

British Communists and Anglo-French Relations, 1914-1945

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Studies of the entente cordiale tend to focus on various aspects of Anglo-French inter-state relations. This is entirely right and proper: the entente was, after all, an agreement between two states. It is to be expected that any volume covering the entente historically will focus primarily, as this one does, upon relations between governments, statesmen, diplomats and soldiers. Nonetheless, these are not the sum total of the contacts between the two countries. In particular, many people in both countries considered themselves to be a part of a wider international movement of revolutionaries who were working together to overthrow capitalism and imperialism and build a 'better' world. From 1917 onwards, in particular, Communists believed that theirs was the ideology of the future, and that their success was only a matter of time. From 1919 onwards, the efforts of Communists were, in theory at least, directed from the Communist International (Comintern) in Moscow, a world party of which the British and French communist parties were – again, in theory at least – only branches. This paper, then, sets out to analyse the importance of France for the British Communist party in the era of the World Wars. It focuses on the impact that France itself had upon British Communists' views of the world, and also upon the nature of the British Communist party's relationship with its French counterpart.

The Communist party of Great Britain (CPGB) was formed in London in August 1920, by the combination of a number of smaller bodies to the left of the Labour party. Its achievements were to prove limited. It never threatened to supplant the much larger Labour party as the dominant force on the British left. Its membership never exceeded 56,000 (at the height of 'Russomania' in the Second World War) and was often (and for much of the inter-war period) no more than a tenth of that figure. It only ever had two MPs at the same time, in 1922-3 and again in 1945-50; in 1929-35, which included the worst years of the depression it had none at all. Only in its trade union work was the picture a little less bleak; but even here, the peaks of influence achieved in the mid-1920s and from the mid-1930s onwards never suggested that

anything like a Communist takeover of the trade union movement. Even so, the Communist party was not irrelevant to British politics and society, least of all during the inter-war period.¹ Its membership was low, but not non-existent. Given its high membership turnover, many more people passed through it than were members at any one time; and given that the reasons people left were by no means confined to political disagreement with communism, it did have a wider influence than its bare membership figures would suggest.² The party also acted as a *provocateur* to the larger Labour party. To some extent, Labour defined itself in contrast to the Communists. At the same time, the presence of the Communists to their left, ever eager to 'expose' any compromising tendencies, was a barrier to Labour's shifting too far away from the left and towards the political centre.

Literature on the history of British Communism has multiplied in recent years, with the opening of archives in Britain and Russia offering masses of new evidence.³ There has also been, still more recently, a very lively debate about the subject, and particularly the nature of the CPGB's relationship with Moscow and Soviet Communism.⁴ This debate has sometimes generated more heat than light, and there is a danger that it will overshadow important and interesting facets of Communist history. In particular, there is scope for study of the nature of the party's views of countries other than the Soviet Union, and of its relations with foreign Communist parties other than Communist Party of the Soviet Union and its predecessors.⁵ This is a very brief initial attempt to offer such a study in the case of France, a country which, precisely because of its physical proximity to Britain and the development of inter-state relations following the 1904 entente, was bound to feature significantly in British Communists' calculations.

I

France occupied a somewhat marginal place in the mindset of the British far left in the years prior to the Great War. In one sense this was strange. The great French Revolution of 1789 was the prelude to a significant upsurge in British radicalism, and for a time France was the

model for British radicals. But this strong French influence soon waned. As war replaced revolution, British radicals became increasingly marginalized. By the time of Waterloo in 1815, few figures on the British left still drew inspiration from France. The series of revolutions that punctuated French history in the nineteenth century – in 1830, 1848, and 1871 – led to periodic upsurges of interest, but such interest tended to be fleeting. French revolutionaries were less likely to be forced into exile than their German or Russian counterparts, which meant that cheek-by-jowl cohabitation between French and British socialists was not common. If France had been the model in the late eighteenth century, Germany had usurped that position by the end of the nineteenth. And, for most of the British far left at least, the 1917 Bolshevik revolution in Russia represented a new and still better exemplar.

What of France itself? The Great War left two predominant images in the minds of those on the British far left: that France was an imperialist power, and that the French left – as it had existed in 1914 – was fatally compromised. The Third French Republic had never excited the British left as the First had: it was felt to have its roots in the crushing of the Paris Commune, and British left socialists had shared the outrage felt widely within the International regarding the decision of Alexandre Millerand, the French socialist leader, to enter the cabinet of Waldeck-Rousseau in 1899. France's uncompromising attitude during the war, best characterised by demands for the unconditional surrender to end the war and reparations to follow it, were repulsive to many on the British left, who felt that they would merely guarantee a continuing cycle of conflict. Although few on the British left went as far as Lenin in arguing for revolutionary defeatism and the turning of the European war of nations into a civil war of classes, more people were influenced by ideas of a negotiated peace without annexations or indemnities. This group became increasingly prominent as the war developed, and especially following the expulsion of H. M. Hyndman and his super-patriotic acolytes from the leadership of the main British Marxist organisation, the British Socialist party (BSP), in 1916. Shorn of the pro-French, anti-German revanchism of the Hyndmanites, the BSP

moved much closer to the essentially anti-French positions already taken up by smaller left-wing groups like the Socialist Labour party and the Workers' Socialist federation. This in turn meant that the British far left totally rejected the peace treaties that followed the conclusion of the war. The Treaty of Versailles, in particular, was vigorously denounced, not just by those who would eventually become members of the Communist party, but also by many in the more moderate Independent Labour party (ILP), and also within the Labour party proper. For such people, France was a state with few saving graces or virtues, and the idea of any Anglo-French entente was repulsive.

This was in part because they tended to be influenced by the view that the war had been caused in large part by the division of Europe into armed camps. In a sense, this was ironic, since it was essentially a liberal interpretation of the war's causes, which went on to have a significant influence in the creation of the League of Nations, upon which the British far left was to heap considerable abuse. However, it was possible to square such a view with a more Marxist interpretation that argued that the war had been caused by the development of rival imperialisms, since the bloc-formation that was described by the liberal view could be seen as an essential by-product of the imperialist tendencies of Europe's states. Indeed, this overlap between liberal and Marxist analyses would prove long-lived, and would enable the CPGB to profit for large parts of its history from what were essentially liberal positions. However, where they came into conflict – as in 1939 – the party would face problems.

The other notion that came out of the war was the idea that the French left was fatally compromised. As John Horne has shown, the French left had faced an unenviable dilemma as war with Germany had erupted, and ultimately the great majority of it settled for the 'choice of 1914'. This was not simply a relapse into some visceral form of super-patriotism. Instead, it was calculated that, since war had come anyway, the labour movement would be better able to maintain its identity, and defend its interests, as part of a national war effort, rather than by trying to stand outside it. This was, in many ways, a sound calculation. However, it 'rendered

official labour leaderships vulnerable to those who rejected the “choice of 1914” or who urged the full use of labour’s power to protect its interests’.⁶ In other words, the choice to support the war effort predetermined that there would be hostility from an anti-war minority. For British far leftists, the French Socialists had shown themselves no better than the Labour party leadership. On the other hand, the breakaway of the independent Social Democrats (the USPD) and the revolutionary Spartakists seemed to suggest that there was still a strong strain of socialist internationalism and revolutionary zeal in Germany. Meanwhile, the Russian Revolution offered fresh inspiration. The fact that the French appeared even keener than the British on smashing the Bolsheviks was enough – along with Versailles – to confirm France’s perfidy, so far as the British far left was concerned. The fact that the French left seemed relatively inert, even supine, at a time when revolution was taking hold in many other parts of Europe – Germany and Hungary as well as Russia – suggested to many British revolutionaries that there was little to be gained at any level from close relations with France or the French.

II

The war ended in November 1918. Two months later, a new factor entered European revolutionary politics with the establishment, in Bolshevik Moscow, of the Communist International. At first, the new organisation was weak, isolated, and poorly understood by many revolutionaries. But its first five world congresses (in 1919, 1920, 1921, 1922 and 1924) gradually stamped its authority over the Communist movement that was developing, at first mainly in Europe, and then in the wider world. Both British Communist views of Anglo-French relations, and the relationship between the British far left and its French counterpart, would now be influenced by the outlook of the Comintern, and of the Soviet party leadership that came increasingly to dominate it.⁷

One of the first acts of the Comintern was to help in the formation of Communist parties in both Britain and France in 1920. The creation of the CPGB in August 1920 was the

culmination of a long series of discussions between various far-left organisations. In the end, the new party amounted, at least initially, to little more than an aggrandised BSP. The rapidly-expanding Labour party was able to marginalize the new body with a degree of ease:

Communist attempts to affiliate to the larger body were rebuffed, and steps were taken to ensure that Communists could not become candidates for, or members of, the party. At first, prospects in France looked brighter. The French Communist party (PCF) was formed in December 1920, when, at the Tours conference of the French Socialist party, the SFIO, a majority of the latter body voted to re-form as a Communist party affiliated to the Comintern. The minority, however, then re-formed the SFIO, and in the years that followed the latter rapidly outstripped the PCF in strength and prestige.

From the outset, it was obvious that there was potential for the CPGB and the PCF to collaborate. After all, their respective states were doing so in the aftermath of the war, and would continue to do so, although on a less close basis, for most of the inter-war period. Specific issues, in short, drew the two parties together. Britain and France remained the two most important states in the League of Nations, from which the Soviet Union was excluded, and which was seen as a thieves' kitchen.⁸ Secondly, the entente powers remained the world's leading imperialist powers – indeed, the League's mandates system had, in effect, added to their imperial possessions. This meant that there was much potential for greater collaboration on anti-colonial agitation, which was a particular enthusiasm of the Comintern. Still more vitally, of course, there was now a revolutionary state – Soviet Russia – to be defended against external aggression, of which Britain and France were the main purveyors in the early years of the new regime. Both had intervened in Russia against the Bolsheviks; both had supported the Whites against the Reds in the Russian Civil War. Although Britain's enthusiasm for such interventions had waned before that of the French, there was little doubt that both remained essentially hostile towards the new regime, the French to the extent of giving strong support to Poland in its war against Russia in 1920-21. Given that Lenin also believed that Britain and France were at a similar stage of capitalist development, there was

even more logic in the Comintern seeking to ensure that its parties in both France and Britain were in close co-operation.⁹

The Third Republic continued to be seriously distrusted by British Communists during the 1920s and into the 1930s. Continuing French hostility towards Soviet Russia played a large part in this process. So did the fact that Paris became the favoured refuge of many white Russians in exile. The French were seen as trying to lead successive British governments in an anti-Soviet direction.¹⁰ In addition, British Communists increasingly saw France as a state where capitalism was speeding up production, and rationalising industry, in ways that were inimical to the workers' interests.¹¹ The Bedaux system, a form of industrial speed-up against which many unions were fighting in Britain from the later 1920s onwards, was strongly associated in British Communist minds with France.

There was, for all these reasons, early interest in developing links between the Communist parties of the world's two leading imperialist powers. After the fourth congress of the Comintern, in November and December 1922, had criticised the CPGB for being too insular, it looked to thicken its links with the French and German parties in particular. The French invasion of the Ruhr in January 1923 led to the formation of a joint committee including British and French, as well as German, Czech and Polish Communists.¹² In April 1923, the French Communist Alfred Rosmer attended a CPGB central committee meeting to report on developments within the PCF.¹³ The Communist MP, J. T. Walton Newbold, visited Paris that August to try to develop links between the British and French parliamentary fractions.¹⁴ These forays were continued with the development of an ambitious plan for Anglo-French collaboration, which was approved by the political bureau of the British party in February 1924;¹⁵ and later in that year, two French Communists came to Britain to speak on behalf of Communist candidates at the general election.¹⁶

However, this early momentum was not sustained. In part, this was simply due to events – the ending of the Ruhr crisis took a lot of the pressure out of the situation, and the parties' international gaze began to wander in different directions. But there were other reasons, too. The fact that the British responded to Comintern criticisms of slow progress by blaming the French did not help matters.¹⁷ Nor did the frequent leadership changes in the PCF. A major blow came when Newbold, who had led the British party's diplomacy towards the PCF, left the party in 1924.¹⁸ He was one of a series of middle-class Communists to leave the party at this point, and this exodus depleted the number of francophone members that the party could boast.¹⁹ The departure of the party's leading intellectual, Rajani Palme Dutt, to Brussels in 1924 – where he remained for the next decade – was a similar blow.²⁰ The PCF's electoral success in 1924, when it won almost one million votes and 26 seats in the chamber of deputies, would hardly have made it more likely to wish to collaborate with its relatively puny British counterpart, which won only one parliamentary seat at the October 1924 general election.

The Comintern did not help matters. The establishment of the regional secretariats (*Landersekretariate*) in Moscow hindered co-operation. The CPGB was made answerable to an Anglo-American secretariat, which comprised the Communist parties of Anglophone nations and some parts of the British Empire; and it was the Romance secretariat which oversaw the work of the Communists of France, Italy, Belgium, Luxemburg, Spain, and Portugal.²¹ In theory, the Comintern was a smooth and well-oiled machine; in practice, this bureaucratic division made it increasingly difficult to co-ordinate the efforts of the CPGB and the PCF. Their two countries might only have been a couple of dozen miles apart, but this counted for little against the realities of Comintern bureaucracy. The major mid-1920s campaigns of the two parties were rather like ships that passed in the night, therefore. The French were not particularly forthcoming in assisting the CPGB over the General Strike and miners' lockout in 1926. But then again, the British had done very little to help the PCF's campaign against the 'Rif war' (1920-26) in Morocco in 1924-5.²² It was perhaps not entirely

by chance that British Communist representatives in Moscow tended not to have many intimates among the French Communists there.²³ By the later 1920s one of the few commonalities between the two parties was that they shared a Comintern representative, in the person of Max Petrovsky, who, although living in Paris and working with the PCF, continued his role as advisor to the British party under the pseudonym A. J. Bennett.²⁴

Relations between the two parties did not improve significantly in the later 1920s or the early 1930s, for a number of reasons. First, the two parties moved at differing speeds towards the anti-social democratic sectarian policies of the ‘class against class’ period. In France, the shift began early: the new line began to be discussed seriously in the spring of 1927, and by that November the party was embarked upon the ‘new line’, in time for the elections of April 1928. In Britain, by contrast, the line shifted well to the left around the end of the 1926 miners’ lockout, but then reverted to a more centrist position, and it was only in early 1928 that the moves towards ‘class against class’ began in earnest. The British party – or at least a strategically placed section of its leadership – then fought a long and, for a while, partly successful rearguard action against the adoption of the line on all its implications. It was only with the Leeds convention of December 1929 that the leadership was finally changed in such a way as to remove – in some cases only temporarily – the leaders who had resisted the new line (see below).

Secondly, and partly as a consequence of this, there was very little stability in the leadership of either party for much of the period. The French party had been notable for frequent changes of leadership during the 1920s, and this process was not really arrested, at least initially, by the new line after 1927. Pierre Sémard, who had only been the party’s general secretary since 1926, was ousted in April 1929 by the so-called ‘youth group’, who provided a collective leadership comprising Henri Barbé, Pierre Célor, Benoît Frachon, and Maurice Thorez. However, their lack of success led to most of them being removed from the leadership in 1931. In Britain, the resistance to the new line led to significant changes in the

party's leadership in 1928-9, with Andrew Rothstein being permanently, and John Campbell temporarily, being removed from leading positions within the party. Harry Pollitt became the party's general secretary in the summer of 1929, but at first his position was not strong, as he had to cope with a group of youthful, Comintern-supported ultra-leftists; it was only in 1930 that Moscow recognised him formally as the leader of the party, and only in November 1932 that his authority as leader was finally established beyond question.²⁵

Thirdly, neither party enjoyed much success during the class against class period. While many of the Comintern's predictions about capitalist economic crisis, and the behaviour of social democratic leaders in the face thereof, were proved at least partly true by the depression that began in 1929, the other side of the prediction – that there would open up a new period of worker militancy and Communist party expansion, and that the collapse of capitalism was being driven forward 'with hurricane speed' – proved illusory.²⁶ The fact that the economic experience of the two countries varied at this point, with the downturn in France coming somewhat later than in Britain, also inhibited close collaboration.²⁷ Furthermore, the two parties were both struggling to hold onto their existing members, let alone expanding, at least in the early years of 'class against class'. In this context, it was often a case of the parties doing what they could to remain in being, rather than moving into such exotic directions as the intensification of Anglo-French links.

In any case, Communist eyes were increasingly focussed on Germany in this period. The Comintern was certainly preoccupied with events in that country. And British and French Communists were hardly likely to be indifferent to what was happening there, either. The Communist parties in both France and Britain were at least publicly optimistic as to the fate of the German Communist party. But, of course, those hopes proved illusory. The appointment of Adolf Hitler as Chancellor of Germany in January 1933 signalled the start of a very different era in Anglo-French relations, both at the state level but also at the level of the respective Communist parties.

III

Soviet reactions to the rise of Hitler were mixed: so too were the reactions of the Communist parties around the world. It was possible, in theory, to take up any one of three positions. The first was that Hitler and the Nazis would prove to be short-lived phenomena, the last and most brutal gasp of a dying capitalist system. Communist parties should redouble their efforts along class against class lines, refusing to compromise, especially with the social democrats who would try to resist supposedly growing revolutionary impulses.²⁸ Secondly, it could be argued that although Hitler was not a flash in the pan, he was predominantly an anti-western politician, whose main target was Versailles and the Anglo-French alliance that had created it; that, while he was domestically anti-Communist, he was a foreign policy realist and would revert to a traditional alignment with Russia, continuing with the kind of policy that had been concluded by Weimar Germany in the 1922 treaty of Rapallo. If this view was correct, then the Soviets could welcome his accession to power, and the task would be to persuade Communist parties abroad to keep their fire fixed on the British and French governments. Finally, it was possible to argue that Hitler posed a serious threat to communism, not just in Germany, but everywhere, especially the USSR; and that therefore the best tactic was to resist him and Nazi Germany to the full. This would involve Communist parties in Britain and France agitating for full-scale military alliances between their countries and the Soviet Union, to counter any danger of German attack.

In 1933, all three of these views found influential supporters at the highest levels of Communist decision-making. By the end of that year, however, the third model was becoming increasingly persuasive. In the spring of 1934, Stalin appointed the Bulgarian, Georgi Dimitrov, as General Secretary of the Comintern. Dimitrov had witnessed the rise of Nazism in Germany as head of the Comintern's Western European Bureau in Berlin; he had become an international celebrity as a result of being imprisoned and tried by the Nazis on false accusations of involvement in the 1933 Reichstag fire. Dimitrov was convinced that

Nazism was a real threat to the workers of the world and also to the 'workers' state', the Soviet Union. Stalin knew this, and his appointment – and increasing favouring – of the Bulgarian marked the start of the temporary eclipse of hopes for Soviet-German co-operation in the immediate future.²⁹

Increasingly, therefore, the French and British parties came to the centre of Comintern thinking. The German Communist party, the KPD – up to 1933 the most important non-Soviet Communist party – was now discredited by its failure to prevent the rise of Hitler and its still more obvious failure to do much in terms of leading resistance to the new regime, while the continuing failure of the KPD and SPD in exile to reach any kind of agreement rang an increasingly discordant note in the new period of 'anti-fascist unity'. At the same time, Soviet foreign policy was moving into a more pro-western direction. From being a semi-alliance of robber barons, of states that were enemies of the workers, Britain and France were now potential allies of the USSR against Germany. Indeed, the USSR joined the League of Nations in September 1934, and agreed a treaty with France the following May.

The French and British party leaderships, meanwhile, were increasingly instrumental in the development of a new, more inclusive, approach. United front initiatives in both countries had a degree of success in 1933-34. Although there was resistance within the British party, some moves were made towards united front work with the Independent Labour party (ILP) in 1933-34. More spectacular were the events of 5-6 February 1934 in Paris, when Communists and socialists came together spontaneously to demonstrate against the prospect of an imminent fascist coup d'état. Thorez and Pollitt were in the vanguard of international Communists during the latter half of 1934 in terms of developing an even more inclusive approach. Thorez, in particular, appears to have disobeyed the advice of at least some Comintern officials in travelling to Nantes in October 1934 to address the national congress of the Radical party, which, as a lower middle-class and non-socialist organisation, was beyond the pale of the united front, which was only meant to incorporate working-class

bodies.³⁰ His successful appeal to the Radicals saw the practical beginning of a new, and even more inclusive, strategy: that of the broad anti-fascist *front populaire* (popular, or people's, front). The place of the French party at the heart of the Comintern was now confirmed. The success of his action was also used explicitly by Pollitt to inspire his own party to move away from sectarianism.³¹

The seventh world congress of the Comintern met in Moscow in the summer of 1935. France, and to a lesser extent Britain, were at the hub of Comintern concerns, and the quest for better relations with Britain and France was at the core of Soviet foreign policy. The key party at the congress, as Dimitrov made clear, was the PCF. The eclipse of the KPD, and the fact that most other Communist parties in the world were illegal, further boosted it: so too did the continuing weakness of the CPGB, which could only muster 7,500 members at the end of 1935 as against the PCF's 87,000.³² France, Dimitrov said, was 'a country in which the working class is setting an example to the whole international proletariat of how to fight fascism'. The French Communist party was 'setting an example to all the sections of the Comintern of how the tactics of the united front should be applied; the Socialist workers [we]re setting an example of what the Social-Democratic workers of other capitalist countries should now be doing in the fight against fascism'.³³

The experiences of the two parties began to move still further apart after the seventh world congress. At the November 1935 general election, the British party – largely in pursuit of better relations with the Labour party, but also in recognition of its own miserable prospects – withdrew all but two of its candidates. When one of these – William Gallacher at West Fife – was elected to parliament, the virtual euphoria of Pollitt and his colleagues must have seemed odd to the French party, which had long had a bloc of deputies in the French Chamber. For its part, the PCF, was about to enter its *annus mirabilis*. It entered the elections as part of a popular front, which went on to win the elections. A popular front government was formed under the Socialist, Leon Blum. Although the Communists decided, for various reasons,

against taking ministerial office in the government, they were, for a time, of central importance to it. Indeed, it was largely through Communist intervention that the strike wave that followed the elections was ended amicably with the Matignon agreement, which enshrined in law a series of important rights for workers, such as paid holidays. Electoral success and practical influence on government policy in the interests of the workers was not quite the revolutionary transformation for which the PCF still claimed to be working, but it was a long way ahead of anything that their British counterparts could achieve at the time. As Nina Fishman has argued, events in France ‘greatly intensified British Communist expectations’.³⁴ It was no coincidence that, in May 1936, the first book published by the Communist-dominated Left Book Club was Maurice Thorez’s *France Today and the People’s Front*.³⁵ It was to be followed periodically by further volumes on France, such as one on the Paris Commune of 1871 in 1937, and a biography of the mid-nineteenth century French revolutionary Auguste Blanqui on the eve of the Second World War.³⁶ It is true that the CPGB was at the forefront of street protests against Sir Oswald Mosley’s British Union of Fascists (BUF), and did find some political space opening up thanks to the Labour party’s reluctance to commit itself to armed support for the republican forces in the Spanish Civil War (1936-9). But otherwise, 1936 was a year of disappointment. In particular, the failure once again of its attempt to affiliate to the Labour party left hopes of emulating the French in their popular front efforts demonstrably unfulfilled.³⁷ In October 1937, while Communists in France, Spain and China appeared to be engaged in real struggles for power, Pollitt was reduced to bickering with Labour politicians about who could claim most responsibility for preventing marches by the relatively insignificant BUF in the context of the London borough council elections.³⁸ British party membership did expand somewhat in 1936, to 11,500. But this a poor showing at the side of the PCF’s 288,000, reached in December of that year.³⁹

And yet, at the same time, there were things that continued to bind the two parties together. At the bureaucratic level, the seventh world congress had abolished the old *Landersekretariate*, replacing them with new more flexible secretariats under named

individuals. The British party was now placed under the overall control of the secretariat headed by the French Communist, Andre Marty. This brought French and British Communists closer together than had been the case in recent years, although the results were not always positive.⁴⁰ More significantly, Spain brought the two parties closer together. The Spanish Civil War broke out in July 1936, and for much of the next two years much of each party's campaigning and resources was devoted to the struggle against fascism there. Inevitably, this kept the question of France at the fore of Communist thinking. France was, with Britain, the chief proponent of 'non-intervention', by which they both did their utmost to avoid being drawn into the conflict, and still more into a general European war. This meant that they maintained, against increasing evidence, that the policy was, in effect, working, when in fact German, Italian and Soviet forces were all involved in one way or another. Naturally, British Communists were quick to attack what they saw as the duplicitous behaviour of the British and French governments which, they believed, were effectively encouraging fascism. In addition, of course, the foreign volunteers who went to Spain were largely forced to travel through France and be organised to a large extent by French Communists, which meant that there were closer personal contacts between significant numbers of British and French Communists than ever before.⁴¹

As the prospects in Spain dimmed, however, the focus moved back to the direct threat posed by Nazi Germany. Both the CPGB and the PCF ran strong campaigns against the appeasement policy being favoured by the British government and its increasingly anti-left French counterpart. In one sense, they were well placed to lead the attack: two leading Communist parties could try to work together to change the common policy of their two governments. The logic became even more compelling when, in October 1938, the Munich agreement broke any last lingering links between the French government and the PCF.⁴² However, tensions between the two parties remained. The Comintern was encouraging all parties to do more to emphasise their national traditions: an ECCI resolution on early 1937 told the CPGB to 'base the whole of [its] propaganda upon British traditions, fortified by

international experience and support'.⁴³ But this approach held dangers. It was not hard to find 'internationalist' Communists who held some rather truculent nationalist prejudices: the long history of Anglo-French antagonism prior to, and indeed since, 1904 did not necessarily mean that emphasis on national traditions would lead to a reaffirmation of the *entente cordiale*. And, as the French popular front government withered, and prospects of any form of wider unity in Britain died away, Anglo-French Communist relations began to take on an increasingly acerbic air. By March 1939, Pollitt was expressing hostility towards the French combined with a defensive pride in his own party in correspondence with Campbell, who was then the CPGB's representative in Moscow:

One thing let me say Johnny, you have no need to be ashamed of your section of the C[ommunist] I[nternational]. The more I see of some others when I attend conferences in Paris the more proud I am of our own Party. Forgive me for being British.⁴⁴

It was in this mood that Pollitt entered the most significant controversy between the two parties during the whole of the period under discussion. This concerned conscription. Britain's armed forces had traditionally been based on volunteers. This principle had been breached during the Great War, but conscription had been phased out soon after the conclusion of hostilities. In March 1939, the Chamberlain government announced that it was to be reintroduced. If anything could be claimed as part of a 'British national tradition', it was hostility towards military compulsion, and the reaction of many Communists, including Pollitt and the party's sole MP, William Gallacher, was to denounce the proposal. However, the Soviets and the French saw it differently. They both had conscription: they believed that Chamberlain's declaration was a long-overdue recognition of the threat posed by Nazi Germany. Against this, Pollitt's objections looked like effete liberalism. The French Communist, Gabriel Péri, attacked the British party. At first, the CPGB leadership repudiated Péri.⁴⁵ But it soon became clear that he was in fact pushing the line favoured by Moscow; and

eventually the party overturned its earlier opposition to conscription. As a result, on 20 May, Pollitt offered his resignation from the post of party secretary, although for the time being it was not accepted.⁴⁶ The next time he offered, it would be. Anglo-French relations, both inter-state and inter-party, were beginning to have a significant impact on the CPGB and its leadership.

Meanwhile, the chances of the two parties achieving anything of immediate significance in the fight against fascism were fading. The failure of the entente powers to reach a military alliance with the Soviets in the summer of 1939 was merely the end of the process. By this stage, British Communists had a rather jaundiced view of France, and of Anglo-French relations. Their views of the Anglo-French entente had changed considerably after the rise of Hitler. Between 1934/5 and 1939, many, perhaps even most, had hoped that it would form one side of the collective security arrangements that would protect the Soviet Union against attack, and even begin a counter-attack against fascism. But many had continued to hold severe suspicions of the motives of both countries. Many found it hard to swallow the argument that Britain and France, with their extensive colonial empires, could be in any way regarded as defenders of ‘democracy’ against fascism. When Pollitt praised the merits of a British democratic tradition that had given birth to the largest empire the world had ever seen, and Thorez defended the rights of France’s Catholic schools even as they denounced ‘godless communism’, some of their less gullible, or more experienced, followers looked askance at them. For these people, little had changed about Britain and France since the entente had been agreed in 1904. What had originated as a deal to resolve various disputes about colonial possessions remained, for many British Communists, essentially a compromise between two rival imperialisms which might otherwise lack the strength to survive. They would soon have their say.

IV

The German invasion of Poland on 1 September 1939 was followed on the third, somewhat haltingly, by declarations of war on Germany by Britain and France. Initially, many Communists felt that there needed to be no change in line, even though the USSR and Germany had entered a non-aggression pact a week before the outbreak of war. Pollitt continued to push the line of 'war on two fronts' – against Hitler, but also against the Chamberlain government at home – and believed he had the support of his party members in doing so. However, many British Communists had become increasingly alarmed as Pollitt's position had moved further and further towards straightforward defence of Britain against Germany.⁴⁷ Other Communist parties, not least the French, were starting to alter their positions in the early days of September. Pollitt was unmoved. He suppressed at least one telegram from Moscow informing him of the need for a new approach.⁴⁸ But the return from the Soviet capital of the British representative to the Comintern, D. F. 'Dave' Springhall, brought the conflict out into the open. At a stormy meeting of the party's central committee on 2 and 3 October, Pollitt, Campbell and Gallacher found themselves isolated as, one after another, their comrades backed the alternative, Comintern-backed, line advocated by Springhall, ably backed by Dutt, a long-time Comintern loyalist. Pollitt was ousted from the leadership and replaced by a secretariat comprising Springhall, Dutt and William Rust.⁴⁹

The new line rejected the view that the war being fought to defend democracy against fascism. Instead, it was a conflict of rival imperialisms, whose outcome was a matter of indifference to the working class of all countries. There was nothing to choose, so far as the workers were concerned, between British and French imperialism on the one hand, and German imperialism on the other. If anything – so the more extreme versions went – British and French attitudes had helped to promote German revanchism, and so Britain and France could be seen as even more culpable than Nazi Germany. At one level, of course, this was palpable nonsense, so much so that it has usually been seen as nothing more than the naïve swallowing of Soviet self-interest by gullible British (and French) Communists. As I have argued elsewhere, there can be no doubt that the Comintern's imprimatur was an important

influence on many British Communists, not least those who were relatively new to the party and for whom a direct and explicit Comintern intervention was a novelty with which they had little idea how to deal other than to obey.⁵⁰

But the changed also accorded with the existing views of many British Communists: it was not a wholly alien imposition. First, there had been misgivings about the old line, as stated above. For most Communists, it took something of a suspension of disbelief to see Britain, or France, for that matter, as a bastion of freedom. The ‘war on two fronts’ line helped to obscure the issue, but the failure of the British government to reach an alliance with the Soviets over the summer, and the Labour party’s continuing hostility towards collaboration with the CPGB, had simply confirmed older prejudices. Secondly, the memory of 1914 weighed heavily with many Communists. Then, Europe had descended into a long and bloody war. The outcome had not been the end of war, but, rather, a recasting of rival imperialisms as a prelude to a further round of armed conflict. Pollitt argued that the situation was now transformed – that fascism and Nazism were fundamentally different from anything that had been fought over, or against, in the earlier conflict. It would be difficult, in retrospect, to maintain that he was wrong to do so. But to many at the time, Pollitt’s line sounded suspiciously like the ‘choice of 1914’ – in a different key, perhaps, but fundamentally the same tune. For such people, Pollitt’s line was merely a reprise of the attitudes that Lenin had been quick to denounce as ‘social chauvinism’, whereby the moment the guns started firing, international socialists emerged as national patriots. Linked to this, thirdly, many saw the crisis as a chance to remove Pollitt, under whose leadership the party had become increasingly centred on the fight against Germany and fascism, to the exclusion of the ‘larger picture’ of trying to bring communism to power. In the years that he had led the party Pollitt had made enemies, and not a few of them now saw their chance to be rid of him.

But France was also very much in the minds of British Communists in September 1939. As one British Communist put it many years later, the ‘the French government made war not on

the Nazis but on the [French] communists and their sympathisers'.⁵¹ Even before war broke out, the French Communist press was closed down and the party was clearly under threat, a point emphasised by Dimitrov to Stalin at the time.⁵² The PCF was banned on 26 September, about half of its deputies were arrested, and Thorez was forced into exile (he was to spend the war years in Moscow). This was scarcely the act of a 'democracy', a point made trenchantly by Dutt in a pamphlet published that November:

If this were a genuine anti-fascist war, would the first act of the French Government be to suppress the French Communist Party, the principal party of the working class and the leader of the anti-fascist fight? This act alone reveals the true character of the war as a war against the interests of the working class and democracy.⁵³

In this way, therefore, the fate of the French Communists was central to the way in which British Communists justified their change of line on the war.

In reality, though, the line of the British Communist party changed less in practice than it did in theory. The party did not launch a strong campaign of revolutionary defeatism, or anything of the sort. While it did continue to press the 'peace' line, it also kept its head down to a certain extent, focussing on day-to-day issues rather than that of the war.⁵⁴ Pollitt, after 'admitting' his 'error' with an insincerity that was recognised on all sides, soon returned to the higher levels of the party, although it was not until 1941 that he returned to the leadership.

Even so, the fall of France in June 1940 did lead to a significant, if short-lived, change in the Communists' approach to the war. Suddenly, a new, defencist line began to be put forward. Ivor Montagu's book, *The Traitor Class*, was a best seller: Montagu, a Communist who was personally and politically close to Pollitt, argued that the fall of France was due to the treachery of its ruling class, and that the same could happen in Britain.⁵⁵ It was argued that 'Two Hundred Families' had dominated French society, economy and politics, and had

effectively betrayed France to the Germans. Strong parallels were claimed with British society on the basis of earlier Left Book Club publications alleging close connections between the supporters of Appeasement and big business.⁵⁶ The implication was obvious – that there *was* after all something to choose between German imperialism on the one hand and French (and indeed British) imperialism on the other. The *Daily Worker* referred to the defeat of France as ‘this sad hour’ – hardly in line with the view that there was nothing to choose between French and German imperialism so far as the French working class was concerned.⁵⁷ Once again, therefore, France moved to the centre of the CPGB’s discourse about the war. However, the absence of Soviet approval for a more wholehearted change of line meant that there was, at this stage at least, no long-lived, overt return to Pollitt’s earlier policy.

There remains much controversy about the PCF’s performance in the period from the fall of France to the German invasion of the USSR the following year, the time ‘between the Junes’.⁵⁸ For the CPGB, ‘between the Junes’ of 1940 and 1941 was difficult in one sense, in it could not openly come out for gung-ho prosecution of the war effort; but, in another, it was quite profitable, as it took up issues like inadequate air raid shelters, pay, prices, rationing, and service dependents’ allowances to make something of an impact, not least through the People’s Convention in January 1941. However, the banning that month of their newspaper, the *Daily Worker*, was a sign that state repression was never far away. Thanks to Hitler, however, the party was on the verge of a new era of apparent success.

V

The new era began on 22 June 1941, with the German invasion of the Soviet Union. At first, Dutt tried to argue for a nuanced view of the conflict which would have put the CPGB firmly behind the USSR while being strongly critical of the Coalition government under Winston Churchill. But neither the Soviets themselves, nor Pollitt, nor, it may be surmised, the great bulk of the CPGB’s membership, felt that this was an appropriate moment for an outbreak of Dutt’s sophistry and semantics. In 1939, in his great row with Dutt in the central committee,

Pollitt had said that what he wanted most of all was to '[s]mash the fascist bastards once and for all'.⁵⁹ Now he had his chance to help achieve that: and this largely summed up the party's line over the next four years.

In this context, there was a curious duality about British Communist attitudes towards France. On the one hand, there was admiration of the French Resistance, and no mistaking, so far as the CPGB was concerned, that it was French Communists who were leading it. At the same time, though, a somewhat patronising air emerged. Pollitt, in particular, had never been much of a Francophile, and he clearly took the view that the British, by successfully resisting Germany, had proved a certain superiority over the French. As the CPGB's membership soared to new heights – 56,000 in December 1942 as opposed to the pre-war peak (1939) of 18,500 – it seemed that it might now, at last, take its 'proper' place at the head of western European communism. There were high hopes of the party finally gaining affiliation to the Labour party, which would have given it a bigger stage and a wider influence – although the Labour party conference voted against this by a large margin in 1943, the vote in favour was higher than on any previous occasion, and it was expected that there would be a more favourable verdict when Labour next discussed the matter. Plans for the first post-war election were on a relatively grand scale, but Pollitt also had hopes for a while of a permanent continuation of Coalition politics, in the context of a permanent collaboration between the victor powers, into the post-war world. In such a context, it seemed possible to adopt a fairly superior attitude towards the French. Significantly, the CPGB's statement welcoming the D-Day landings in 1944 made not a single mention of France.⁶⁰ The party did its best, though, to draw on the reflected glory of the Resistance and of German atrocities against French Communists: ironically, given events in early 1939, the party published a glowing tribute to Péri following his murder by the Germans in 1941.⁶¹

But the CPGB's high hopes came to very little. The Labour party's rules prohibited a renewed discussion of Communist affiliation for three years following its defeat in 1943; by the time

that period was up, it had changed its rules to permanently bar the separate political parties such as the CPGB from joining. Communist party membership deflated slowly after 1942. Ideas of continuing Coalition foundered on Labour's refusal to contemplate continuing association with the Conservatives; hopes of an electoral deal with Labour alone then came to nothing. The CPGB ran 21 candidates at the 1945 election, but only 2 were elected, while Labour's massive majority of 146 meant that the handful of fellow-travellers who were elected as Labour MPs would have very little opportunity to help the Communists by pressuring Attlee's government.⁶²

Conversely, the reputation of the PCF flourished. The party's role in the Resistance has, of course, aroused much discussion and debate, but it was real and significant enough not only to offer short-term glory to the party, but also to help forge a collective mentality and memory that would keep the party firmly united for more than a generation. Nothing that the CPGB experienced during the war could rival this – the nearest was probably the fight against the ban on the *Daily Worker*, which hardly compared, for all that the party tried to make of it, at the time and afterwards.⁶³ Even the fact that the party's leader, Thorez, had not been in France during the war probably helped the PCF, by ensuring that its leaders had close relations with the Soviet leadership. It was not insignificant that when the Soviets, having formally abolished the Comintern in 1943, wanted to denounce the American Communist leader Earl Browder for his dissolution of the Communist Party of the United States of America in 1945, they used as their mouthpiece a French Communist, Jacques Duclos. For a while after the war, the PCF even participated in the French government. The contrast with the CPGB could not have been sharper.

The final insult came in 1947, when the Communist Information Bureau (Cominform) was formed by the Soviets as a rather pale successor to the Comintern. Unlike the earlier body, its membership was restricted to Communist parties within the Soviet sphere of influence, plus two other parties – the Italians and the French. Pollitt was 'privately somewhat annoyed' by

the exclusion of the British.⁶⁴ It hardly helped his mood, or that of other British Communists, that the conduit through which Cominform communication was to reach the CPGB appears to have been the PCF headquarters in Paris.⁶⁵ Although there was some British support for the French miners' strike in 1948, there was otherwise not much entente, and even less cordiality, between the British and French Communist parties by the later 1940s.⁶⁶

At the level of international relations more broadly conceived, British Communists now regarded the idea of an Anglo-French entente as being of little relevance to the modern world. The developing Cold War was at the centre of Communist thoughts, and the final exclusion of Communists from the French post-war government in 1947 left no room to doubt that, once again, Britain and France were united against the USSR. But they were now regarded by Communists, not as masters of their own fate, but as mere pawns of a much more sinister influence, namely, the 'Yankee Imperialism' of 'dollar-hungry American gangsters'.⁶⁷ Nor did early moves towards greater European integration, which culminated in the formation of the European Economic Community in 1957, appear to offer anything better. For British Communists, Britain and France were once again powers ranged against the USSR, but now in collaboration with the USA. And that was enough to condemn them.

VI

This account has not challenged prevailing view that British Communists were essentially unsuccessful in this period. It has, however, attempted to trace the relationship of the British Communist party with its French counterpart, and its view of France in general, in order to shed new light on the nature of Anglo-French relations more generally in the period of the World Wars. Historical significance, after all, is not just a matter of success or failure. In the period under review, British Communists had a greater sense of France, and of the revolutionary movement there, than their immediate predecessors on the British left had had. At various points between 1918 and 1945, the issue of Anglo-French relations did come to the forefront of British Communist thinking. However, enthusiasm for a bilateral *entente cordiale*

was minimal. In part, this was because France was mistrusted as being as imperialist, and indeed counter-revolutionary, state: only *in extremis*, in the popular front period, did this perception soften somewhat. It was also due, however, to mistrust, shading into sheer dislike, of French Communists. But it was also due to the Soviet factor. Given the centrality of both Britain and France to the considerations of Soviet diplomacy and statecraft, it was inconceivable that British and French Communists would either have wanted, or been allowed, to pursue an approach towards their own countries' foreign policies that did not prioritise Soviet interests. For a time, in the Second World War, it was possible to claim that all three countries were working together. But, all too soon, that period ended, and western European Communists found themselves in the much harsher political climate of the Cold War. That the PCF flourished, at least when compared with the CPGB, is just one minor illustration of the differences between the two countries that have made their broad co-operation since 1904 seem all the more remarkable.

¹ Though for an alternative view, see Steven Fielding, 'British Communism: interesting but irrelevant?', *Labour History Review*, 60 (1995), pp. 120-3.

² Andrew Thorpe, 'The membership of the Communist party of Great Britain, 1920-1945', *Historical Journal*, 43 (2000), pp. 777-800.

³ See e.g. Andrew Thorpe, *The British Communist Party and Moscow, 1920-43* (Manchester, 2000); Gidon Cohen and Kevin Morgan, 'Stalin's sausage machine: British students at the International Lenin School, 1927-1937', *Twentieth Century British History*, 12 (2002), pp. 327-55; John McIlroy and Alan Campbell, 'The British and French representatives to the Communist International, 1920-1939: a comparative survey', *International Review of Social History*, 50 (2005), pp. 203-40.

⁴ See, among others, Kevin Morgan, 'Labour with knobs on? The recent historiography of the British Communist party', *Mitteilungsblatt des Instituts für soziale Bewegungen*, 27 (2002), pp. 69-83; John McIlroy and Alan Campbell, 'Histories of the British Communist party: a user's guide', *Labour History Review*, 68, 1 (2003), 33-59; John McIlroy and Alan Campbell, 'A peripheral vision: Communist historiography in Britain', *American Communist History*, 4, 2 (2005), 125-57.

⁵ One noteworthy recent addition to the literature in this area is McIlroy and Campbell, 'British and French representatives to the Communist International, 1920-1939'.

⁶ John Horne, *Labour at War: France and Britain, 1914-1918* (Oxford, 1991), p. 83.

⁷ Thorpe, *British Communist Party and Moscow*.

⁸ For an example of this kind of attack, from what was in effect a CPGB 'front' organisation, see National Left Wing Committee, *Towards a Labour Government: The Policy and Programme of the National Left-Wing Movement* (London, n.d. [1927]), esp. pp. 12-13, 16-17. See also J. T. Murphy, *New Horizons* (London, 1941), pp. 342-3.

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- ⁹ See e.g. V. I. Lenin, 'Political report of the Central Committee RKP(b) to the ninth All-Russian conference of the Communist party', 20 September 1920, in *The Unknown Lenin: From the Secret Archive*, ed. Richard Pipes (New Haven and London, 1996), pp. 95-115; *Lenin on Britain* (London, 1934), p. 207.
- ¹⁰ Rajani Palme Dutt, *World Politics, 1918-1936* (London, 1936), pp. 61-3.
- ¹¹ Rajani Palme Dutt, *Socialism and the Living Wage* (London, 1927), pp. 59-60.
- ¹² Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History [RGASPI] 495/100/104, fo. 22, CPGB political bureau, 11 April 1923.
- ¹³ RGASPI 495/100/103, fo. 79, CPGB central executive committee minutes, 10 April 1923.
- ¹⁴ RGASPI 495/100/117, fos. 60-1, 'Statement of Newbold's talk with Comrade Sellier in Paris', 7 August 1923.
- ¹⁵ RGASPI 495/100/159, fos. 49-50, CPGB political bureau 29 February 1924; 495/100/147, fo. 102, political bureau 6 June 1924; 495/100/147, fo. 2, preliminary meeting of British delegation, 9 June 1924; 495/100/163, fo. 74, organisation bureau 10 June 1924.
- ¹⁶ CPGB, *Seventh National Congress* (London, 1925), p. 159.
- ¹⁷ RGASPI 495/100/104, fos. 49, 78-9, CPGB political bureau, 7, 26 September 1923.
- ¹⁸ Newbold, 'Why I have left the Communist Party', *Forward*, 13 September 1924.
- ¹⁹ Thorpe, *British Communist Party*, pp. 80-1; see also Harry Wicks, *Keeping My Head: The Memoirs of a British Bolshevik* (London, 1992), pp. 53-4.
- ²⁰ John Callaghan, *Rajani Palme Dutt: A Study in British Stalinism* (London, 1993), pp. 58-62.
- ²¹ Grant Adibekov and Eleonora Shakhnazarova, 'Reconstructions of the Comintern organisational structure', in Mikhail Narinsky and Jurgen Rojahn (eds.), *Centre and Periphery: The History of the Comintern in the Light of New Documents* (Amsterdam, 1996), p. 68.

²² John Callaghan, 'The Communists and the colonies: anti-imperialism between the wars', in Geoff Andrews et al (eds.), *Opening the Books: Essays of the Social and Cultural History of the British Communist Party* (London, 1995), pp. 10-11.

²³ This can be seen from comments in Murphy, *New Horizons*, pp. 87, 274.

²⁴ Thorpe, *British Communist Party*, p. 109.

²⁵ Ibid., pp. 200-1.

²⁶ Rajani Palme Dutt, *Crisis: Tariffs: War* (London, 1931), p. 19.

²⁷ Charles P. Kindleberger, *The World in Depression, 1929-1939* (Harmondsworth, 1987), p. 46.

²⁸ A prominent British example of this viewpoint, published in the year before the Nazi takeover, was John Strachey, *The Coming Struggle for Power* (London, 1932).

²⁹ Kevin McDermott and Jeremy Agnew, *The Comintern: A History of International Communism from Lenin to Stalin* (London, 1996), pp. 124-5.

³⁰ E. H. Carr, *The Twilight of Comintern, 1930-1935* (London, 1982), pp. 198-201. The 'united front' was developed as a Comintern strategy in 1920-1, and essentially involved Communists seeking alliances with other socialist and working-class organisations which would help to promote socialism and, in the not-too-distant future, revolution. The 'popular front' emerged in response to Nazism, and was aimed to unite all anti-fascists, including non-socialists and those from organisations outside the working class. Although the long-term aim of revolution remained, the popular front was, effectively, a much more moderate and defensive formation than its predecessor.

³¹ CPGB, *Harry Pollitt Speaks: A Call to All Workers* (London, n.d. [1935]), pp. 4-5.

³² Julian Jackson, *The Popular Front in France: Defending Democracy, 1934-1938* (Cambridge, 1988), p. 219; Thorpe, 'The membership of the Communist party of Great Britain', p. 781.

³³ Georgi Dimitrov, 'United front of the working class against fascism', speech delivered at the Seventh World Congress of the Communist International, 2 August 1935, in idem., *The Working Class Against Fascism* (London, 1935), p. 40.

³⁴ Nina Fishman, *The British Communist Party and the Trade Unions, 1933-45* (Aldershot, 1995), p. 94.

³⁵ Noreen Branson, *History of the Communist Party of Great Britain, 1927-1941* (London, 1985), p. 214.

³⁶ Frank Jellinek, *The Paris Commune of 1871* (London, 1937); Neil Stewart, *Blanqui* (London, 1939).

³⁷ See for example Emile Burns, *Communist Affiliation* (London, 1936).

³⁸ Harry Pollitt, *Labour's Way Forward* (London, 1937), p. 5.

³⁹ Thorpe, 'The membership of the Communist party of Great Britain', p. 781; Jackson, *The Popular Front in France*, p. 219.

⁴⁰ See e.g. RGASPI 495/74/36, fo. 105, Marty to Dimitrov, 9 September 1937.

⁴¹ Branson, *History of the Communist Party of Great Britain*, p. 231.

⁴² Jackson, *The Popular Front in France*, p. 248.

⁴³ RGASPI 495/100/1149, fos. 12-15, 'Draft resolution of secretariat on report of Comrade Pollitt', 4 January 1937.

⁴⁴ RGASPI 495/100/1040, fos. 5-7, Pollitt to Campbell, 30 March 1939.

⁴⁵ *House of Commons Debates*, 5 series, vol. 346, cols 1348, 1382, 1457, 1461, 27 April 1939. I am grateful to Kevin Morgan for this reference.

⁴⁶ Thorpe, *British Communist Party*, pp. 247-9.

⁴⁷ See e.g. John Attfield and Stephen Williams, *1939: The Communist Party and the War* (London, 1984), pp. 54-8, 99-109; Douglas Hyde, *I Believed: The Autobiography of a Former British Communist* (London, 1952), pp. 68-9; Malcolm Macewen, *The Greening of a Red* (London, London, 1991), p. 63; Bas Barker and Lynda Straker, *Free – But Not Easy*

(Matlock, 1989), p. 70; Harry McShane and Jean Smith, *Harry McShane: No Mean Fighter*, (London, 1978), p. 231.

⁴⁸ Monty Johnstone, 'The CPGB, the Comintern and the war, 1939-1941: Filling in the blank spots', *Science and Society*, 61 (1997), 27-45, at 29-32; Thorpe, *British Communist Party*, pp. 257-8.

⁴⁹ For this meeting, see Francis King and George Matthews, *About Turn: The Communist Party and the Outbreak of the Second World War: The Verbatim Record of the Central Committee Meetings, 1939* (London, 1990).

⁵⁰ Thorpe, *British Communist Party*, p. 259.

⁵¹ Macewen, *Greening of a Red*, p. 62.

⁵² Dimitrov to Stalin, 27 August 1939, in *Dimitrov and Stalin, 1934-1943: Letters from the Soviet Archives*, ed. Alexander Dallin and F. I. Firsov (New Haven and London, 2000), p. 150.

⁵³ Rajani Palme Dutt, *Why this War?* (London, 1939), p. 5.

⁵⁴ Willie Thompson, *The Good Old Cause: British Communism, 1920-1991* (London, 1992), p. 68.

⁵⁵ Ivor Montagu, *The Traitor Class* (London, 1940), p. 63.

⁵⁶ See Simon Haxey, *Tory M.P.* (London, 1939), published by the Left Book Club.

⁵⁷ *Daily Worker*, editorial on 'France and Britain', 6 July 1941, reprinted in *Daily Worker* Defence League, *The Daily Worker and the War* (London, n.d. [1941]), pp. 14-16.

⁵⁸ David Wingeate Pike, 'Between the Junes: the French Communists from the collapse of France to the invasion of Russia', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 28 (1993), pp. 465-85.

⁵⁹ King and Matthews, *About Turn*, p. 203.

⁶⁰ Communist party, 'The second front opens', June 1944, in CPGB, *Documents for Congress: A Collection of the Principal Political Statements issued by the Communist Party between July 1943 and August 1944* (London, 1944), p. 30.

⁶¹ William Rust, *Gabriel Péri* (London, n.d. [1941/2]); see also Harry Pollitt, presenting central committee's report to CPGB national conference, May 1942, reprinted in CPGB, *The Way to Win* (London, 1942), p. 13; Harry Pollitt, *How to Win the Peace* (London, 1944), p. 59.

⁶² The two Communist MPs were Gallacher at West Fife, in the Scottish coalfield, and Phil Piratin, at Mile End in the East End of London.

⁶³ William Rust, *Lift the Ban on the Daily Worker* (London, n.d. [1941]); *idem.*, *The Story of the Daily Worker* (London, 1949), esp. pp. 83-96.

⁶⁴ Noreen Branson, *History of the Communist Party of Great Britain, 1941-1951* (London, 1997), p. 157

⁶⁵ Henry Pelling, *The British Communist Party: A Historical Profile* (London, 1958), p. 141.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 153-5.

⁶⁷ William Gallacher, *The Tyrants' Might is Passing* (London, 1954), pp. 37, 43.