–6.
  81. Allison Drew, ‘Prisoner Number 3566: An Interview with Joseph Leon Glazer’, *Socialist History*, 22 (2002), pp. 32–55, 39.
  82. Jack to son, 13 March 1922, in Camp, *Two Centuries*, p. 130.
  83. Simons and Simons, *Class and Colour*, p. 296; Krikler, *White Rising*, p. 289, puts the date as 17 March.
  84. Sidney to Rebecca, 17 March 1922, p. 39.
  85. F. to Ivon Jones; Sidney to Rebecca, 20 March 1922, p. 40.
  86. S. P. Bunting, ‘Red Revolt’: *The Rand Strike, January–March, 1922* (CPSA, Johannesburg: 1922), p. 37; Roux, *S. P. Bunting*, p. 95.
  87. Roux, *Time Longer*, pp. 150–1.

88. Bunting, 'Red Revolt', pp. 22–3; Herd, 1922, pp. 47–8; Simons and Simons, *Class and Colour*, pp. 294–6.
89. RGASPI, 495.64.6, D. I. Jones, *Further statement on the South African Situation*, 25 March 1922, p. 2; Hirson and Williams, *Delegate*, pp. 221–40.

## 10 Fighting against Empire

1. Frank Hoole to Judith Lidgett Hoole, 11 April 1921, quoted from Elisabeth Brewer to Elizabeth Camp, 27 September 2003. My thanks to both.
2. Roux, *S. P. Bunting*, pp. 95–6; Harrison, *Memoirs*, p. 83; Hirson and Williams, *Delegate*, p. 247.
3. Report by S. P. Bunting on 4th Congress of Comintern, [29 April 1923] (extracts), in Apollon Davidson, Irina Filatova, Valentin Gorodnov and Sheridan Johns (eds), *South Africa and the Communist International: A Documentary History*, 2 vols (London and Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 2003), vol. 1, pp. 129–30, esp. 129.
4. Norman, *Autobiography*.
5. Bunting Family Papers, S. P. Bunting to Arthur H. Bunting, 2 August 1922. All correspondence from Sidney and Becky to their children are from these papers. *Southampton Daily Echo*, 19 March 1946; Sue Hill, Southampton City Council Archives, to author, 13 February 2004.
6. Joseph Roth, *What I Saw: Reports from Berlin 1920–33* (London: Granta, 2003), pp. 111–14, 12.
7. Roux, *S. P. Bunting*, p. 96.
8. S. P. Bunting to Arthur H. Bunting, 9, 18 August 1922; Roux, *S. P. Bunting*, p. 96.
9. Roux, *S. P. Bunting*, p. 97; Harrison, *Memoirs*, pp. 85–6.
10. Mother and father to Arthur, 27 August 1922; Rebecca to Arthur, 30 August 1922.
11. Report by S. P. Bunting on 4th Congress of Comintern, p. 129.
12. Quentin Bell, *Bloomsbury Recalled* (New York: Columbia, 1995), p. 2; Bunting Family Papers, Gordon Square School for Girls, Report for Autumn term 1922, Arthur Bunting; Arthur Bunting to Brian Bunting, 19 March 1992, p. 2.
13. Mummy & daddy to Arthur, 28 September 1922; R. Bunting to Arthur, n.d.
14. *International*, 19 January 1923.
15. Roux, *S. P. Bunting*, pp. 97–8; *International*, 24 November 1922.
16. *International*, 5 January 1923.
17. Drew, *Discordant Comrades*, p. 68.
18. S. P. Bunting, The 'Colonial' Labour Front, 23 October 1922 in Drew (ed.), *Radical Tradition*, vol. 1, pp. 51–4, 53–4.
19. S. P. Bunting to General Secretary, Comintern, 1 January 1923, in Davidson et al. (eds), *Communist International*, vol. 1, pp. 111–17, esp. 114, nn. 9–12; McDermott and Agnew, *Comintern*, pp. 33–4.
20. *International*, 19 January 1923; 25 January 1924; see also 5 January 1923.
21. Rebecca to Arthur, n.d.; *International*, 5 January 1923.
22. Mummy & daddy to Arthur, n.d.; Mother to Arthur, n.d.
23. *International*, 19 January 1923.
24. Bunting to General Secretary, Comintern, pp. 111, 114, n. 11; Report by S. P. Bunting on 4th Congress of Comintern, p. 129; Mummy & daddy to Arthur, n.d. According to Hirson and Williams, *Delegate*, p. 247, Jones was unable to meet Sidney.
25. Arthur to Brian, 19 March 1992, p. 2.

26. Bunting to General Secretary, Comintern, pp. 112–14. The Amalgamated Engineering Union was open to skilled workers only; it did not accept unskilled workers, irrespective of ethnicity.
27. Bunting to General Secretary, Comintern, pp. 116–17.
28. Mummy & daddy to Arthur, 7 January 1923.
29. Harrison, *Memoirs*, pp. 94–5.
30. R. Bunting to Arthur H. Bunting, [12 January 1923]; Harrison, *Memoirs*, pp. 90, 94–5.
31. Sidney to Rebecca, 11 April 1923, pp. 41–2, 42; 4 May 1923, pp. 60–1.
32. Jack to Alfred, 18, 23 March 1923.
33. Jack to Sidney, 9 April 1923; Lidgetton Diaries, 9 April 1923.
34. Jack to Chairman & Directors, 21 October 1922.
35. Jack to Sidney, 9 April 1923.
36. Sidney to Rebecca, 21 April 1923, pp. 48–51, 50.
37. Jack to Alfred, 10 April 1923.
38. Sidney to Rebecca, 14 April 1923, pp. 43–4, 43; Arthur Bunting to Brian Bunting, 9 October 1996, p. 1.
39. *International*, 5 January, 16 March 1923; Harrison, *Memoirs*, pp. 98–101.
40. *International*, 30 March, 13 April 1923; Roux, *S. P. Bunting*, pp. 99–100.
41. Coventry, University of Warwick Modern Records Centre, Mann Papers, uncatalogued MSS 334, Andrews to Mann, 2 January 1923.
42. Sidney to Rebecca, 21 April 1923, p. 48.
43. Sidney to Rebecca, 16 April 1923, pp. 44–5, 52 note; 19 April 1923, p. 47; 21 April 1923, pp. 48–51, 49; Bunting to General Secretary, Comintern, p. 112.
44. Sidney to Rebecca, 2 May 1923, pp. 58–60, 59; Simons and Simons, *Class and Colour*, p. 651, n. 34; Drew, *Discordant Comrades*, p. 70.
45. Report of EC to Second Congress, CPSA, 28 April 1923, in Davidson et al. (eds), *Communist International*, vol. 1, pp. 122–8, esp. 124.
46. Sidney to Rebecca, 30 April 1923, pp. 55–7, 56.
47. Sidney to Rebecca, 19 April 1923, p. 47; 1 May 1923, p. 57–8, 57; *International*, 4 May 1923.
48. Sidney to Rebecca, 30 April 1923, pp. 55–7, 56.
49. Sidney to Rebecca, 4 May 1923, pp. 60–1, 61; 6 May 1923, pp. 62–3, 62.
50. Sidney to Rebecca, 25 May 1923, pp. 71–2, 72; 26 May 1923, pp. 73, 74 note; Brian Bunting to author, 9 July 2003.
51. Jack to Sidney, 14 May 1923; see also Jack to Sidney, 16 July 1923.
52. Jack to Alfred, 14 May 1923; Jack to Sidney, 29 June 1923; Jack to Alfred, 2 July 1923.
53. Quoted in Jack to Alfred, 2 July 1923; Bunting, ‘Memorials’, p. 43; Roux, *S. P. Bunting*, p. 52.
54. University of the Witwatersrand, William Cullen Library, Historical Papers, Joint Council Papers, Johannesburg correspondence 1923, AD1433, Cj 2.1.3 (file 3), Sidney P. Bunting to Hubert Hosken, 16 June 1923, and Johannesburg Joint Council of Europeans & Natives to S. P. Bunting, 18 September 1923. As Roux noted, *S. P. Bunting*, p. 54, Sidney ‘was better known in the location than in the drawing room’.
55. RGASPI, 495.64.14, S. P. Bunting to I. Amter, 24 November 1923; Provisional Secretary for Calling the Negro Conference to Executive Committee of the CPSA, 23 July 1923, and 495.64.19, Secretary for Calling Negro Conference to CPSA, 15 November 1923.
56. S. P. Bunting to Jack, 15 November 1923, courtesy of Elizabeth Camp.

57. Bunting to Jack, 15 November 1923; Jack to Chairman & Directors, 22 August 1923 and Jack to Alfred, 27 August 1923.
58. Bunting to Jack, 15 November 1923.
59. *International*, 25 May, 27 July 1923. See also Cope, *Comrade Bill*, pp. 286–7.
60. Bunting, 'Memorials', pp. 44, 49, n. 7.
61. *International*, 16 May 1923; Cope, *Comrade Bill*, pp. 287–91; Colindale, British Library, *A Vital Issue. Shall Labour enter the Cabinet?* (25 June 1924); Davenport and Saunders, *South Africa*, pp. 297–8. The South African Native National Congress became the African National Congress in 1923.
62. Jack to Sidney, 13 May 1924; R. Bunting to Arthur H. Bunting, 5 May 1924.
63. Hirson and Williams, *Delegate*, pp. 163, 255. Jones died on 29 May 1924; Sidney Bunting's obituary of Jones appeared in the *International*, 6 June 1924.
64. Jack to Alfred, 10 June 1924.
65. *International*, 26 October 1923.
66. Bunting to Amter, 24 November 1923; Roux and Roux, *Rebel Pity*, p. 26.
67. RGASPI, 495.64.33, *CPSA Third Congress, Johannesburg, 27–30 December 1924*, pp. 14, 20; Roux, *S. P. Bunting*, pp. 104–6.
68. Kevin McDermott, 'Bolshevisation "From Above" or "From Below"? The Comintern and European Communism in the 1920s', in Taumo Saarela and Kimmo Rentola (eds), *Communism: National and International* (Helsinki, 1998), pp. 105–17; Allison Drew, 'Bolshevizing Communist Parties: The Algerian and South African Experiences', *International Review of Social History*, 48 (2003), pp. 167–202.
69. RGASPI, 495.64.42, CPSA Central Executive Committee Minutes, 6, 20 August 1925; RGASPI, 495.64.40, E. S. Sachs to General Secretary, CPSA, 21 November 1925; RGASPI, 495.64.53, CPSA Central Executive Meeting Minutes, 22 April 1926; RGASPI, 495.64.43, *Fourth National Conference of the Communist Party of South Africa held at 145 Long Street, Cape Town, on December 26–8, 1925*, pp. 32–3.
70. Harrison, *Memoirs*, p. 102.
71. *Fourth National Conference*, pp. 3, 17; see also RGASPI, 495.64.45, Cape Town branch report to Central Executive Committee for 1925; Roux, *S. P. Bunting*, p. 106. For social background on some of the early Africans Communists, see Robin D. G. Kelley, 'The Religious Odyssey of African Radicals: Notes on the Communist Party of South Africa, 1921–34', *Radical History Review*, 51 (1991), pp. 5–24.
72. *Fourth National Conference*, pp. 27, 36; Roux, *S. P. Bunting*, p. 110; Roux and Roux, *Rebel Pity*, p. 31.
73. Jack to Evelyn Bunting, 18 January 1926.
74. Jack to Chairman & Directors, 29 September 1925.
75. Roux, *S. P. Bunting*, pp. 107–8, 113–14; Roux and Roux, *Rebel Pity*, pp. 68, 92, 128, 144; Roux, *Time Longer*, pp. 132, 225; *Fourth National Conference*, p. 37.
76. RGASPI, 495.64.53, CPSA Central Executive Committee Minutes, 4 February 1926. Within two years two to three pages per issue were written in African languages.
77. *South African Worker*, 27 August 1926, pp. 3, 6; Drew, *Discordant Comrades*, p. 78; Lulu, 'Communist Party Press', pp. 10–15.
78. Drew, 'Prisoner Number 3566', p. 39.
79. RGASPI, 495.64.48, S. P. Bunting to Secretary, ECCI, 3 November 1926; S. P. Bunting to E. R. Roux, 15 December 1926, S. P. Bunting Papers.
80. Clements Kadalie, *My Life and the ICU: The Autobiography of a Black Trade Unionist in South Africa*, ed. Stanley Trapido (London: Frank Cass, 1970), pp. 19, 81, 72–3; Wick-

- ens, *Industrial and Commercial*, p. 93; RGASPI, 495.64.53, CPSA Central Executive Minutes, 9 September 1926.
81. Wickens, *Industrial and Commercial*, p. 97; Roux, *S. P. Bunting*, pp. 109–10.
  82. Roux, *S. P. Bunting*, p. 110; Roux and Roux, *Rebel Pity*, pp. 40, 48.
  83. S. P. Bunting to E. R. Roux, 15 December 1926; Roux, *S. P. Bunting*, p. 111.
  84. Drew, *Discordant Comrades*, pp. 79–81; S. P. Bunting Papers, Correspondence, E. R. Roux to Bunting, 29 December 1927.
  85. RGASPI, 495.64.63, CPSA Central Executive Committee Minutes, 31 March 1927; Simons and Simons, *Class and Colour*, pp. 388, 658, n. 9.
  86. Bunting, 'Memorials', pp. 43–4; Bunting Family Papers, Yeoville School, Terminal Report, Arthur Bunting, 30 June 1927; Brian Bunting to author, 9 July 2003.
  87. Jack to Chairman & Directors, 20 September 1927; Jack to Alfred, 10 September 1927.

## 11 For a Native Republic

1. Brian Bunting to author, 30 January, 9 July 2003.
2. University of the Witwatersrand, William Cullen Library, Historical Papers, Roux Papers, B1, Correspondence, 1927–8, A2667, Anglo-American Secretariat, ECCI to Central Committee, South African Communist Party, 9 August 1927; Roux Papers, A, *Resolution on South Africa*, n.d. [c. 1927]; Roux, *S. P. Bunting*, p. 112.
3. RGASPI, 495.64.63, CPSA Central Executive Committee Minutes, 29 September 1927.
4. *Resolution on South Africa*, p. 2. See also Martin Legassick, 'Class and Nationalism in South African Protest: The South African Communist Party and the "Native Republic", 1928–34', *Eastern African Studies*, 15 (July 1973); Grossman, 'Class Relations', pp. 144–61; Baruch Hirson, 'Bunting vs. Bukharin: The "Native Republic" Slogan', *Searchlight South Africa*, 3 (July 1989), pp. 51–65; Baruch Hirson, 'The Black Republic Slogan—Part II: The Response of the Trotskysts', *Searchlight South Africa*, 4 (February 1990), pp. 44–56; Nyawuza, 'The Road to the "Black Republic" in South Africa', *African Communist*, 122 (3rd quarter 1990), pp. 42–50, 92; Nyawuza, 'Left, Right on the Road to the Black Republic', *African Communist*, 123 (4th quarter 1990), pp. 52–61; Roger E. Kanet, 'The Comintern and the "Negro Question": Communist Policy in the United States and Africa, 1921–41', *Survey*, 19:4 (1973), pp. 86–122; Johns, 'Comintern'; and Drew, *Discordant Comrades*, pp. 94–111.
5. McDermott and Agnew, *Comintern*, pp. 42–54, 68–71.
6. Bakar Ali Mirza, 'The Congress against Imperialism', *Modern Review* (1927), pp. 555–66; 566, 555, 564; 'Report on the Development of the League against Imperialism', *Anti-Imperialist Review*, 1:1 (July 1928), pp. 83–96.
7. Alex La Guma, *Jimmy La Guma: A Biography*, ed. Mohamed Adhikari (Cape Town: Friends of the South African Library, 1997), pp. 17–22; Karis and Carter (eds), *From Protest to Challenge*, vol. 4, p. 53.
8. Raymond van Diemel, *In Search of 'Freedom, Fair Play and Justice': Josiah Tshangana Gumedede (1867–1947), A Biography* (Belhar: South Africa, 2001), pp. 1–18, 39–41, 97.
9. La Guma, *La Guma*, pp. 31–2; van Diemel, *Gumedede*, pp. 97–101; Simons and Simons, *Class and Colour*, p. 389.
10. Remarks of N. Bukharin to Presidium, ECCI, 16 March 1927 (extracts), in Davidson et al. (eds), *Communist International*, vol. 1, pp. 154–6, 155; La Guma, *La Guma*, pp. 34–6; van Diemel, *Gumedede*, pp. 97–101. La Guma, p. 34, states that Gumedede travelled

- to Moscow with La Guma but van Diemel, p. 103, notes that Gumede returned to South Africa via England after Berlin.
11. Roux, *S. P. Bunting*, pp. 89, 101, 105; Simons and Simons, *Class and Colour*, p. 396; Doreen Musson, *Johnny Gomas, Voice of the Working Class: A Political Biography* (Cape Town: Buchu, 1989), p. 48; Robert A. Hill and Gregory A. Piriou, “Africa for the Africans”: The Garvey Movement in South Africa, 1920–40’, in Marks and Trapido (eds), *Politics of Race, Class and Nationalism*, pp. 209–53.
  12. La Guma, *La Guma*, pp. 42–3; van Diemel, *Gumede*, p. 101; CPSA Central Executive Committee Minutes, 29 September 1927.
  13. McDermott and Agnew, *Comintern*, p. 70; Ralph Darlington, *The Political Trajectory of J. T. Murphy* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1998), p. 157.
  14. RGASPI, 495.64.61, J. La Guma, *Report on the South African Situation in the Party*, 2 December 1927; Report of Discussion, Meeting of Anglo-American Secretariat, ECCI, 1 December 1927 (extract), in Davidson et al. (eds), *Communist International*, vol. 1, pp. 166–9; La Guma, *La Guma*, pp. 42–8; van Diemel, *Gumede*, pp. 112–16.
  15. J. A. La Guma to V. Demar, 10 January 1928, in Davidson et al. (eds), *Communist International*, vol. 1, pp. 173–4; Drew, *Discordant Comrades*, p. 97.
  16. RGASPI, 495.64.75, CPSA Central Executive Committee Minutes, 15 March [1928].
  17. RGASPI, 495.64.56, CPSA Central Executive Committee Minutes, 10 November, 10 December 1927; S. P. Bunting Papers, Correspondence, D. G. Wolton to E. R. Roux, 14 February 1928.
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  21. J. A. La Guma to V. Demar, 10 January 1928; Simons and Simons, *Class and Colour*, p. 395; RGASPI, 495.64.75, CPSA Central Executive Committee Minutes, 10 May [1928].
  22. RGASPI, 495.64.76, *ECCI Resolution on S. Africa*, n.d., pp. 9–10, 30.
  23. Roux and Roux, *Rebel Pity*, pp. 66–7; Drew, *Discordant Comrades*, p. 99; RGASPI, 495.64.75, CPSA Central Executive Committee Minutes, 5, 19, 26 January, 2, 9 February 1928
  24. Roux, *S. P. Bunting*, pp. 114–15; Simons and Simons, *Class and Colour*, pp. 400–1; Robert Edgar, *The Making of an African Communist: Edwin Thabo Mofutsanyana and the Communist Party of South Africa, 1927–39* (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 2005), p. 8; RGASPI, 495.64.75, CPSA Central Executive Committee Minutes, 22 March 1928.
  25. *Umteteli wa Bantu*, 14 April 1928; RGASPI, 495.64.75, CPSA Central Executive Committee Minutes, 19 April 1928; Drew, *Discordant Comrades*, pp. 98–9.
  26. J. A. La Guma, *A Native Revolutionary Movement of Black South Africa* [1928], summarized in Simons and Simons, *Class and Colour*, p. 398.
  27. Roux Papers, A19, J. A. La Guma, *Who’s for the Third International Thesis on S.A.*, n.d. [1928], p. 2; Simons and Simons, *Class and Colour*, p. 409.



28. CPSA Central Executive Committee Minutes, 12 April 1928; S. P. Bunting Papers, Correspondence, D. G. Wolton to E. R. Roux, 8 May 1928.
29. Jack to Chairman & Directors, 15 September 1928; Jack to Alfred, 11 June 1928; Jack to Chairman and Directors, 15 September 1928.
30. Allison, *Appleton-le-Moors*, pp. 160, 112; Lidgett, *Mrs Joseph Shepherd*; Bunting Family Papers, Arthur to Mummie and Daddy, 11 July 1928; Elizabeth Camp to author, 7 December 2003.
31. Brian Bunting to author, 16 December 2003.
32. Roth, *What I Saw*, pp. 125, 145 n.
33. Roux and Roux, *Rebel Pity*, pp. 59–60.
34. Roux and Roux, *Rebel Pity*, p. 60; Francis Beckett, 'Rose between thorns', *Guardian* G2 (24 June 2004), p. 7. David Lipetz and Rose Cohen became victims of Stalin's great terror, executed in September and November 1937 respectively.
35. S. P. Bunting, *Imperialism and South Africa: Being a report on behalf of the delegates of the S. S. Communist Party on their return from the VI Congress of the Communist International, Moscow 17<sup>th</sup> July – 1<sup>st</sup> September, 1928*, (Johannesburg: Communist Party South Africa, November 1928), pp. 8–9.
36. McDermott and Agnew, *Comintern*, pp. 76–7; M. Worley, 'Courting Disaster? The Communist International in the Third Period', in Matthew Worley (ed.), *In Search of Revolution: International Communist Parties in the Third Period* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2004), pp. 1–17; 1–2.
37. Roux, *S. P. Bunting*, p. 123.
38. J. La Guma to D. Petrovsky, 22 August 1928, in Davidson et al. (eds), *Communist International*, vol. 1, pp. 187–8; see also RGASPI, 495.64.77, Douglas Wolton to Secretary, Colonial Commission, 23 May 1928, and Wolton to Secretary, British Section, Comintern, 1 August 1928.
39. Roux and Roux, *Rebel Pity*, pp. 63–4.
40. Darlington, *J. T. Murphy*, pp. 182–3.
41. S. P. Bunting, 'Statement presented at the Sixth Comintern Congress, 23 July 1928', in Drew (ed.), *Radical Tradition*, vol. 1, pp. 77–80, 79; Roux, *S. P. Bunting*, p. 125.
42. S. P. Bunting, *Declaration by South African Delegate, 7 August 1928*.
43. 'Discussion on the Report of Comrade Bukharin. Comrade Rebekka Bunting (S. Africa)', Sixth World Congress of the Communist International, Ninth Session, 25 July 1928 (afternoon), *International Press Correspondence*, 8, 48, 11 August 1928, p. 839.
44. University of California, Los Angeles, University Research Library, Ralph Bunche Collection, 2051, Box 62, E. R. Roux, *Black and White Trade Unionism in South Africa* (28 July 1928).
45. E. R. Roux, 'Thesis on South Africa', presented at the Sixth Comintern Congress, 28 July 1928, in Drew (ed.), *Radical Tradition*, vol. 1, pp. 81–4, 84, 81, 84; emphasis in the original.
46. E. R. Roux, 'The New Slogan and the Revolutionary Movement among White Workers in South Africa', presented at the Sixth Comintern Congress, 30 July 1928; in Drew (ed.), *Radical Tradition*, vol. 1, pp. 84–6.
47. Minutes of Meeting, Negro Commission, Sixth Congress, Comintern, 11 August 1928 (extract) in Davidson et al. (eds), *Communist International*, vol. 1, pp. 184–6; Roux, *S. P. Bunting*, pp. 128–9.
48. S. P. Bunting, 'Statement on the Kuusinen Thesis', in Drew (ed.), *Radical Tradition*, vol. 1, pp. 86–93, 93; McDermott and Agnew, *Comintern*, pp. 235–7.

49. Amendment to the 'Native Republic' Slogan Proposed by CPSA Delegation, Sixth Comintern Congress, 25 August 1928, in Davidson et al. (eds), *Communist International*, vol. 1, pp. 188–91, 189–90.
50. 'Declaration of British Delegation on the Theses on the Colonial Question, Sixth Congress, 22 August 1928 (extracts), in McDermott and Agnew, *Comintern*, pp. 233–4.
51. S. P. Bunting Papers, [S. P. Bunting], draft letter to Editor of Pravda, 18 July 1928.
52. Roux, *S. P. Bunting*, pp. 125–9.
53. S. P. Bunting Papers, Correspondence, J. Shields to Comrade Bunting, 10 October, 17 September 1928.
54. Roux, *S. P. Bunting*, p. 129.
55. Bunting, 'Memorials', pp. 45–6.
56. Bunting, *Imperialism*, p. 35, emphasis in original.
57. S. P. Bunting Papers, S. P. Bunting to E. R. Roux, 14 September 1928.
58. S. P. Bunting to E. R. Roux, 5 December 1928, in Drew (ed.), *Radical Tradition*, vol. 1, pp. 98–101; Simons and Simons, *Class and Colour*, pp. 386, 410–11; interview with A. H. Bunting.
59. S. P. Bunting, *Imperialism*, pp. 22–3, 52, 49, 59, emphasis in original.
60. *Rand Daily Mail*, 28 August 1928; J. La Guma to D. Petrovsky, 30 August 1928, in Davidson et al. (eds), *Communist International*, vol. 1, pp. 191–2 and 192, n. 2.
61. *Star*, 19 November 1928; S. P. Bunting Papers, Correspondence, *Remarks on the situation in South Africa by Com. Reesema*, 20 December 1928.
62. RGASPI, 495.64.75, CPSA Central Executive Committee Minutes, 6, 13 September 1928.
63. RGASPI, 495.64.75, CPSA Central Executive Committee Minutes, 20 September 1928.
64. RGASPI, 495.64.78, Ben Weinbren to James W. Ford, International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers, 14 December 1928 and Ben Weinbren to Comrade Losovsky, 23 December 1928; Drew, *Discordant Comrades*, p. 102.
65. S. P. Bunting to E. R. Roux, 5 December 1928, pp. 98, 99.
66. 'Our Annual Conference – An Inspiring Gathering', report in *The South African Worker*, 31 January 1929, in Bunting (ed.), *South African Communists*, pp. 97–100.
67. Harrison, *Memoirs*, p. 104; Roux, *S. P. Bunting*, p. 133; Simons and Simons, *Class and Colour*, p. 410; NASA, JUS 269, 3/1064/18, part 5, Deputy Commissioner, Divisional C. I. Officer, Witwatersrand Division to Deputy Commissioner, South African Political, Witwatersrand Division, 18 January 1929.
68. Simons and Simons, *Class and Colour*, p. 409.
69. S. P. Bunting to E. R. Roux, 9 January 1929, in Drew (ed.), *Radical Tradition*, vol. 1, p. 101.
70. 'Our Annual Conference', p. 99; 'Programme of the Communist Party of South Africa adopted at the seventh annual conference of the Party on January 1, 1929', in Bunting (ed.), *South African Communists*, pp. 100–6, 104.
71. 'Our Annual Conference', pp. 99–100; Roux, *S. P. Bunting*, p. 133; Simons and Simons, *Class and Colour*, pp. 409–10, 660, n. 58.
72. Bunting to Roux, 9 January 1929.
73. 'Programme of the Communist Party of South Africa adopted at the seventh annual conference', p. 102.
74. S. P. Bunting to E. R. Roux, 5 December 1928, p. 100.

75. Minutes of Special Meeting, Central Executive Committee, CPSA, 17 March 1928, in Davidson et al. (eds), *Communist International*, vol. 1, pp. 180–1; J. La Guma to D. Petrovsky, 22 August 1928, p. 187.
76. S. P. Bunting Papers, Correspondence, Victor and William to S. P. B., 8 December 1928; Report of V. Danchin and W. Kalk to Anglo-American Secretariat, ECCI, [5 December 1928] (extract), and Anglo-American Secretariat, ECCI, to Central Executive Committee, CPSA, 14 December 1928, in Davidson et al. (eds), *Communist International*, vol. 1, pp. 195–7, 197–9.
77. S. P. Bunting Papers, Correspondence, Victor and Willie to S. P. B., 22 December 1928; *Remarks on the situation in South Africa by Com. Reeseema*, p. 3. Sidney's letter to the *Star* appeared on 17 November 1928.
78. Bunting to Roux, 9 January 1929; RGASPI, 495.64.80, *Copy of letter from T. W. THIBODI [sic], General Secretary, South African Federation of Native Trade Unions*, 7 January 1929; Drew, *Discordant Comrades*, p. 104.
79. Bunting to Roux, 9 January 1929.
80. Davenport and Saunders, *South Africa*, pp. 311–13; Musson, *Gomas*, pp. 50–1, 54.

## 12 Into the Wilderness

1. Davenport and Saunders, *South Africa*, pp. 308–12.
2. Lungisile Ntsebeza, 'Structures and Struggles of Rural Local Government in South Africa: The Case of Traditional Authorities in the Eastern Cape', PhD (Rhodes University: 2003), p. 143; Roux, *Time Longer*, p. 53.
3. 'Programme of the Communist Party of South Africa adopted at the seventh annual conference', p. 104; Roux, *Time Longer*, p. 217; Johns, *Red Flag*, pp. 235, 237; Ntsebeza, 'Structures and struggles', p. 51; Harrison, *Memoirs*, p. 105. Wilfred Harrison had been nominated to contest the Cape Flats seat but withdrew due to a planned trip to Europe.
4. Roux Papers, B1, E. R. Roux to Douglas [Wolton], 22 November 1928, and Election Manifesto of the Communist Party (draft by E. R. Roux), n.d.
5. Election Manifesto, pp. 1–3.
6. S. P. Bunting to E. R. Roux, 9 January 1929, in Drew (ed.), *Radical Tradition*, vol. 1, p. 101; Bunting, 'Memorials', p. 45. See also Roux, *S. P. Bunting*, pp. 131–40; Roux, *Time Longer*, pp. 217–27; Johns, *Red Flag*, pp. 236–41.
7. Jack to Alfred, 15 January 1929.
8. Bunting Family Papers, Arthur Bunting to parents, 14 February 1929.
9. University of London, Institution of Commonwealth Studies, Ruth First Collection, RF/1/15/1/11, Anderson Khumani Ganyile, *Notes on the Pondo Struggle against the Bantu Authorities: The Back-ground to Resistance*, p. 34. According to Ganyile, Sidney was still fondly recalled in the 1950s. See also Roux and Roux, *Rebel Pity*, p. 101; La Guma, *La Guma*, p. 63.
10. Interview with Dabulamanzi Gcanga, Manzana, Engcobo, 6 September 2003.
11. Harrison, *Memoirs*, p. 106. Roux, *S. P. Bunting*, p. 135, dates their entry into the Transkei as 8 March, but the trial transcripts state 1 March. See NASA, BAD [Department of Native Affairs], 6647, 67/331, *Rex versus S. P. Bunting and two others*, p. 84 [hereafter *Rex versus S. P. Bunting*]. All legal documents cited are from this file. They are not in order, are not always clearly identified and use different abbreviations for the same case. To identify them, I have used the name on the first page of each document.

12. Roux gives the name as Litshaba in *Time Longer*, p. 218 and *S. P. Bunting*, p. 135; the legal documents use Lutshaba.
13. Arthur Bunting to parents, 14 February 1929. Caravan travel was not unknown in the region. The *Bhunga* had recently sponsored a caravan tour to demonstrate agricultural techniques; see Umtata Archives, box 94, envelope 76, 'A Collection of Photographs taken by the Agricultural Section of the U.T.T.G.C., Caravan tours: General Council in Transkeian Districts, 1928–32'.
14. *Rex versus S. P. Bunting*, p. 84.
15. Roux, *Time Longer*, p. 218.
16. Ntsebeza, 'Structures and struggles', pp. 122, 128–30, 138–9, 142–3, 151, 156, 177–8.
17. *Official Yearbook of the Union of South Africa and of Basutoland, Bechuanaland Protectorate, and Swaziland*, no. 12, 1929–30 (Pretoria, 1931), p. 947.
18. Roux, *Time Longer*, p. 26; Anthony Sampson, *Mandela: The Authorised Biography* (London: HarperCollins, 2000), pp. 15–20; Davenport and Saunders, *South Africa*, pp. 186–8.
19. Alfred Xuma, Govan Mbeki and Nelson Mandela, for instance, were raised as Methodists. Steven D. Gish, *Alfred B. Xuma: African, American, South African* (New York: New York University, 2000), pp. 10–11; Govan Mbeki, *South Africa: The Peasants' Revolt* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1964), p. 12; Nelson Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom: The Autobiography of Nelson Mandela* (London: Little, Brown, 1994), pp. 4, 15.
20. Ntsebeza, 'Structures and struggles', pp. 131, 133–4. The South African Native College was the precursor to University of Fort Hare, the only university-level institution for Africans in South Africa.
21. *Official Yearbook*, pp. 955, 956–7.
22. Sampson, *Mandela*, p. 21. Mandela, *Long Walk*, pp. 46–50.
23. Union of South Africa, *Government Gazette*, 30 August 1929, p. 678, 667. In the Cape Flats, 4,544 people were registered in 1929, of whom 2,668 were white, 840 African, 61 Indian, 26 Cape Malay and 949 'mixed and other Coloured races'.
24. Roux, *Time Longer*, pp. 136–7. The official court records are in English, but the importance of Makabeni's role becomes apparent in the trial transcripts.
25. Robert Edgar, 'Garveyism in Africa: Dr. Wellington and the American Movement in the Transkei', *Ufahamu*, 6:3 (1976), pp. 31–57, esp. 32–40, 47; Hill and Pirio, 'Africa for the Africans', pp. 238–42.
26. *Rex v. S. Bunting and two others* [hereafter *Rex v. S. Bunting*] – *Native Administration Act*, p. 18.
27. *Rex v. Bunting and two others*, [hereafter *Rex v. Bunting*] p. 1.
28. *Rex versus S. P. Bunting – Native Administration Act: (C) Report of Mr Bunting at meeting held by him at Umtata on 6<sup>th</sup> March 1929*, pp. 27–8. I have found no evidence that Jabez Bunting went to South Africa. According to W. J. Townsend, H. B. Workman and George Eayrs (eds), *A New History of Methodism*, 2 vols (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1909), vol. 2, pp. 250, n. 273–4, Reverend W. Shaw left Grahamstown in 1823 to set up a number of mission stations, including Buntingville.
29. *Rex v. S. Bunting – Native Administration Act*, p. 16.
30. *Rex versus S. P. Bunting – Native Administration Act: (C) Report of Mr Bunting*, p. 30.
31. *Rex v. S. Bunting – Native Administration Act*, pp. 17–18.
32. Roux, *Time Longer*, p. 219.
33. *Rex v. Bunting*, pp. 3–4.
34. *Rex versus S. Bunting – Native Administration Act*, pp. 2, 3, 5, 12.

35. *Rex versus S. Bunting – Native Administration Act*, pp. 8–9, 12–13, 23.
36. *Rex versus S. P. Bunting – Native Administration Act: Reasons for Judgment*, pp. 45–6; *Rex versus S. Bunting – Native Administration Act*, pp. 23–4; Roux, *Time Longer*, p. 219.
37. *Rex versus S. P. Bunting – Native Administration Act: Notice of Appeal*, 18 March 1929.
38. *Daily Dispatch*, 5, 12–16, 19 March 1929.
39. Jack to Alfred, 18 March 1929.
40. *Rex versus S. P. Bunting*, Exhibits D1, D2, D3. Communist Party in isiXhosa is Komanisi Pati. My thanks to Lungisile Ntsebeza for translations from isiXhosa.
41. Nelson Mandela attended the school in the mid-1930s and worked in Reverend Harris's garden. He recalled Harris as a 'severe' man 'with no levity', who ran Clarkebury 'with an iron hand', in Sampson, *Mandela*, pp. 16–17; Gish, *Xuma*, 17; Umtata Archives, box 878, file 50/4/37, Church and mission sites, Clarkebury, Engcobo.
42. *Rex versus S. P. Bunting*, Annexure H5, Umtata, pp. 64–5.
43. Gish, *Xuma*, pp. 9, 11.
44. *Rex versus S. P. Bunting*, p. 57.
45. *Rex versus S. P. Bunting*, Annexure H2: Manzana, pp. 47–9, 51–2.
46. *Rex versus S. P. Bunting*, pp. 57, 38, 42, 10, 44, 45, 49, 48.
47. *Rex versus S. P. Bunting*, Annexure H3: Cala, pp. 53–8, 57.
48. *Rex versus S. P. Bunting*, pp. 60, 41, Annexure G3, pp. 36–9, Annexure H4, pp. 59–62.
49. Roux, *Time Longer*, p. 220.
50. *Rex versus S. P. Bunting*, pp. 62–3.
51. *Rex versus S. P. Bunting*, pp. 65, 62, 66–7, 30–2.
52. *Rex versus S. P. Bunting*, pp. 62, 68.
53. *Rex versus S. P. Bunting*, Annexure H6: Show Ground, pp. 68–72.
54. *Rex versus S. P. Bunting*, pp. 69, 70, 62, 35–6.
55. NASA, BAD, 6647, 67/331, part 1, Preparatory Examination Covering Sheet, and Magistrate W. J. Davidson to Chief Magistrate, Umtata, 31 August 1929.
56. Bunting Family Papers, Arthur Bunting to parents, 22 April 1929.
57. *Rex versus S. P. Bunting*, pp. 61–2; Roux, *Time Longer*, p. 218.
58. Transkeian Territories General Council, *Proceedings and Reports of Select Committees at the Session of 1929. Annual Reports and Accounts for 1928 and Estimates of Revenue and Expenditures for 1929–30 (Final Print)* (King William's Town: the King Printing Company, 1929), pp. 167, 183–4.
59. Transkeian Territories, *Proceedings and Reports*, pp. 184–5.
60. *Rex versus S. P. Bunting*, pp. 11, 12, 13, 12.
61. *Rex versus S. P. Bunting*, pp. 46, 47, 44, 9–10, 47, 49; interview with Gcanga.
62. Umtata Archives, box 104, 'Miscellaneous South African Political Pamphlets', B. J. P. Tyamazashe, *Five S. S. C. Part Songs for Native Schools*, [Alice], Lovedale Press.
63. *Rex versus S. P. Bunting*, pp. 15–17.
64. *Rex versus S. P. Bunting*, pp. 21, 24–5, 30, 27, 32–3, 35.
65. S. P. Bunting Papers, *Mr. S. P. Bunting's Election Address*, Communist Party, Umtata, 15 May 1929.
66. S. P. Bunting Papers, Correspondence, S. P. Bunting to Roux, 14 May 1929; Roux, *S. P. Bunting*, p. 138.
67. Bunting Family Papers, Arthur Bunting to parents, 19 May 1929.
68. JUS 269 3/1064/18 part 5, NASA, reports of S. P. Bunting's meetings at Macubeni, Mount Arthur and Bengu; Commissioner of Police to Secretary for Justice, 14 June 1929.

69. Jack to Alfred, 23 April 1929.
70. In Thembuland 3,390 people were listed on the voters' list, and 2,336 or 69 per cent cast votes. Of these A. O. B. Payn (South African Party) won 1,079, G. K. Hemming (Independent, South African Party), 934 and S. P. Bunting (Communist), 289; 34 votes were rejected. In the Cape Flats 4,148 people were on the voters' list, and 3,134 or 76 per cent voted. A. J. Chiappini, MPC (South African Party) received 1,719, W. McGregor (National Party), 1,186, D. G. Wolton (Communist), 93 and P. J. Wolmarans (Independent), 84; 52 votes were rejected. Union of South Africa, *Government Gazette*, 21 June 1929, pp. 728–9; *Natal Witness*, 12–15 June 1929.
71. Brian Bunting to author, 19 May 2005.
72. S. P. Bunting to Secretary, C. P., 21 July 1929, copy, author's possession, p. 1.
73. Bunting, 'Memorials', p. 45.
74. Bunting to Secretary, C. P., 21 July 1929, p. 5.
75. *Rex v. Bunting*, p. 29.
76. NASA, BAD, 6647, 67/331, part 1, Magistrate W. J. Davidson to Chief Magistrate, Umtata, 31 August 1929, and E. W. Baxter, Solicitor-General, Grahamstown to Secretary for Native Affairs, Cape Town, 31 July 1929.
77. Secretary for Native Affairs to Solicitor-General, Grahamstown, 12 August 1929.
78. NASA, BAD, 6647, 67/331, part 2, Chief Magistrate of Transkeian Territories to Secretary for Native Affairs, 3 September 1929; Union of South Africa, *House of Assembly Debates (Hansard)*, 8 August 1929, pp. 584–6.
79. Union of South Africa, *Hansard*, 8 August 1929, pp. 574–86, esp. 575–8.

### 13 Falling from Grace

1. NASA, JUS 269, 3/1064/18, part 5, [S.M?] Memo to 'The Minister' on 'Communism on Witwatersrand, 23 August 1929, p. 2. Levy was also known as Ralph Lee.
2. Jack to Chairman & Directors, 20 August 1929.
3. Brian Bunting to author, 30 January 2003; Bunting, 'Memorials', p. 45.
4. Roux Papers, B2, Simon M. Nkoana to S. P. Bunting, 31 May 1929, 19 August 1929.
5. [S.M?], Memo to 'The Minister', p. 3.
6. Roux Papers, Unsigned statement, n.d., and [S. P. Bunting], Rules of the League of African Rights.
7. Roux Papers, League of African Rights (D), [Gana Makabeni], statement of 31 August 1929, Maxaka's location, Libode; Roux, *S. P. Bunting*, p. 141.
8. NASA, JUS 269, 3/1064/18, part 5, Marcus Garvey to J. Gumede, 27 August 1928, *League Against Imperialism and Oppressed Nations. South African Branch*, and Commissioner of Police to Secretary for Justice, 15 January 1929.
9. Bradford, *Taste of Freedom*, pp. 167, 240; Roux, *Time Longer*, pp. 178, 247. On Ballinger see F. A. Mouton, *Voices in the Desert: Margaret and William Ballinger, A Biography* (Pretoria: Benedic Books, 1997), and F. A. Mouton, 'From Motherwell to South Africa: William George Ballinger, Trade Unionist and Native Representative, 1892–1974', *Scottish Labour History Review* (Winter 1994/Spring 1995), pp. 6–7.
10. Roux Papers, *League of African Rights*, 1 September 1929. Baker asked that he be replaced, Roux Papers, B2, Chas. Baker to Bunting, 6 September 1929; Roux, *Time Longer*, 226–7; van Diemel, *Gumede*, p. 141.
11. Roux Papers, B2, [Makabeni] to Nzula, 3 September 1929; G. Makabeni to Bunting, 4 September 1929, and [Solly?] Sachs, 5 September 1929.

12. Roux Papers, [Bunting] to Garner Makabani, 16 October 1929.
13. Roux Papers, Gana Makabeni to Bunting, 24 October 1929.
14. Roux Papers, B2, G. Makabeni to Bunting, 4 October 1929, pp. 1–2.
15. Jack to Alfred, 14 October 1929.
16. The *United Transvaal Directory*, 1930, p. 403, still had the Regent Street residence; the directories of 1931, p. 395, and 1932, p. 429, list offices in Asher's Buildings and residence at Highland Road.
17. Brian Bunting to author, 30 October 2004, 30 January 2003; Bunting Family Papers, 'Notes by BPB to Memorials by A. H. Bunting', p. 3.
18. Roux Papers, D, A. Nzula and E. R. Roux, *League of African Rights: Petition of Rights*, 10 October 1929; Roux Papers, B2, [Bunting] to Malkinson, 2 December 1929.
19. Roux Papers, E. J. Dambuza to S. P. Bunting, 27 September 1929; E. J. Dambuza to Nzula, 20 September 1929.
20. Roux Papers, S. P. Bunting to E. J. Dambuza, 23 September 1929.
21. Roux Papers, S. Malkinson to Bunting, 6 November 1929, Bunting to Malkinson, 7 November 1929, S. Malkinson to Bunting, 2 October 1929.
22. Roux Papers, Umhlangala to Editor, S. A. Workers' paper.
23. The cable was dated 22 October 1929. Letter from the Executive Bureau, Communist Party of South Africa, to the Executive Committee, Comintern, in Drew (ed.), *Radical Tradition*, vol. 1, pp. 108–10; Roux, *S. P. Bunting*, pp. 141–2; Worley, 'Courting Disaster?', pp. 1–2; A. Drew, 'The New Line in South Africa: Ideology and Perception in a Very Small Communist Party', in Worley (ed.), *In Search of Revolution*, pp. 337–59.
24. Letter from the Executive Bureau, CPSA to the Executive Committee, Comintern, in Drew (ed.), *Radical Tradition*, vol. 1, pp. 108–10; Drew, *Discordant Comrades*, pp. 115–16.
25. Roux Papers, B2, Malkinson to Bunting, 30 November 1929.
26. Roux Papers, Malkinson to Bunting, 4, 9 December 1929.
27. Roux Papers, Malkinson to Bunting, 4 December 1929.
28. Roux Papers, B2, [Bunting?] to Secretary, C. P., Vereeniging, 16 October 1929, and [Bunting?] to M. Diamond, 16 October 1929.
29. Roux Papers, B2, M. E. Maling to A. Nzula and E. R. Roux, 21 October 1929; Bishop, Tembu Church to Secretary, League of African Rights, 28 November 1929.
30. Roux, *Time Longer*, pp. 217, 227–9; Basner, *Am I an African?*, pp. 30, 32, 48.
31. van Diemel, *Gumede*, p. 142; Davenport and Saunders, *South Africa*, pp. 316–17; Roux Papers, B2, Malkinson to Bunting, 30 November 1929.
32. Roux Papers, B2, [Bunting] to Malkinson, 2 December 1929.
33. Roux, *S. P. Bunting*, p. 143; Roux, *Time Longer*, p. 231.
34. Edgar, *African Communist*, pp. 10–12, 12.
35. Jack to Alfred, 17 December 1929.
36. S. P. Bunting Papers, S. P. Bunting to [Roux], p. 5 [pp. 1–2 missing]; Roux, *S. P. Bunting*, p. 145; Drew, *Discordant Comrades*, pp. 116–17.
37. Jack to Sidney, 4 January 1930.
38. Bunting to [Roux], pp. 4–5; Roux, *S. P. Bunting*, pp. 143–4.
39. Bunting to [Roux], pp. 3, 6, 3; van Diemel, *Gumede*, p. 148.
40. van Diemel, *Gumede*, pp. 147–8, 151–2; Roux Papers, C, Pamphlets, J. T. Gumede, *A Fighting Policy for South Africa*, address to African National Congress Conference (Bloemfontein, 21 April 1930).

41. Open Letter from the Cape Western Province Delegates of the African National Congress to J. T. Gumede (President of the African National Congress) and to all African Organisations, addendum to Gumede, *Fighting Policy*, pp. 5–7.
42. NASA, JUS 269, 3/1064/18, part 5, S. P. Bunting to Secretary, I.C.U. of Africa, 1 April 1930, Henry G. Boy to Divisional C. I. Officer, 7 April 1930, Richard S. Godley to Commissioner of Police, Pretoria, 9 April 1930, and R. James to Deputy Commissioner, South African Police, Johannesburg, 10 April 1930.
43. Jack to Alfred, 29 April 1930.
44. Jack to Chairman & Directors, 26 June 1930.
45. Jack to Alfred, 12 May 1930.
46. RGASPI, 495.64.89, Presidium of the ECCI to Communist Party of South Africa, 7 May 1930.
47. *Umsebenzi*, 12 September 1930.
48. Roux, *S. P. Bunting*, p. 145.
49. RGASPI 495.64.99, Letter to ‘My dear Molly’, 26 August 1930, p. 1; S. P. Bunting to Secretary, C. P., Cape Town, 22 September 1930 in Drew, *Radical Tradition*, vol. 1, pp. 69–70, 69; Drew, *Discordant Comrades*, p. 117.
50. S. P. Bunting Papers, Correspondence, Malkinson to Comrade, 28 November 1930, Malkinson to Bunting, 29 November 1930.
51. RGASPI, 495.64.99, Moses M. Kotane to Comrade Willy, 22 November 1930. This is probably Wilhelmina Taylor, who taught Kotane at the CPSA night school; see Brian Bunting, *Moses Kotane: South African Revolutionary* (London: Inkululeko, 1975), p. 46.
52. RGASPI, 495.64.100, Report from A. Green, 8 October 1930, and [Solly Sachs?] to Comrades, 24 July 1930.
53. Roux, *Rebel Pity*, pp. 74, 81–2; Simons and Simons, *Class and Colour*, p. 442; Lalu, ‘Communist Party Press’, pp. 16–25.
54. E. R. Roux to the Executive Bureau, Communist Party of South Africa, 18 November 1930, in Drew (ed.), *Radical Tradition*, vol. 1, pp. 111–13, 112–13.
55. RGASPI, 495.64.92, [Campbell] to Political Commission, ECCI, 15, 16 August 1930.
56. Roux, *S. P. Bunting*, p. 148.
57. RGASPI, 495.64.132, Report of Comrade D. G. Wolton (Late S.A.) to ECCI, 13 March 1934, p. 1.
58. E. R. Roux to the Executive Bureau, pp. 112–13.
59. S. P. Bunting to E. R. Roux, 29 November 1930, in Drew (ed.), *Radical Tradition*, vol. 1, pp. 113–14, 113; S. P. Bunting Papers, Correspondence, S. P. Bunting to Comrades of the Communist Party, October 1931; Roux, *S. P. Bunting*, p. 140.
60. Roux, *S. P. Bunting*, p. 149; Lalu, ‘Communist Party Press’, pp. 25–30.
61. ‘How to Build a Revolutionary Mass Party in South Africa: A letter from the Executive Committee of the Communist International’, *Umsebenzi*, 12 December 1930, in Drew (ed.), *Radical Tradition*, vol. 1, pp. 114–19, 117–18.
62. Bernard Sachs, *Multitude of Dreams: A Semi-Autobiographical Study* (Johannesburg: Kayor, 1949), pp. 155–6; Roux, *Time Longer*, p. 248. Sifiso Mxolisi Ndlovu, ‘Johannes Nkosi and the Communist Party of South Africa: Images of “Blood River” and King Dingane in the late 1920s–1930’, *History and Theory*, 39:4 (December 2000), pp. 111–32.
63. Sachs, *Multitude of Dreams*, pp. 155–6; Sidney’s words are from 2 Corinthians 4:8–9. *Umsebenzi*, 19 December 1930.
64. RGASPI, 495.64.96, Report on Ninth Annual Conference of the Communist Party (South Africa), 26–8 December 1930, pp. 10–11, 4.



65. Report on Ninth Annual Conference, pp. 12–15.
66. Roux, *S. P. Bunting*, p. 149; Johns, *Red Flag*, p. 267.
67. Report on Ninth Annual Conference, p. 11; Simons and Simons, *Class and Colour*, p. 443.
68. RGASPI, 495.64.109, Letter from S. Malkinson, 10 March 1931, Moses Kotane to Bloemfontein DPC, 20 March 1931, CPSA Political Bureau to S. Malkinson, 20 March 1931, and DPC Bloemfontein to Secretariat, Johannesburg, passed 24 March 1931. On CPSA expulsions in this period see Grossman, 'Class Relations', pp. 192–6; Johns, *Red Flag*, pp. 276–83; Drew, *Discordant Comrades*, pp. 112–36.
69. RGASPI, 495.64.109, S. Malkinson, *Explanation*, 2 June 1931, pp. 1–2; Roux, *S. P. Bunting*, p. 113; Drew, *Discordant Comrades*, pp. 122–3.
70. *Rand Daily Mail*, 3 September 1931; *Star*, 2 September 1931; Roux *S. P. Bunting*, pp. 154–5. Roux, *Time Longer*, p. 257, gives the date as May 1930; it was 1931.
71. RGASPI, 495.64.134, *Information re the Leading Cadres CPSA*, 8 June 1933; Simons and Simons, *Class and Colour*, p. 451; interview with Jack and Ray Simons, Cape Town, October 1994.
72. Roux and Roux, *Rebel Pity*, p. 96; interview with Charlie van Gelderen, Cottenham, July 1997.
73. Roux and Roux, *Rebel Pity*, pp. 103, 109; Drew, *Discordant Comrades*, p. 124.
74. Sachs, *Multitude of Dreams*, pp. 164–5; Arthur Bunting to Brian Bunting, 19 March 1992, p. 3; interview with A. H. Bunting.
75. RGASPI, 495.64.113, CPSA Central Committee Minutes, 4 July 1931, pp. 1–2, 6–7, 11.
76. Lidgerton Diaries, July 1931; Bunting Family Papers, Kathleen Bunting to Becky, 19 December [1931?].
77. *Star*, 3 September 1931; *Rand Daily Mail*, 4 September 1931.
78. *Rand Daily Mail*, 5 September 1931; *Star*, 4, 7 September 1931.
79. *Umsibenzi*, 4 September 1931; Roux, *S. P. Bunting*, pp. 157–8; Simons and Simons, *Class and Colour*, p. 448; Drew, *Discordant Comrades*, p. 124.
80. *Rand Daily Mail*, 8, 9 September 1931; Roux, *S. P. Bunting*, pp. 156–8.
81. Interview with A. H. Bunting; Allison Drew, 'Will the Real Sidney Bunting Please Stand Up? Constructing and Contesting the Identity of a South African Communist', *English Historical Review*, 118:479 (November 2003), pp. 1208–41; 1241.

## 14 A Weary Soul

1. RGASPI, 495.64.118, S. P. Bunting to Comrades of the Communist Party, September 1931, pp. 1–3.
2. S. P. Bunting to Comrades of the Communist Party, October 1931; see also exchanges between Sidney and the ECCI in Davidson et al. (eds), *Communist International*, vol. 2, pp. 22–3, 25–6, 46–9.
3. Report of Committee of Opponents of PB, CPSA to ECCI, 13 November 1932, in Davidson et al. (eds), *Communist International*, vol. 2, pp. 49–58, 49–50; Roux and Roux, *Rebel Pity*, p. 103.
4. Roux and Roux, *Rebel Pity*, p. 104.
5. Sam Malkinson, *Explanation*, p. 2, described Makabeni as 'the most self-sacrificing member of the Party and liked by all'.

6. RGASPI, 495.64.113, Report of CPSA Central Committee Meeting, 28–30 December 1931, pp. 3, 21.
7. *Umsebenzi*, 8 January 1932.
8. Report of Committee of Opponents, pp. 50, 51, 57.
9. *Umsebenzi*, 22 January 1932; Roux and Roux, *Rebel Pity*, p. 104; Roux, *S. P. Bunting*, pp. 163–4.
10. *Umsebenzi*, 4 March 1932; Report of Committee of Opponents, p. 53.
11. T. W. Thibedi to Communist League of America, 26 April 1932; Communist League of America to T. W. Thibedi, 30 May 1932; T. W. Thibedi to Leon Trotsky, 10 August 1932; Leon Trotsky to T. W. Thibedi, 4 September 1932, all in Drew (ed.), *Radical Tradition*, vol. 1, pp. 124–7, 129–31; Drew, *Discordant Comrades*, pp. 143–4. The Communist League's officers were S. H. Scott Seroke, Trustee; G. Malefo, Chairman; P. H. Mati, Secretary; S. Malifo, Treasurer; and T. Maiketsi, Assistant Treasurer. Its slogans were: 'Up with the Negro Workers – Down with Slaves' and '*Vuka Africa, Tsoga Africa*', Amsterdam, International Institute of Social History, Trotsky Archives.
12. *Umsebenzi*, 22 October 1932; S. P. Bunting to ECCI, 26 October 1932, in Davidson et al. (eds), *Communist International*, vol. 2, pp. 46–9; Roux, *S. P. Bunting*, pp. 166–7.
13. On Sidney's legal practice see, for example, University of the Witwatersrand, William Cullen Library, Historical Papers, Ballinger Papers, A410/B2.16.1, file 1, S. P. Bunting to Miss M. L. Hodgson, 29 July 1932.
14. 'Minutes of a Meeting of Communist Delegates at the Albert Street Hall, on the 13th November, 1932', *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 19:1 (1999), pp. 103–5.
15. 'Minutes of a Meeting of Communist Delegates', pp. 103–4; Roux, *S. P. Bunting*, p. 168.
16. Lidgetton Diaries, 2 January 1933.
17. Interview with Dr W. H. le Riche, Professor Emeritus, University of Toronto, Faculty of Medicine, 19 October 2004; W. H. le Riche to author, 12 November 2004, 10 March 2005.
18. Brian Bunting to author, 30 October 2004; *United Transvaal Directory*, 1934, p. 409.
19. Bunting, 'Memorials', p. 39.
20. Brian Bunting to author, 30 January 2003.
21. University of the Witwatersrand, William Cullen Library, Historical Papers, South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR), AD 843/RJ/Kb 18.3 (file 2), J. H. Oldham to J. D. Rheinallt Jones, 5 July 1933.
22. SAIRR, file 2, Inter-University Committee for African Studies, *Teaching and Research in African Studies*.
23. SAIRR, file 2, S. P. Bunting, Application to International Institute of African Languages & Cultures, 21 August 1933.
24. SAIRR, file 2, Monica Hunter Wilson and Hilda Beemer Kuper became renowned anthropologists. Rheinallt Jones applied for 'a small sum ... for using and training native students in field work'; but was not successful. Oldham to Rheinallt Jones, 5 July 1933.
25. SAIRR, file 2, Secretary to S. P. Bunting, 26 October 1933.
26. S. P. Bunting, *An African Prospect and Appeal to Young Africa, East, West, Central, South* (Johannesburg: Modern Press, December 1933), pp. 1, 20–1, 23–5, 28, 32.
27. le Riche to author, 12 November 2004; *Plant Sciences News*, 6:9 (October 2002), pp. 2–5.

28. Bunting, 'Memorials', p. 47; Bunting (ed.), *Letters to Rebecca*, p. 75; Brian Bunting to author, 12 October 2004.
29. S. P. Bunting to Brian, 6 July 1934.
30. Drew (ed.), *Radical Tradition*, vol. 1, p. 24; Drew, *Discordant Comrades*, p. 150; interviews with R. O. Dudley, Cape Town, April 1988 and Charlie van Gelderen.
31. S. P. Bunting to Brian, 6 July 1934.
32. Lidgetton Diaries, 18 July 1934; Sidney to Becky, 1 August 1934, p. 75.
33. Drew (ed.), *Radical Tradition*, vol. 1, p. 30; Drew, *Discordant Comrades*, pp. 201–2.
34. 'Refuse to Ship Goods to Abyssinia!', *Umsebenzi*, 22 June 1935, and 'Native and Coloured Workers' Anti-war Strike', *Umsebenzi*, 7 September 1935, both in Bunting (ed.), *South African Communists*, pp. 123–5; Roux, *Time Longer*, pp. 302–3; Drew, *Discordant Comrades*, pp. 152–3, 163, nn. 47, 48.
35. Roux, *S. P. Bunting*, pp. 174–5.
36. Jack to Alfred, 19 November 1935.
37. Jack to Alfred, 10 December 1935. The Hoare–Laval Pact was subsequently disowned.
38. Drew, *Discordant Comrades*, pp. 201–2.
39. Chipkin, *Johannesburg Style*, p. 115.
40. Brian Bunting to author, 30 October 2004; Bunting, 'Memorials', p. 47; interview with le Riche.
41. Jack to Sidney, 11 February 1936; Jack to Chairman & Directors, 21 October 1935. From 1 July 1934–30 June 1935 the estate employed thirty contract workers, twenty farm workers, eight Indians and some daily-paid women.
42. Brian Bunting to author, 12 October 2004; Roux, *S. P. Bunting*, p. 176; Bunting, 'Memorials', p. 47; interviews with A. H. Bunting and le Riche.
43. Roux, *S. P. Bunting*, p. 176.
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45. Bunting, 'Memorials', p. 47; Roux, *S. P. Bunting*, pp. 176–7; interview with le Riche.
46. Roux, *S. P. Bunting*, p. 177; E. R. Roux, 'S. P. Bunting', *Forward*, 29 May 1936, p. 5; *Rand Daily Mail*, 26 May 1936; *Star*, 26 May 1936; interviews with A. H. Bunting and le Riche; Brian Bunting to author, 16 December 2003.
47. Jack to Evelyn, 14 July 1936.
48. Bunting Family Papers, R. Bunting to Evelyn, 22 July 1936; syntax and spelling errors in the original. All of Sidney's wealth was left to his wife. After expenses she inherited £923.8.4; TAB MHG 93480, Estate File, S. P. Bunting.

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