

Introduction: ‘... A body invested with complete authority over the party ...’

A key lesson Lenin took from his study of German Social Democracy was the indispensability to revolutionary advance of ‘experienced leaders who have been long schooled and prepared for their trade [as political leaders] – leaders who have learned to work together smoothly as a team – without all this, a steadfast struggle is impossible on the part of any class at all in modern society’ (Lenin, 1902/2005, p. 784; bracketed phrase translator’s explanation). Those crucial actors, Lenin envisaged, would come together to form a central executive committee ‘embracing all the best revolutionary forces ... and *managing* all the general affairs of the party’ (original emphasis)

(<https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1902/sep/00.htm>). The executive would ‘guide the life of the Party not only where major decisions are involved, but also in all the details of its day-to-day existence’ (Liebman, 1975, p. 39). Lenin’s insistence on the significance of leadership – which he understood in relation to the dialectic between necessity and freedom and the correlation of social forces – became part of the common sense of early British Communism. It was reiterated by Stalin, who by the mid-1920s had become the most powerful influence in the Russian party/state and consequentially the Comintern (McIlroy & Campbell, 2019a).

‘Marxism’, Stalin stressed, ‘does not at all deny the role of eminent personalities or the fact that history is made by people’ (van Ree, 2002, p. 162). However, in relation to the revolutionary party he reflected, with unconscious irony, ‘the point is not “the leader” but the collective leader, the C[entral] C[ommittee] of the party’ (van Ree, 2002, p. 164). If, as its president, Zinoviev, with Stalin the most vigorous proponent of the post-1920 ‘iron phalanx’, the militarized model of revolutionary organization, put it, the Comintern was to be ‘a genuine general staff’ of international insurgency, the best elements of its national affiliates represented on their leading bodies would operate as ‘field commanders’ (quoted in Draper,

1957, p. 264). In the aftermath of the 1923 Comintern Commission which reviewed its progress and recommended changes in its *modus operandi*, the British party (CPGB) reaffirmed that ‘to function effectively it must have a central guiding and directing body invested with complete authority over the party as a whole’ (CPGB, 1924, p. 46).

The central executive committee (EC)¹ was elected by the party congress – by the end of the 1920s through a slate system by which the outgoing leadership presented a list of replacements for approval (Pelling, 1958, p. 52). Drawn from what came to be known as the ‘cadre’, the most able and reliable leaders at national and regional level, ‘embracing all the best revolutionary forces’, the EC liaised with the Executive Committee of the Comintern (ECCI) and subordinate bodies within the CPGB. It functioned as the initiator of change in relation to programme, politics, strategy and tactics. It educated activists, guided their practice, maintained the cohesion, coordination and discipline necessary to mobilize the membership and, on some accounts, held the party together (Newton, 1969, p. 91). Given its significance and the fact that it provides scholars with a reasonably comprehensive catalogue of the party’s collective leadership, studies of its composition have been surprisingly absent from the historiography.

Recent research has begun to remedy this lacuna (see McIlroy & Campbell, 2019b, 2020a, b, 2021 and the sources therein). An earlier paper presented the findings of a survey of the CPGB leadership during ‘the long foundation period’ from 1920 until 1923 (McIlroy & Campbell, 2020b). A further article analysed the 39 Communists who served on the EC during the years between 1923 and 1928 – taking the latter date as the entry point of the Comintern’s catastrophic, ultra-left Third Period, which witnessed the triumph of Stalinism in the Soviet Union, and constituted a watershed in CPGB politics and the continuity of its leadership (McIlroy & Campbell, 2021). Utilizing prosopographical techniques, the essay examined the origins, background, age, occupation, educational experience, pre-CPGB

affiliations and future destinations of the leadership cohort (see McIlroy & Campbell, 2019b, pp.175–180, 2020a, p. 43 for a brief discussion of prosopography). It distinguished EC members who served on three or fewer of the five committees elected during this period from those who featured on four or five ECs. It designated the latter contingent the ‘core’ of the contemporary leadership.² It proceeded to provide biographical sketches of the 20 members who figured on the executive on three or fewer occasions.

The present article continues presentation of this research by profiling the 19 Communists who constituted the ‘core’ of the leadership between 1923 and 1928. (See **Appendix**.) The first section focusses on those members of the ‘core’ who were removed from the EC in 1929 as Stalin rolled out the Third Period. This is followed by life histories of representatives who survived as leaders the convulsions that ‘Class Against Class’ unleashed, including those who returned to serve on future committees. The third part explores the biographies of that small group of leaders – Gallacher, Campbell, Dutt and Pollitt – ‘the core of the core’, who stood at the heart of the Communist elite in the 1920s and played significant roles into and beyond the 1950s.³ The final section glances back at the leading contingent of 1923–1928. It compares this group with its predecessor during the foundation period before bringing together and reflecting on the entire cohort of activists who figured in the leadership from 1920 to 1928.

The ‘core’ leadership of the CPGB, 1923–1928: ex-SLP casualties

In examining the ‘core’ of Communists who in terms of tenure dominated the EC between 1923 and 1928, we look first at those who did not survive the decade as part of the national leadership. Born in Glasgow to immigrant, Irish nationalist parents, Arthur MacManus (1888–1927) was intended for the Church; but *Rerum Novarum* gave way to *The Communist Manifesto* and *Two Pages from Roman History* and he joined the elect of the Socialist Labour

Party (SLP). As a member of its trade union arm, the Industrial Workers of Great Britain (IWGB) and the Amalgamated Society of Engineers (ASE), he participated in the 1911 strike at the Singer sewing machine works (Bell, 1941, pp. 94–96, 72–74; McIlroy & Campbell, 2020c). As a leader of the wartime Clyde Workers' Committee (CWC) deported from Glasgow in 1916, he took a key part in the formation of the National Shop Stewards and Workers' Committee Movement (NSS&WCM), chaired its National Administrative Committee (NAC), and was prominent in strikes over dilution and conscription. As an SLP activist he eventually opposed the war, but it was 1918 before he called for action from the shop stewards.⁴ The Bolshevik revolution and his industrial experiences prompted reconsideration of the SLP's De Leonist variant of syndicalist politics which hinged on a possibly peaceful and substantially 'spontaneist' revolution conducted via 'socialist industrial unionism' assisted by a propagandist party (Hinton, 1973; Kendall, 1969, pp. 150–169). MacManus attended the 1917 Leeds Conference on soviets, which the leading shop stewards identified with the workers' committees in the munitions industry, and stood as an SLP candidate in the 1918 general election at Halifax, mustering 4,036 votes (Challinor, 1977, pp. 206–208).

He met Russian emissaries in 1918 and a process commenced by which he progressively abandoned his earlier politics. Thereafter, he planned a united Communist Party: as a member of the SLP Unity Committee, he was central to negotiations. When the SLP balked over the issue of the new party's affiliation to Labour, with Tom Bell and William Paul he launched the Communist Unity Group (CUG) to mobilize dissident members in support of the merger (Macfarlane, 1966, pp. 29–30, 50–56). In recognition of a degree of personal charisma and his record as a mass leader and architect of unity, he was appointed the CPGB's first chair. Tragedy struck when his wife, Hettie Wheeldon, a socialist opponent of the war, and daughter of Alice Wheeldon who was convicted of sedition on the fake evidence

of an informer in a trial in which Hettie herself was acquitted, died in childbirth (Rowbotham, 1986/2015; Rippon, 2009).⁵ The party's inauguration disclosed differences between its leaders and exposed their tenuous grasp of Bolshevik politics. For MacManus, centralized leadership meant an inflated apparatus micro-managed by the chair, or president as he was sometimes styled. His main concern with Soviet subsidy was that it was insufficient, although according to security reports in 1921 he received £7 10s a week, remuneration beyond the reach of the vast majority of British workers.⁶ On the ground, the party operated as a federation; in an intractable economic and political environment, confusion reigned over the united front, while organized intervention in the unions and Labour Party was unusual. He admitted in 1923: '... in the sense of a previously considered political policy, and in the sense of the operation of that policy, we had none at all'.⁷

Problems were exacerbated by repression – he went on the run for several months; rivalry over positions; incipient factionalism and a group around Dutt who challenged his stance over 'Bolshevisation'; and disputes over finance. His alcohol intake accelerated and his health deteriorated. The 1922 Dutt-Pollitt report on party organization only partly resolved difficulties. However, its aftermath saw the position of chair terminated and a new chapter opened in the wake of the 1923 Comintern Commission which refreshed the leadership and reoriented the CPGB's trade union and Labour Party work.⁸ He played a declining role at home while continuing to represent the party internationally. He resided in Moscow for lengthy periods in 1923 and 1924, where he served as the CPGB's Comintern representative, was elected to the ECCI, and was a delegate at successive World Congresses (McIlroy & Campbell, 2005a, pp. 206–207, 211). He was active in attempts to establish a Communist Party in Ireland while in 1924 he was in the eye of the storm over 'the Zinoviev letter', which allegedly contained directives from the Comintern chief and MacManus to the CPGB concerning subversion of the armed forces (Bennett, 2018; O'Connor, 2004, pp. 56,

68–69, 71, 76–78, 84, 88–89). Frustration at his diminished standing was underlined when he resigned his party posts to protest a decision he would not open the annual Congress.

Reminded the rules prohibited such resignations on pain of expulsion, he climbed down (Thorpe, 2000, p. 70). Politically, he was loyal to the Soviet leadership and dedicated to the CPGB. In 1925–1926, he served six months in Wandsworth with his fellow leaders but played little significant part in the General Strike. His final assignment was the ‘Hands Off China’ campaign. Debilitated by illness, he died in February 1927 and his ashes were buried in the Kremlin wall (McIlroy & Campbell, 2020c).

His comrade from the SLP in Glasgow, Thomas Hargrave Bell (1882–1944), the son of a steelworks labourer and a home-working cotton spinner, served an apprenticeship as an iron moulder. A youthful member of the Independent Labour Party (ILP) and Social Democratic Federation (SDF), Bell joined the SLP at its inception in 1903, although he spent some three years between 1906 and 1909 outside the organization after a dispute over De Leon’s support for the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). Active in the IWGB and the Associated Ironmoulders of Scotland, he was elected to the executive of the latter and became its president – engagements in conflict with the party’s earlier interdict on members holding office in reformist unions. An autodidact and freethinker, he spent much of the war in England and participated in the NSS&WCM (Bell, 1941, pp. 1–100; Corr, 1984; Kendall, 1969, pp. 70, 338, n.35). He recalled: ‘We had one immediate aim, viz. to make it impossible for the Government to carry on the war. This political aim was associated with each and every grievance in the workshops’ (Bell, 1941, pp. 34–35). In reality, it was 1918 before the NSS&WCM moved to anything resembling this position (Kendall, 1969, pp. 130–131). With MacManus, he attended the Leeds Conference, acted as his agent at Halifax, and was instrumental in forming the CUG – quitting as editor of the *Socialist* to become its secretary.

Financed by Comintern funds, he worked full-time to build support for the CPGB before its launch (Bell, 1941, pp. 156–158, 174–195, 1937, p. 51).

Dour, dedicated and a scourge of John Barleycorn, Bell became the party's national organizer. Allegedly on a weekly wage of £7 10s, he appeared less moralistic about mammon. He spent much of 1921 and 1922 in Moscow as CPGB representative to the Comintern and a member of the ECCI and its Anglo-American Secretariat.⁹ Like MacManus, he experienced little difficulty in reinventing himself politically: he accepted the vanguard party, soviets, the dictatorship of the proletariat – even as it morphed into the Stalinist state – and ditched his long-standing views on Labour. He even abandoned his long-cherished conceptions of Independent Working Class Education (IWCE) which he now believed should no longer be independent but subject to party control with the emphasis on Comintern training rather than an ecumenical education in Marxism. The CPGB, he asserted, represented 'fundamental breaks with earlier socialist parties' (Bell, 1924, pp. 5–6). Through the 1920s, he headed the Colonial and Agit-Prop departments, edited the *Communist Review*, and served a second stint in Moscow. His subservience to the Russian regime was highlighted when he orchestrated the CPGB's denunciation of Trotsky: 'There is in our ranks still a large element of the democratic mind who do not like to come to decisions until they have got all the facts before them.' He was speaking to a resolution which affirmed the CPGB's 'implicit faith' in the Russian party and the Comintern (McIlroy, 2001, pp. 39, 41).

As Stalinism spread its wings, he was slow to return to the sectarianism of his youth. Criticised at the Tenth Plenum, stereotyped as yesterday's man, unable to shake off 'his old line mentality', he was behind the curve in disowning 'the hidebound traditions of an old leadership steeped in the opportunism of the Second Period' (McIlroy & Campbell, 2005a, p. 221). His exclusion from the EC in December 1929 marked the termination of his time at the top. He was, nonetheless, furnished with paid assignments with the Friends of the Soviet

Union and the Comintern in Ireland, China, France and Moscow; but his stab at history came to grief when his *British Communist Party* fell victim to changing fashions and a libel suit (McIlroy & Campbell, 2020c, p. 636). Nonetheless, he completed his memoir and remained active until his death (Morgan, 2018). In *Pioneering Days*, he invested his marriage to fellow SLP member Lizzie Aitken with the trappings of a proletarian fairy tale. It did not have a happy ending. In the late 1920s, he began a relationship with long-standing CPGB activist, Phyllis Neal, who was working for the Comintern in Moscow, although there is no evidence they ever married. Two of his three sons were Communists; the oldest, Oliver, an International Lenin School (ILS) student and ‘shock-worker’ in the Soviet Union (Bell, 1941, pp. 88–90; McIlroy & Campbell, 2020c, pp. 636–637).

Reinvention rather than continuity similarly characterised the post-1920 politics of Aitken Ferguson (1890–1975), a third former SLP activist from Glasgow who became part of the CPGB’s leadership nucleus, only to be phased out after 1929. A boilermaker from a family of craftworkers – his father was an iron moulder – he was raised in the respectable working-class neighbourhood of Kelvinside and conscripted into the army in 1916 in obscure circumstances, for he was a skilled operative in a war industry (for background, see Hinton, 1973, pp. 136–139). Resuming activity in the SLP after demob, by 1920 he was secretary of its Glasgow branch.¹⁰ He joined the CPGB in 1921 and was recalled by one contemporary as ‘probably the best-read man in the Communist Party in Scotland ... he had got a good Marxist background in the SLP’ (McShane & Smith, 1977, pp. 142, 226). Prominent in the Boilermakers’ union and Glasgow Trades Council and Labour Party, he stood unsuccessfully in successive parliamentary elections and was appointed a full-time CPGB organizer in 1924, a post he filled through the 1930s (Klugmann, 1969b, pp. 242–243, 357, 361, 369). Within the party bureaucracy, he was outstripped by the ILS graduates Peter Kerrigan, Bob McIlhone and Bob McLennan, as well as his fellow former Glasgow SLP member, Finlay

Hart; despite being ‘one of the most capable men in Scotland theoretically, he was no organizer’ (McShane & Smith, 1977, p. 226). Projecting an aggressive proletarianism and debunking CPGB attempts to engage with bourgeois culture under the *nom de guerre*, ‘Clydebank Riveter’, Ferguson was an early advocate of ‘Class Against Class’. He was seconded to the Comintern’s West European Bureau in Berlin to facilitate party fine-tuning of ‘the new line’ but failed to feature on the EC thereafter (Croft, 1990, pp. 36–37, 55, note 12, 59–60; Thorpe, 2000, p. 145). He was remembered for his endeavours to advance the Popular Front by building bridges with the Scottish Nationalists and Radical Liberals to muster support for a Scottish Parliament, an ambition which fizzled out with the advent of the war. He remained a CPGB member, taking an interest in party affairs until shortly before his death (McShane & Smith, 1977, p. 226).

There were similarities between the pre-Communist history of Bell and MacManus and the early career of J.T. Murphy (1888–1965). Like MacManus, he was religious, a Primitive Methodist preacher and Sunday School teacher. Like Bell, he was a teetotaler averse to ‘beer-swilling’. Unlike them, he demonstrated ambition to escape his class but his aspirations to become a civil servant were thwarted by the unemployment of his Catholic Irish father, a blacksmith’s striker. Murphy left school at 13, worked in Vickers Engineering where he qualified as a lathe turner, and emancipated himself from religion through imbibing Darwin, Huxley and Spencer. His political development was slow, although as an ASE shop steward, syndicalist and student of Marxism in IWCE classes, he became a leader of the Sheffield Workers’ Committee and assistant secretary of the NAC of the NSS&WCM. He was 29 when he joined the SLP. His pamphlet, *The Workers’ Committee*, suggested theoretical talent, although tellingly silent on the war and political action.¹¹ 1917 transformed him and he campaigned to remake the SLP in the Bolsheviks’ image. Less conciliatory towards the British Socialist Party (BSP) than Bell and MacManus, he maintained a leftist

stance, leant towards the SLP leaders and did not support the CUG. It was only when the Second World Congress of the Comintern delivered the *quietus* to syndicalist tendencies that he saw the Leninist light (Hinton, 1973, pp. 298–329; Kendall, 1969, pp 199, 207–209; Macfarlane, 1966, pp. 49–52, 60–63).

Returning from Moscow with funds to finance the British Bureau of the Red International of Labour Unions (BBRILU), Murphy remained on the party payroll for almost a dozen years. Aside from an attraction to theory, the SLP left little trace on his politics as he worked in the Industrial department, the Parliamentary department and Agit-Prop, as acting secretary and representative to the Comintern – as well as reporting for *Pravda* and editing *Communist Review*. Unlike some worker-intellectuals, he enthusiastically embraced the role of functionary (Darlington, 1998, pp. 91–132). It was Murphy who moved the CPGB resolution backing the Russian *troika* against the Left Opposition – a position he affirmed at the Fifth Comintern Congress – and composed the introduction to the Russian rulers’ compilation, *The Errors of Trotskyism*. He personified the subordination of CPGB leaders, assuring the November 1927 ECCI Presidium:

The English Party not only supports the exclusion of Trotsky and Zinoviev from the Executive of the International but pledges itself most emphatically behind the CP [SU] and the International in every measure which is thought desirable in order to help the party of the Soviet Union and the International to rid itself of their influence, and even of their personality’ (Darlington, 1998, p. 158; McIlroy, 2001, pp. 41–42).

His pliability became apparent during his eighteen months in Moscow in 1926–1927:

despatched to defend the CPGB’s record in the General Strike against Russian criticism, he capitulated to Stalin and regurgitated his critique of the CPGB leadership (Thorpe, 2000, pp. 97–102, 111).

He never opposed the Comintern, although his proposals for implementing its thinking could be idiosyncratic – witness his suggestion of a Workers’ Political Federation to rescue the CPGB from the National Left Wing Movement on the cusp of the Third Period

(Bell, 1937, pp. 130–131). Increasingly isolated in a leadership where some saw him as individualist, ambitious and self-seeking, he resigned his positions in 1928 in protest against insinuations that his motives in reporting for *Pravda* were mercenary. The rift was repaired, but mutual suspicion persisted (Thorpe, 2000, pp. 133–134). He was quick to champion the ultra-left turn but, unlike other pioneers, did not receive preference. By 1932, he was pondering answers to the debacle. His proposal that the MacDonald government provide credits to the Soviet Union to enable it to purchase British goods hardly justified the commotion it caused. Refusing to recant, he resigned and was expelled (Darlington, 1998, pp. 205–216).

Allegations he had been a police spy did the rounds; for others like Dutt, it was a case of *cherchez la femme*. He had married Ethel ‘Molly’ Morris, a nurse, sometime suffragette and an intermittently active CPGB member, in 1920. Their decision to send their son, Gordon, to a ‘progressive’, fee-paying school contradicted Communist values and created financial pressures which increased when Murphy lost his job with *Pravda*, but evidence that domestic matters prompted his resignation is scarce (Darlington, 1998, pp. 215–216; Hargreaves, 2019; Macleod, 1997, p. 236; Murphy, 1998). He joined the Labour Party, became secretary of the Socialist League, and was later active in the Popular Front Propaganda Committee. During the war, he worked in an aircraft factory. Murphy published several books, including a celebration of Stalin, before breaking with Marxism and finally politics entirely (Darlington, 1998, pp. 234–260).

He was fertile in ideas, taught himself philosophy and capitalist economics, worked at German and Russian, and read Macauley and Conrad in prison. He never developed his theoretical inclinations and must cede precedence in the pantheon of autodidacts and worker-intellectuals to fellow SLPer, Thomas Alfred Jackson (1879–1955). Born in London, the son of a Radical printer and apprenticed as a compositor, he read extensively in science,

secularism, philosophy and imaginative literature before encountering the SDF, which he joined in 1900. Caught up in the ‘impossibilist’ revolt against Hyndman, he was a founding member of the breakaway Socialist Party of Great Britain (SPGB) which he served as secretary before decamping in 1909 to take up paid work with the ILP. Unkempt and erudite, his colourful examples and forceful language made him one of Britain’s most popular socialist lecturers. He was prosecuted for sedition during the war but secured exemption from military service and was, on his own account, ‘conscripted’ into the SLP, whose ideas he shared. After 1917, he was reborn as a Leninist. A supporter of the CUG, his duties as an organizer of the North East Labour College precluded attendance at the CPGB’s Foundation Convention but he formally adhered to the party at the January 1921 Congress (Morton & Macintyre, 1979; Morton & Saville, 1977; Rée, 1984, pp. 10–14).

From 1921 to 1929, he worked at King Street as a journalist, educator and speaker. He assisted Francis Meynell and then Raymond Postgate in editing the *Communist* before switching to the *Workers’ Weekly* – which he briefly edited in 1926 – and the *Sunday Worker*. His restless, probing intellect, rich imagination, outspokenness, interest in boxing, folk music and rare books, prioritization of education and respect for theory, stood out on a predominantly ‘practical’ and frequently philistine EC dispensing a vulgar ‘Bolshevisation’. Jackson aspired instead to nurture a critical, educated, participative Communist rank and file, insisting that Marxist politics included culture and dialectics. He assailed Pollitt’s mechanical recitals of Zinoviev and ridiculed the idea that the members’ mandate was ‘to carry out all instructions at the double and stand to attention until the next order comes ... Is an ignorant membership necessary to the plan of organization adopted at [the] Battersea [Congress]?’ (Jackson, 1924). ‘The all-too-eager Leninists’, he subsequently observed, ‘tend to relegate theory further and further into the background’ (*Sunday Worker*, 1 September 1929).

When the Third Period arrived from Moscow, he exposed its psychology: ‘What on earth is the use of us mistaking our own subjective emotions for the revolutionary feelings of the proletariat’ (Branson, 1985, p. 23). He categorised ‘self-criticism’ as abasement before authority, deplored the corruption of English by ‘Inprecorrisation’ and reflected: ‘Nothing is more easy and nothing more contemptible than heresy-hunting’ (Jackson, 1929). Rebuked by the Comintern, he was removed from the EC and party payroll in December 1929 (Macfarlane, 1966, p. 311). The termination of his leadership career confirmed that evolving Comintern policy could be criticized; but the ECCI’s final verdict was law. If it is difficult to discern continuities of any significance between the pre- and post-1920 philosophy and politics of the former SLP contingent, Jackson may constitute a partial exception. Nonetheless, he eventually conformed to Stalinist doctrine: when in 1932 he contested Stalin’s excommunication of Luxembourg from the canon, the former antagonist of ‘self-criticism’ buckled under fire and published a recantation (McIlroy, 2006, pp. 215–217). Marginalized in the CPGB, he propagated Stalinist ideas in the National Council of Labour Colleges (NCLC). When his *Dialectics* appeared in 1936 after several rewrites to placate party leaders and appease Comintern authority, he attracted brief celebrity as a theorist – although the text was subsequently criticised for neglecting Soviet philosophers (Rée, 1984, pp. 124–128). Two children of his marriage to the suffragette and socialist, Katherine Hawkins, were politically active, Vivien in the CPGB and Stella in the SPGB. On her death in 1927, his marriage to the party activist Lydia Packman provided him with a base in Sussex where he concentrated on writing. Bereaved in 1943, he returned to addressing CPGB meetings and lecturing for the NCLC, retiring shortly before his death (Rée, 1984, pp. 129–130).

Substantially less is known about Beth Turner, a member of the ‘core’ leadership who disappeared from the party as well as its elite after 1929. A Yorkshire textile worker, she has

been identified with the ‘Mrs Turner’ who represented Rotherham CUG at the 1920 Unity Convention. This seems plausible but it has not been possible to establish if she was a member of the SLP (<https://grahamstevenson.me.uk/2017/10/03/turner-beth/>). In the aftermath of the CPGB’s first National Conference of Communist Women in 1924, the party created a Women’s Department at King Street and she was appointed National Women’s Organizer (Klugmann, 1969a, p. 338). The initiative promised progress: hitherto, ‘women’s work’ had been neglected while throughout the party women were largely treated as the supporting cast so that only a handful played even a secondary role in the leadership. The accent in 1924 was on reaching working women and organizing activists and periphery in women’s sections. The aim was to stimulate resistance in the factories while urging housewives as well as working women to support industrial struggle and solidarize with male workers in disputes. Despite advances, ‘women’s work’ and the improvement of women’s position in the CPGB remained far from central to the party’s concerns during Turner’s time in office (Bruley, 1986, pp. 104–107, 146–148, 179–180; *Workers’ Weekly*, 12 September 1924). The difficulties were apparent from her own case: on a contemporary’s account, her husband objected to her political activity and her subsequent extra-marital liaison produced a child and prompted criticism in some Communist circles. As ‘Class Against Class’ gathered momentum, she voted with the ‘right wing’ on the EC and failed to unconditionally endorse Comintern criticism of the British leadership. With other ‘right-wingers’ she was removed from the EC list in the run-up to the December 1929 Congress. Provided with employment in a party bookshop, she left in a dispute over funds and disappeared from the record.¹²

The ‘core’ leadership of the CPGB, 1923–1928: former BSP and ILP casualties

Among former BSP pilots who did not weather the Third Period storm, Albert Inkpin (1884–1944) was the most experienced. He was born in Haggerston in working-class London, the

son of a cabinet-maker. His early life had something in common with other Communist leaders – a father who was an erratic provider, a mother ambitious for her children who intended him for theological college and ensured he went into clerical work. He joined the SDF at 20, became its assistant secretary three years later and was promoted to secretary in 1913. Exempted from military service on the grounds he was indispensable to a political organization – a verdict contested by the authorities who sought to enlist him as an informer – he participated in the ‘internationalist opposition’ to Hyndman in the BSP, embraced 1917, and played an important part in the unity negotiations. As CPGB secretary he worked with MacManus in soliciting Soviet subsidies which he considered a *sine qua non* for a viable party. Finance remained at the centre of his concerns through the 1920s. Despite being considered in some quarters little more than ‘an office worker’, ‘non- political’, and over-indulgent to Labour, he was an efficient administrator who argued his political corner. He enjoyed a comfortable life, drove a car and planned to set up his son in a garage business; but there is no reason to doubt his commitment: he served six months hard labour in 1922 and 12 months with his fellow leaders in 1925.¹³

One of them remembered him as ‘a serious, efficient and competent comrade ... an indefatigable worker, bringing understanding and a sympathetic approach to people’ (Bell, 1941, pp. 192–193). However, his reliability came into question in 1928 when revelations that Russian subsidies were being laundered by Communist employees of the Moscow Narodny Bank surfaced. He admitted negligent oversight and a Comintern Inquiry concluded he should cease to supervise such sensitive operations and function as an office manager rather than a political secretary.¹⁴ He entered the Third Period in an exposed position and found the sectarianism towards Labour difficult to stomach. He was sent to work in the Birmingham office before being removed from the EC and party payroll. His salary since 1920 had amounted to around £260 a year and he had no alternative means of making a

living; some speculated about the money he could make selling his story.¹⁵ The Comintern relented and he was exiled to Berlin then Amsterdam, as secretary of the International Bureau of the Friends of the Soviet Union (FSU). His intercepted correspondence provides insight into the subsequent stress and family tensions 1929 visited on its victims. It was 1938 before he was permitted to return to Britain as secretary of the *Russia Today* Society where he served Soviet interests until illness saw him put out to pasture shortly before his death.¹⁶

In exile, he struggled to master German, read popular poetry, particularly John Masefield, and followed cricket, supporting Middlesex but admiring Bradman.¹⁷ In 1910 he had married Julia Raven, the daughter of Russian parents, who was active in his party branch. The Inkpins were a Communist family: his brother Harry, a member of the 1922 Reorganization Committee who later chaired the Control Commission, and his wife Maude, were, like Julia, founder members. Albert's son, Arthur, was a Young Communist League (YCL) member who worked for a time at Russian Oil Products and for whom he sought work and training in the USSR, while his daughters Jean and Kathleen worked briefly for the FSU. Julia was employed by the Soviet-owned Black Sea and Baltic Steamship Company and formed a friendship network with the wives of other casualties of the new line, Katie Cant, Ethel Horner, May Wilson and Polly Hannington. Julia remained in the party until her death in 1957.¹⁸

Removed from the leadership at the same time for forceful defence of the united front, now considered 'Class Collaboration', Andrew Rothstein (1898–1994), was only briefly a BSP member; as the son of Theodore Rothstein, he was born into an organization central to his family's life. His mother, Anna Kahan and her sister Zelda, who married the BSP/CPGB activist W.P. Coates, were the children of Jewish immigrants and supporters of the BSP's 'internationalist' wing. Andrew joined the BSP in 1917 around the time he went up to Balliol College, Oxford as a Brackenbury scholar before being conscripted and serving as a lance

corporal in the Royal Engineers.¹⁹ After taking his degree in 1920, he acted as his father's assistant and, after Theodore's deportation, his replacement, liaising between the CPGB and the Russians. He worked for the Soviet Trade Delegation, the Russian Telegraph Agency (ROSTA), and the press agency TASS, as well as supervising employees of the Russian companies. 'A Communist of the purest water',²⁰ he was distinguished from fellow leaders by dual citizenship, fluency in Russian, a father who worked in the Soviet Commissariat of Foreign Affairs, and the fact that, in recognition of his functions on behalf of the Soviet state, he operated under the pseudonym 'C.M. Roebuck'. He was outspoken, short-tempered and critical, particularly of Dutt with whom he competed as interpreter of the line. Politically, he was a child of the CPGB not the BSP – although as with Inkpin it is tempting to relate his orientation to Labour to that organization – and his connections and abilities facilitated advancement within it. Anti-intellectualism, suspicion of nepotism and his abrasiveness ensured he was far from popular. Over-confidence and lack of support in the party paved the path to his downfall.²¹

At the Sixth World Congress, his criticisms of the Comintern over the Colonial Question attracted unfriendly attention and when his antipathy to designation of Labour as the 'Third Capitalist Party' brought him into the line of fire, the Russians declined to help. Acknowledging 'mistakes' but insisting he was being singled out, he was removed from the EC and, after a stint as South Wales organizer, exiled to Moscow (Burke, 2018; Thorpe, 2000, pp. 122, 137, 142, 146–149). It was 1931 before the CPGB assented to his return and reunion with his wife, Edith Lunn, daughter of a prosperous Russian family, employed at the All-Russian Cooperative Society (Arcos), and his children Andrew and Natalie.²² His exclusion from the leadership was permanent; suitably distanced from King Street, his service to the Stalinist state continued. He worked for TASS, recruited Melita Norwood as a Soviet spy, and operated on the fringes of the Springhall affair (Burke, 2008, pp. 67–69).

During the wartime honeymoon with Russia, he secured appointment as a lecturer at the University of London School of Slavonic Studies; as times changed his contract was not renewed. He was recalled in these years as a ‘rather boring, round-faced petit-bourgeois figure who defended whatever needed defending in the Soviet Union’ (Hobsbawm, 2002, p. 140). Working for the Society for Cultural Relations with the Soviet Union and the Marx Memorial Library, he sat on CPGB committees, contributed to its press, adulated Stalin and justified the Russian invasion of Hungary in 1956 – while refusing to recognise, let alone oppose, the anti-Semitic campaign against his fellow Jews in the Soviet Union. As the CPGB polarized and imploded, he remained an antagonist of Eurocommunism and became Member No.1 of the successor Communist Party of Britain (Burke, 2018; Hobsbawm, 2000, p. 140).

Ernest Brown (1892–1960) was, like Rothstein, a long-term Communist; unlike the younger man he had opposed the war, not fought in it. The son of a plasterer and a textile operative, he first saw the light of day in Bingley, Yorkshire, worked as a boot repairer and at an early age enrolled in the ILP. He was imprisoned for resisting conscription, elected national secretary of the body representing conscientious objectors interned in government camps, and led a prisoners’ strike at Dartmoor. He entered the CPGB as national secretary of the ILP Left Wing and spent the ensuing decade as an organizer in Scotland and Yorkshire and in the Organization Department in London.²³ In 1924–1925, he represented the CPGB in Moscow, in a consultative capacity, deemed insufficiently senior to be elevated to the ECCI (McIlroy & Campbell, 2005a, pp. 209, 215). By 1928 he had emerged as a second-level member of the leadership team, drafted on to the Political Bureau (PB) in the run-up to the General Strike. He formed a political partnership with Isabel Porter, a Tyneside schoolteacher he married in 1921. Educated at Sunderland Teacher Training College and later the ILS, she subsequently occupied important positions in the party and conducted a lengthy affair with J.R. Campbell while allegedly criticising the indiscretions of other female comrades. She

quickly exceeded Ernest in oratorical passion and popular appeal (Hill, 1982; McLeod, 1997, p. 242). As the CPGB responded to increased hostility in the labour movement and Stalin prepared 'the second revolution', Brown expressed reservations about mass radicalization and asserted the need to maintain the united front tactic. Labour remained as Lenin had put it, a 'bourgeois workers' party' (Thorpe, 2000, pp. 122, 128, 147).

Branded a 'right-winger', he was dropped from the EC slate for the December 1929 Leeds congress and transferred from the key territory of Scotland to Bradford (Thorpe, 2000, pp. 147, 157). The woollen strike which began there in Spring 1930 was projected as a test for 'the new line' and Communist leadership independent of the union bureaucracy.

Grassroots insurgency and 'fascisation' of the apparatus demanded a focus on rank-and-file strike committees, not the union machinery. Brown carried the can for the debacle. Pollitt, who shared in the failure, denounced him as 'an unscrupulous opportunist of the worst type'²⁴ and he was relieved of responsibility for implementing tactics whose efficacy he had doubted. Isabel's career now overshadowed his own. He was subsequently employed by the FSU, worked for the Committee for the Relief of Victims of Fascism, and in the post war years for a branch of Xinhua, the New China News Agency headed by Samuel Chinque (Chen Tian Sheng) a trusted servant of the new Peking regime in Britain.²⁵ He died of a heart attack on holiday in Morecambe after four decades as a Communist, survived by Isabel and their son Kenneth.

Helen Crawford (1877–1954) entered the CPGB in 1921 with Brown and the ILP Left. She was the oldest of the two women in the 1920s 'core' leadership and possessed an unsurpassed record of struggle. A suffragette thrice imprisoned, she graduated from temperance campaigning and pacifism to Christian Socialism. She was gaoled as an opponent of the war and was a leading light in the Glasgow rent agitation. Disillusioned with parliamentarianism and a supporter of 'direct action', she travelled to Moscow in 1920 to

attend the Second Congress of the Comintern – arriving too late to participate but retaining a favourable impression of Soviet progress. The following year she was engaged in the CPGB’s initial attempts to appeal to women workers and subsequently became secretary of the Workers’ International Relief. She had to overcome the handicap of being a middle-class, middle-aged woman in a male-dominated, workerist party. A native of Glasgow, her father was a prosperous, religious-minded businessman. A devout Sunday School teacher, at 21 she married Alexander Crawford, her Church of Scotland minister and a widower half a century her senior. His death in 1914 provided her with the time and resources to devote to socialism (Corr, 2010; Sherry, 2020).²⁶

Like Turner, she was briefly a PB member, and welcomed the Third Period, worried that, instead of asserting itself as an independent revolutionary party, the CPGB was becoming an appendage of Labour (Branson, 1985, pp. 22, 32, 38; Thorpe, 2000, pp. 122, 131). By no means consistently ultra-left, she loyally accepted the necessity of making way ‘for younger elements from the factories’.²⁷ Termination of her tenure may have had something to do with her background and age at a point when four younger working women were drafted onto the Executive (Branson, 1985, p. 340). She continued to be active during the 1930s. She worked for the FSU and was a partisan of the Popular Front reorientation towards Liberals and Nationalists, advocating a Scottish Convention and federal republic of Britain (McShane & Smith, 1977, pp. 225–226). In 1944, she married the master blacksmith and CPGB sympathiser, George Anderson; he predeceased her. She was memorialized as ‘plucky, disinterested, devoted and zealous for the cause of the working class’, a woman who combined ‘rare intelligence with a rich sense of humour’ (Bell, 1941, p. 258). Perhaps a residue of the ILP remained: others who knew her recalled her as ‘a very courageous and honest woman ... although she was more of a pacifist than a revolutionary’ (McShane & Smith, 1977, p. 33).

The ‘core’ leadership of the CPGB, 1923–1928: survivors

Trends in participation on the EC complicate categorization. Several of those culled as dissidents in 1929, for example, were victims *and* survivors in that they re-emerged to play a role in the party leadership in succeeding decades. Bob Stewart (1877–1971), who returned to the committee in 1935, provides an intriguing example. His second disappearance from the EC in the later 1930s appears related to the convention that leaders engaged in secret operations should not serve openly on party bodies, for he remained part of the Communist elite. The oldest male in the leading nucleus during 1923–1928 and another antagonist of the demon drink, he joined the CPGB from the Socialist Prohibition Party (SPP) by way of the CUG. With Bell, MacManus and Paul, he attended the breakaway’s inaugural conference and remained close to them. He came from a family of farm labourers who migrated to Dundee where the father became a carter and the children laboured in the jute mills. Stewart worked half-time from the age of ten, later completing an apprenticeship as a carpenter and joiner. He worked in South Africa before becoming an organizer for the Scottish Prohibition Party, animating a split which became the SPP.

A street corner propagandist, he acquired union experience and in 1915 was appointed to a full-time post with the Scottish Horse and Motormen’s Association. During the war he was a conscientious objector and served time in Dundee Gaol and Wormwood Scrubs.²⁸ After the formation of the CPGB, he was employed at King Street and as Scottish Organizer endured three months hard labour for sedition and became the party’s first parliamentary candidate at Caerphilly in 1921. In 1923–1924 he represented the CPGB at the Comintern and contested Dundee in the 1924 general election; the following year he acted as secretary during Inkpin’s imprisonment. In addition, he expended considerable effort in supervising the

stuttering fortunes of Irish Communism (McIlroy & Campbell, 2005a, pp. 213–214; O’Connor, 2004, pp. 145–147, 151–152, 154, 164–165, 187).

A disfigured nose lent his face ‘a fearsome aspect’ but he was ‘the mildest of men’, among ‘the most level-headed of the founding fathers’ and a dispenser of ‘sagacious realism’ amidst the vertiginous rhetoric of other leaders.²⁹ His response to ‘Class Against Class’ was mixed. Initially inclined towards the majority who sought to maintain the substance of the united front and orientation to Labour, he advocated a vote for Labour candidates where Communists were not standing unless Labour’s representative was ‘an open reactionary’. He shifted to proposing abstention but was associated with ‘the right danger’ and incurred the enmity of hardliners when, with Inkipin and Rothstein, he condemned YCL calls for a new leadership (Thorpe, 2000, pp. 121–122, 143). He accepted removal from the December 1929 EC slate with equanimity, defending Bell and Campbell while endorsing the need for new blood: ‘Everybody admits that changes are necessary ... I don’t know that I have been politically opportunist although I have been at times politically passive.’³⁰ He was not restored to the 1932 committee. However, he had made friends during his time in Moscow where his daughter, Annie, learned the language and married a Russian, and he bounced back (Beckett, 1995, p. 74).

In 1930, the Security Services recorded all funds from the USSR were ‘said to pass through Stewart’s hands’, and during the following three years he not only visited Ireland but Brussels, Copenhagen, Paris and Zurich. The watchers believed he had gone underground and by the mid-1930s was the link between the CPGB and the London operations of Soviet Intelligence, liaising with the Russian Embassy.³¹ He was back on the EC in 1935 and although he did not figure on the 1937 committee – the security files suggest he was an *ex officio* member – he continued to be part of the leadership, attended EC meetings and voted on key issues.³² He became chair of the Control Commission which planned for underground

work in the event of war and the Cadres Committee which monitored party security and vetted members' reliability. Thorpe concluded he 'ran the party's more clandestine operations' and was 'in charge of "international liaison" which meant linking up with the Soviet Trade Mission and probably being involved with, or at least broadly aware of, the darker world of Soviet espionage in Britain' (Thorpe, 2000, pp. 241–242). In 1939, the Russians instructed him to 'create a new conspiratorial apparatus', working with Springhall, who was subsequently convicted of spying for the Soviet Union (Johnstone, 1997, p. 31). British intelligence accepted Anthony Blunt's statement that Stewart was involved in running 'the Cambridge Three' during the Russian *rezidents*' absence (West, 2014, pp. 131, 182; Wright, 1987, p. 228).

His room at King Street was bugged. The listeners' transcripts of his often-cryptic conversations lend credence to the view that he was experienced in espionage and his absence from open work was designed to distinguish the two aspects of Communist activity:

Apropos of the Springhall case, Stewart said that if a comrade was involved in the kind of work which might bring the party into trouble he had to be in a position where the Party could disown him – 'I have been on the retired list for B. years ostensibly ... If you've got to do this kind of work you've simply got to disappear ... Go off the bloody map so far as possible ...'. During a conversation about a spy ring with which Springy [Dave Springhall] had had some connection, Stewart said, 'I know more about this job than most people. For years I saw every man that came on the job.' He then spoke of some man who had worked in the Soviet embassy in Berlin, 'the things I've done for that b. ... I might have been caught quite easy because I carried the stuff ... B. lucky we were.'³³

There was no objection to members spying for Russia, he believed, but espionage must be kept separate from legal activity: 'Stewart said: "I'd give the Soviet Union all the B. information that could be stolen from anywhere" but one had to do it in the correct way.'³⁴ He seems to have succeeded in this. Approached by MI5, he refused to cooperate: in the absence of evidence admissible in the courts, no further action was taken. He was one of the 'disciplined soldiers and had spent too long in the game to be broken' (Wright, 1987, p. 249). He married Margaret Lang, a Glasgow-born jute worker, in 1922. Their children William,

employed at the Soviet Embassy, Robert, a victimised printworker who worked for a Soviet company, and Annie, an employee of Arcos who returned from Moscow when her Russian husband was arrested during the purges and later married a party activist, were CPGB members.³⁵ Stewart remained on the payroll into the 1950s, retiring to write unrevealing memoirs published on his ninetieth birthday (Callaghan, 2003, p. 130).

The career of Wal Hannington (1896–1966) on the executive was even more complicated. He successfully resisted exclusion from the December 1929 EC; was dislodged in 1933; restored in 1935; replaced, again for political reasons, in 1937; and reinstated in 1943 before finally departing in 1947. Hannington epitomized that tiny minority of the skilled, metropolitan working class which invested in Communism. The son of a foreman bricklayer, he qualified as a toolmaker, joined the Kentish Town BSP, participated in the NSS&WCM and was a lifelong stalwart of the Amalgamated Engineering Union (AEU). Victimization brought him into the unemployed movement. In 1922, he emerged as a leader of the National Unemployed Workers' Committee Movement (NUWCM), at that juncture the CPGB's most successful enterprise. During the mid-1920s, he was prominent in the MM as secretary of its Metal section. He was imprisoned with the other eleven party leaders in 1925 and in 1928 returned to the NUWCM. Imaginative application of techniques acquired in the unions and a patient if pugnacious, temperament made him its outstanding organizer, instrumental in doubling its membership (Branson, 1985, pp. 339–341; Macfarlane, 1966, pp. 124–129; Morgan, 2000; Stevenson, 2004).

He encountered difficulties with 'Class Against Class', despite its emphasis on the revolutionary potential of the jobless and questioned radical revision of the Communist attitude to Labour, while accepting the affiliation campaign should be shelved. In consequence, he was labelled a 'right-wing opportunist' and excluded from the EC slate for the December 1929 Congress. He secured re-election without official backing: 'He was not',

he declared, ‘going to stand on the penitents’ form because it was fashionable although he would defy being called a Right Winger. Some of those who accused him of not being “political” had better themselves learn how to work among the masses’ (Branson, 1985, pp. 23, 32, 38, 50; Campbell & McIlroy, 2008, p. 68, for quote; Thorpe, 2000, p. 130–132, 148, 176–177). Rather than indulging in abstract rhetoric like his critics, he was, he insisted, attempting to apply the line in struggle. Other leaders were convinced he was capitulating to reformism: instead of utilising the NUWCM to mobilize the unemployed on the basis of revolutionary politics, he was bent on building a reformist union enrolling fee-paying members and representing them at benefit tribunals. Pollitt’s attempts to bring the NUWCM closer to RILU, integrate it with the MM and establish broader-based unemployed councils, encountered a mixture of compliance and resistance on Hannington’s part.

Yet, he never challenged the ‘new line’, ascendant Stalinism or the Stalinization of the British party on any political level; he sought only to sidestep their symptoms. His problems compounded by sympathy for the persecuted Arthur Horner, he was isolated on the EC and then removed from it. The leadership neither attempted to dislodge him from the NUWCM nor countenanced what they considered evasion and prevarication. They combined criticism with attempts to outflank him by introducing and ‘building up’ orthodox cadres in the NUWCM, simultaneously soft-peddalling Hannington’s own ‘popularization’. They wanted to avoid loss of a potentially valuable asset with an appeal beyond the party (Branson, 1985, pp. 78–80; Campbell & McIlroy, 2008, pp. 69–76). Events came to his rescue. The united front turn ignited the rightward dynamic which produced popular front politics. Hannington was ‘re-popularized’ as leader of a campaign for an unemployed organization sponsored by the recently social-fascist TUC. With the advent of war, the NUWCM was suspended and never revived. Its reputation lived on in the pages of Hannington’s *Unemployed Struggles* (Campbell & McIlroy, 2008, pp. 77–82; Hannington,

1936). He returned to engineering and in 1942 was elected an AEU national organizer, a post he filled for almost a decade. By the 1950s he could not contain his resentment as party leaders backed younger Communists for union office.³⁶ He was, first and foremost, a trade unionist, although fragments of an unfinished novel, *The Brothers*, throw new light on a personality often presented in prosaic terms. He died from a heart attack in Hammersmith, London, in 1966, survived by Polly, daughter of a Kentish Town railway coal porter, who was his partner for 49 years.³⁷

It is doubtful whether Robert 'Robin' Page Arnot (1890–1986), shared 'Fat Wal's' appreciation of beer and boxing. He was, however, a keen student of trade unionism and a stern critic of heretics who despaired of 'the tendency of the NUWM to become a kind of specialised trade union' (Branson, 1985, p. 78) and lamented: '[Hannington] still has this dangerous opportunistic tendency making it a real danger to the Party that he is a leading figure in the NUWM.'³⁸ Born again as a Communist in 1920, the former Guild Socialist was re-baptised in 1928 when he sponsored the Dutt-Pollitt thesis which blazed the trail for the Third Period. He took issue with the 'opportunism' of the Spanish and German leaders Serra and Thaelmann, as well as criticising Bell, Horner and Rothstein, at the Ninth Plenum and Sixth World Congress, and was equally vocal in successive onslaughts against dissenters.³⁹ The alacrity with which he embraced Stalin's characterisation of the union leaders as 'social fascists' seems incongruous in one who had spent his adult life cultivating them. His early career in the CPGB suggests the elasticity of the role of party intellectuals; while he was a leading member of Dutt's circle and a mainstay of *Labour Monthly*, he was also the party's expert on trade unionism.

From 1915 he had conducted research into industrial relations, established contact with the NSS&WCM, covered labour issues for the ILP's *New Leader*, and taught classes for union activists. He prioritized detaching the Research Department from the Fabian Society

and the Labour Party, a project accomplished in 1924. During the 1919 strike he handled press and publicity for the National Union of Railwaymen. He was propaganda secretary for the union-backed Council of Action in 1920 and from 1924 worked for the Miners' Federation of Great Britain (MFGB), advised the Anglo-Russian Trade Union Committee and edited its journal, *Trade Union Unity*. In June 1926 he was 'officially charged by the Miners' Federation with conduct of strike propaganda'.⁴⁰ Arnot thus possessed a privileged entry into the world of union bureaucrats and opportunities to influence them. After his release from prison with the other CPGB leaders in 1926, his calling card, 'Director of the Labour Research Department' (LRD), eased his path to leading Communist agitation in the North-East and a commission to write the MFGB's response to the official TUC report on the General Strike. The other side of Arnot was on display in Moscow the same year when he composed with Murphy a Comintern-inspired critique of the failure of his fellow EC representatives to adequately criticise left-wing union leaders during the General Strike and mining dispute (Klugmann, 1969b, pp. 68–69, 161–162; Thorpe, 2000, pp. 100–101). Perhaps by 1928 he was disillusioned with the labour bureaucracy and revitalised by vistas of impending revolution.

Resigning as secretary of the LRD, he was employed by the Comintern in Moscow. He put his exclusion from the EC list in January 1929 – a move he returned to thwart – down to the machinations of 'Right Opportunists'. After a spell as Comintern representative in the USA helping suppress the schisms of Cannon and Lovestone, he participated in the 1929 Leeds CPGB Congress, 'at which', he recalled with satisfaction, 'Right wing opportunist majority routed'.⁴¹ He sat on the first editorial board of the *Daily Worker* but came under fire for neglecting work assigned to him and in November 1930 returned to Moscow as the party's representative to the Comintern. For nine months in 1932 he acted as CPGB organizer in Lancashire where he was not a great success at practising what he preached and the

following year he was commissioned to launch the Marx Memorial Library and Workers' School. In 1935 he succumbed to iridocyclitis and was granted leave of absence.⁴² During a second stint as Comintern representative between 1936 and 1938, he witnessed the terror, purges and show trials at first hand, advising the CPGB how to spin the carnage to British labour. But he encountered problems. André Marty, the official with responsibility for the British party, complained to Dimitrov that Arnot was a slacker who simulated illness to avoid hard work. His past relations with the former Comintern representative in London, the now purged Bennett-Petrovsky, attracted the attention of the NKVD (Chase, 2001, p. 236; McIlroy & Campbell, 2005a, pp. 222–228; Thorpe, 2000, p. 242). Back in Britain, whether through poor health, a less than spectacular recent record, desire for a quieter life, or a mix of these factors, he was not re-elected to the 1938 EC. He never re-appeared in the leadership but concentrated on writing for the party press and researching his histories of the British miners.

He was born in Greenock, grandson of a Chartist, and the child of socially mobile agricultural workers: his father, a Presbyterian Scottish nationalist, became editor of the local newspaper. Arnot became a socialist at 18 after hearing John Maclean speak at Glasgow University from which he graduated in 1913. He joined the Fabian Society and was a founder of the University Socialist Federation. In 1914, he became secretary of the Fabian Research Department – from 1917 the LRD – and spent the last years of the war in Wakefield Prison and Wormwood Scrubs as a conscientious objector. He was a founder of the National Guilds League and chair of the faction which entered the CPGB.⁴³ With his first wife, Leila Ogier Ward, a doctor's daughter, he had a daughter, Barbara. They separated in 1916. In 1932 he married CPGB founder member, Olive Budden, a London University graduate he met at the LRD. She attended the ILS, 1926–1928, and worked for *Inprecorr* and the Marx-Engels Institute. He remained a respected member of the CPGB and in his eighties attended meetings

of the Society for the Study of Labour History as its president, bringing the house down when he commenced one contribution: ‘The last time I spoke to Robert Applegarth ...’.⁴⁴

Arnot was as assiduous in pursuit of miners’ leader, Arthur Horner (1894–1968), as he was in harrying Hannington and Rothstein. As its representative to the Comintern, he advised the party leadership on the crusade against ‘Hornerism’ and participated in the inquisition of the heretic in Moscow during 1931 (McIlroy & Campbell, 2005a, p. 224). Horner’s fluctuating fortunes underline the limitations of designating the leading ‘core’ simply in numerical terms and characterising EC representatives in terms of their appearances on the committee. For in contrast to Arnot, a survivor in 1929, a casualty in the later 1930s, Horner was a victim of the Third Period who became a decreasingly influential fixture on the committee from the mid-1930s to the early 1950s. Ever-present from 1923 to 1928, he was removed in December 1929, but reinstated in 1935; he served continuously until replaced in 1952 because of his by-then entrenched distance from the party (Branson, 1985, pp. 339–342, 1997, pp. 253–254; Callaghan, 2003, p. 11). He was a popular component of the 1920s ‘core’, but ‘Class Against Class’ constituted a watershed.

He first saw the light of day in Merthyr Tydfil – his English father was a railway porters’ foreman – and turned 22 before he entered the mining industry as a surface worker having earlier worked as a grocery assistant and salesman. He supported the Temperance movement and trained as a pastor in the non-conformist sect, the Churches of Christ, adhering to the ILP and Christian Socialism but embraced syndicalism under the influence of *The Miners’ Next Step* and Noah Ablett. Opposed to the war, he enrolled in the Irish Citizen Army, returning to face a court martial. On his release from prison, he became a checkweighman at Mardy colliery, although his experience of working underground was negligible (Fishman, 2010a, pp. 31–76; Francis, 2004; Horner, 1960). He joined the CPGB in 1921 and a growing reputation ensured his appointment to the EC in 1923 and an influential

role in the Miners' Minority Movement (MMM). Elected to the South Wales Miners' Federation (SWMF) executive in 1925 and the MFGB executive the following year, he was the CPGB's standard bearer throughout the General Strike and mining lockout. He headed the party fraction and personified Communists' uncompromising defiance of the coal owners and critical attitude towards the MFGB leaders.⁴⁵

As hostility to the CPGB deepened, he failed to secure re-election to either the SWMF or MFGB executive and devoted his energies to RILU and the MM. In December 1929, he was removed from the EC and MM and subsequently summoned to Moscow to work for RILU and reconsider his antipathy to the 'new line'. It seemed to work. In September 1930, his abjuration of sin was published in the *Daily Worker* and he returned to Britain to lead the MMM. Reconciliation proved temporary. Insistence on operating through SWMF structures and observing 'trade union legalism' as against establishing strike committees and exercising 'independent leadership' in the abortive January 1931 stoppage in the South Wales coalfield provoked further outrage. His repeated refusal to recant stimulated a national campaign for submission in the Communist press and preparations for his expulsion (McIlroy & Campbell, 2001, pp. 105–118). Instead, the Comintern decided to deal directly with an experienced and popular activist, and he returned to Moscow where the ECCI examined his case and damned his deviance, concluding that his 'line of trade union legalism and the surrender of the independent organisation of the masses unconditionally to the bureaucracy has nothing in common with the line of the Comintern'.⁴⁶ His acceptance of the verdict and public self-criticism paved the way for return to activity. He was too useful to lose.

But the experience changed him: he increasingly placed trade unionism before politics and brushed aside pressure to follow party policy. The Popular Front phase lent his stance some legitimacy; but he continued his independent course through the 1940s and 1950s. As he ascended the ladder from miners' agent to SWMF president (1936) and general secretary

of the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) (1946), he maintained his distance from King Street and when convenient disregarded CPGB policy, asserting he was better placed to decide issues than people like Pollitt. In 1940 he joined the government's invasion committee without consulting the party. His achievements included rebuilding the SWMF, and taking a significant role in the nationalisation of the mines and creation of the NUM. In the post-war decade he continued to campaign for increased production, advocated wage restraint, condemned unofficial strikes, and did little to democratize the National Coal Board (NCB). He was depicted as a prisoner of the NUM executive, but his stance was congruent with the approach he had developed since 1932. Little distinguished Horner from his Labour colleagues apart from expertise in industrial relations, negotiating skill, opposition to foreign labour, particularly Polish refugees in British mines, and uncritical support for the USSR. He objected when the NCB exported coal from Wales which undermined Communist-supported strikes in Western Europe, remaining silent when the Soviet bloc did the same thing.⁴⁷

The only public rifts in the NUM leadership centred on his support for striking French Communist miners in 1948 for which he was formally reprimanded, and his defence of the Russian invasion of Hungary in 1956. He was hardly a syndicalist as is sometimes claimed, nor was his practice marked by his earlier beliefs. He championed ownership of industry by the capitalist state, not the overturn of capitalism and the reorganisation and management of industry by revolutionary unions that the syndicalists preached. For militants, he had become part of the bureaucracy, stifling rank-and-file initiative while urging, 'Men, be loyal to your leaders', a sentiment *The Miners' Next Step* had deplored. His politics changed in 1920 and changed again in the early 1930s. By the 1950s, his party membership reflected desire to identify with a political past long left behind. For the CPGB, a continued, if strained, connection provided information and prestige. His heresy had been limited: he resisted 'independent leadership' but never confronted Stalinism and his trade unionism was always

complemented by defence of the CPGB's defining Soviet shibboleth. Even after Khrushchev's devastating revelations he maintained: 'history will pay tribute to the many great achievements of Stalin ... and will record that the triumphs of Socialism, which he saw carried through, is the hope for the people all over the world' (Horner, 1960, p. 218). His later years were clouded by alcohol, and when he retired as NUM general secretary in 1959, he refused overtures to return to the party EC (McIlroy, 2013, pp. 615–623; Fishman, 2010b, pp. 945–946). In 1916 he married Ethel Merrick, daughter of an English-born miner from Merthyr Vale, who became a loyal Communist. Their children, named for Rosa Luxemburg, Voltairine de Cleyre and Joan of Arc, were sporadically active in the party – and Voltairine married a member.

In his ghost-written autobiography, Horner recollected that when he proposed to Ethel, he told her 'the Movement' would always take priority over their marriage (Horner, 1960, p. 179). Subsequent events suggest that 'the Movement' meant trade unionism not a revolutionary party. Others, reproached by Horner for lack of experience of 'real working class life',⁴⁸ made a different choice. For William Rust (1903–1949), serving 'the Movement' demanded first and foremost the construction of a revolutionary party, a predilection perhaps related to the fact he had joined the CPGB at 17. He was, moreover, well acquainted with proletarian life, coming from what he fairly termed 'an ordinary working class family' – his father was a journeyman bookbinder. He worked part-time from an early age, leaving school in 1917 for a clerical post. He was a Labour Party member – expelled after six years membership for Communist activity – and briefly a Boy Scout. His arrival as a CPGB activist was announced in 1921 when he was dismissed by the Hulton Press for revealing that it paid J. T. Brownlie, President of the AEU, for industrial information. He participated in the NUWCM and YCL and his rise in the party was swift: he was co-opted to the EC in 1923 and elected to it in 1925, a year in which he attended the Comintern's Fifth World Congress in

Moscow and served a prison sentence with the other party leaders. He was substantially formed within the CPGB, indeed in its higher and international echelons, and he remained on its payroll for a quarter of a century.⁴⁹

Like many young Communists he fell under Dutt's spell. Nonetheless, as the line began to change in 1928, he favoured the 'right-wing' leadership, moving left after attending the Ninth Plenum and the Sixth World Congress, and emerging as an attack dog for Stalinization who excelled in exposing heretics. Backed by the Comintern, he fended off attempts to exclude him from the EC's slate for the January 1929 Congress and spearheaded the purge (Flinn, 2001, pp. 85–88). As a member of the secretariat and editor of the *Daily Worker*, he collaborated closely with Pollitt and Gallacher, and was a key actor in the leadership between 1930 and 1932. Advised by Dutt and in partnership with Campbell, he resisted Pollitt's attempt to dilute the line to rebuild the party's presence in the unions, a stance vindicated at the 1932 Congress (McIlroy, 2015, pp. 541–565). Nonetheless, the daily was criticised by the Comintern. Although defended by Pollitt, he was transferred to Moscow as CPGB Representative to the Comintern (McIlroy, 2015, p. 553).

In 1934, he was appointed party organizer in Lancashire, succeeding where Arnot had failed and serving with distinction, despite his three-year stint being interrupted by a motor bike accident. A cadre report from 1938 stated he 'had certain sectarian tendencies along with R. P. Dutt. But overcame these in his work in the Lancashire district.'⁵⁰ His record of achievement continued: in Spain he reported for the *Daily Worker* and acted as senior commissar of the British Battalion of the International Brigades where he was instrumental in reinforcing Comintern control and Stalinist discipline (Flinn, 2001, pp. 92–94). In October 1939, he helped ensure the EC endorsed Stalin's position on 'the imperialist war' (King & Matthews, 1990, particularly pp. 140–149, 215). He was restored to the editorial chair at the

Daily Worker, and there he remained, playing an important role in the leadership, until his death in 1949.

Rust was a Stalinist bureaucrat but an effective one. In Lancashire he succeeded ‘in effecting considerable improvement in Party activity and organisation’. He was ‘very capable politically. Loyal and reliable ... Done splendid work in Spain.’⁵¹ Whether his devotion to Moscow was exceptional is questionable, particularly if we separate substance from style. Other leaders were equally steadfast if less forensic; others were similarly ambitious and the evidence that he attempted to replace Pollitt in the 1930s or 1940s is slight. He was ruthless and single minded – so were other CPGB functionaries. Perhaps he possessed a less attractive personality (Flinn, 2001, pp. 79–80, 96–98). However, his decisiveness when others dithered, his humility, the fact he listened, were recalled by Malcolm MacEwen who remembered 5,000 mourners at his funeral. But he also noted Rust’s liking for the lavish hospitality of foreign bureaucrats, observing ‘we were probably witnessing the first stages of the corruption of an elite’ (MacEwen, 1991, p. 152).

His first wife, Kathleen O’Donoghue, was a working-class YCLer who accompanied him to Russia and worked on the *Moscow Daily News* (Beckett, 2004, pp. 1–13, 100–117; McLeod, 1997, pp. 3–12). In Moscow he left her and their baby, Rosa, for a Georgian Communist, Tamara Kravetz. She secured entry to Britain via a marriage of convenience to YCL activist, Philip Regan, and lived with Rust until their wedding in 1948. Kathleen subsequently married a Russian and when he was arrested returned home, leaving Rosa in a Soviet boarding school. It was only after tremendous tribulations in war-torn Russia that she made her way back to London. The *Daily Worker* journalist, Alison McLeod, who remembered, ‘Politically he was ruthless to anyone who uttered the slightest criticism of the Soviet Union’, recalled he never mentioned his daughter; indeed, ‘If anyone had described in our office one-tenth of what Rosa had lived through, Bill Rust would have denounced such

anti-Soviet lies and slanders' (McLeod, 1997, p. 12). Kathleen remained a loyal Communist. Rosa, married a CPGB member, but refused to join the party: 'I didn't like the people in it, they lacked humanity' (Beckett, 2004, p. 119). Tamara became the CPGB's National Women's Officer and on Rust's death married the party peer, Wogan Phillips, Lord Milford.⁵²

The 1920s and a glance beyond: the 'core of the core' across CPGB history

On 7 September 1939, in the aftermath of his pact with Hitler, Stalin ordered Dimitrov, titular head of the Comintern, by now an NKVD-supervised bureau of the Soviet state, to instruct affiliated parties that the developing World War was not an anti-fascist conflict but a struggle for supremacy between imperial powers. Meeting on 2–3 October, the CPGB reversed its earlier anti-fascist position and adopted Stalin's edict, with only Pollitt, Campbell and Gallacher dissenting. William Gallacher (1881–1965), the party's sole MP, roundly abused the moving spirits in the change of line, Dutt, Rust and Springhall, and refused to work with them in future. Within days, he executed a U-turn, agreed his vote should be registered for, not against, the change, and returned to the fold (Johnstone, 1997, pp. 27–45; King & Matthews, particularly pp. 91–101). In July 1940, he approached the Foreign Office requesting that he or another party leader be permitted to visit Russia to convince Stalin to aid Britain. The overture was rejected: Sir Stafford Cripps, British ambassador to Moscow, observed that CPGB leaders possessed little clout with Stalin.

The initiative has been interpreted as a stratagem to elicit further instructions from the Russians as to future party policy (Johnstone, 1997, pp. 38–39). Whatever its purpose, events 1939–1940 confirmed the nature of the relationship between the Soviet state and the CPGB. They illuminated Gallacher and a career punctuated by explosive responses to Russian directives which subsided into tame compliance. Emotional loyalty to the Soviet Union and

intellectual dependence on its ideology held his politics together. In the context of a lifelong defence of the indefensible, whatever intricate mechanisms of self-delusion were at work, Hugh MacDiarmid's distillation of Gallacher as 'Lovely in his integrity ... clear-headed and clean-hearted' reads like black comedy, although it is perhaps excessive to dismiss him, as one repentant Communist did, as 'a romantic pseudo-revolutionary'.⁵³ Essentially an orator and agitator, he possessed a warm, courageous, temperamental personality and was highly regarded as an organizer and constituency MP (Cf Macfarlane, 1966, p. 41).

He was born in the Irish quarter of Paisley, to a labourer and former soldier and a sometime farm servant and washerwoman. Educated at the local Catholic school, he worked as a grocery boy from the age of 12 before serving an apprenticeship as a brass founder. He joined the SDF from the ILP in 1906. Influenced by John Maclean, he graduated to its 'internationalist' wing, opposing Hyndman's Citizens' Army and rejecting all concessions to patriotism and militarism at the 1912 BSP conference. A militant trade unionist, he favoured a strategy which attempted to fuse industrial and political action (Crick, 1994, pp. 266–267; Duncan, 2004). The syndicalist inclinations he voiced in the CWC, which he chaired from his base in Albion Motors, were reinforced by a sojourn in Chicago, home of the IWW, in 1913. He opposed the war and conscription but avoided outright defiance (Duncan, 2004).

He advocated workers' participation in state supervision of the munitions industry to increase production and oversee dilution, and reacted fiercely to fellow BSPer Peter Petrov's demand that the CWC actively oppose the war. In a court performance he recalled as 'shameful', he registered hostility to strikes which impeded production, although it did not save him from a prison sentence (Hinton, 1973, p. 131; Kendall, 1969, pp. 43, 114–119, 126–127). His syndicalist conception of the shop stewards' movement – it would help create 'one big union' which would place workers in control of industry – took another turn when he co-authored a pamphlet with the ILP's John Paton, which propounded Guild Socialist ideas and

envisioned industrial unions negotiating 'collective contracts' with the state (Hinton, 1973, pp. 129, 131, 280). Gallacher took little part in the foundation of the CPGB and it was as a syndicalist and anti-parliamentarian that this unlikely Bolshevik attended the Second Comintern Congress as a representative of the Scottish Workers' Committee (Gallacher, 1966, pp. 150–153; Riddell, 1991, p. 444).

After a transformation attributed to Lenin, he commandeered the movement to create a Scottish Communist party and persuaded the Communist Labour Party (CLP) to desert his former mentor Maclean and enter talks with the CPGB (Macfarlane, 1966, pp. 64–67; McKay, 2004, pp. 84–97). He became prominent in the new party as vice-chair. His puritanical instincts repelled by blatant pursuit of self-interest, he pursued reform. Previously close to MacManus, he stood unsuccessfully against him as chair, collaborated with Dutt and Pollitt against the Scottish caucus and was instrumental in initiating the Committee on Reorganisation. His replacement by Pollitt as secretary of BBRILU after slow progress towards establishing the MM produced enduring distrust of Dutt, but his leadership aspirations evaporated. By 1925, when imprisoned with his fellow leaders, he was appreciated as a volatile but hardworking staple of the apparatus.⁵⁴ After 1926, he criticised the application of the united front and contested calls for a general strike to block the Trade Disputes Bill. In a minority of one, he threatened to emigrate to Canada; instead, he spent some six months in Moscow, appointed as a representative to the Comintern to ride guard on Murphy (McIlroy & Campbell, 2005a, p. 237; Thorpe, 2000, p. 108). Returning in Spring 1928, he questioned 'Class Against Class', claiming that neither the conjuncture nor the Labour Party had changed sufficiently to justify the left turn. He received little credit for his endeavours to recharge the united front via engagement with the Cook-Maxton Campaign and was soon rehearsing what he would subsequently castigate as the 'left-sectarian'

nostrums of ‘independent leadership’ and ‘social fascism’ (Macfarlane, 1966, pp. 210–212; Thorpe, 2000, pp. 118–119).

By 1930, Gallacher was a member of the PB, in charge of industrial work and sponsoring a range of abortive ultra-left initiatives. He participated in the launch of the red union, the United Mineworkers of Scotland, proposed a breakaway in South Wales and advocated a United Mineworkers of Great Britain to compete with the MFGB (Campbell, 2000, pp. 334–342). He was selected to contest the ‘Little Moscow’ of West Fife, with the Comintern leader, Manuilsky, who favoured his candidature, remarking ‘Why should we always have to hear him, why not the bourgeoisie?’ (Thorpe, 2000, p. 217). He took the seat with a slim majority in the 1935 general election and held it for 15 years before defeat in 1950. In the Commons, he presented party policy with power and persistence. But his comrades were conscious of his unpredictability and, as with Saklatvala, Reg Bishop, was appointed his private secretary. The leadership kept him on tight rein. Nonetheless, during the war he was periodically at loggerheads with Pollitt over issues such as the second front; blanket opposition to strikes; his performance as party chair; and his susceptibility to flattery by Labour politicians.⁵⁵ After 1950, he played an increasingly ornamental role as chair and president, remaining on the EC until 1963. In 1913, he married Jeannie Roy, a dairy shop worker who became a long-term Communist. He was a dedicated husband and family man, grief stricken when the two nephews they had adopted died in World War II. He was, his biographer concluded, ‘an unrepentant Stalinist, a virulent anti-Trotskyist and in denial over the crimes of the regime in the Soviet Union’ (Duncan, 2004).

Something similar might be said about his friend and protégé, John Ross Campbell (1894–1969). One commentator claimed Campbell may have remained in the dark about Stalin’s crimes against humanity: ‘opinions differ as to how far his stay in Moscow in 1938–9 made him aware of Stalin’s mass repression of innocent people’ (Johnstone, 2006). Belief

that this shrewd and experienced Communist, the party's authority on Russian politics and spokesman on Trotskyism who had spent considerable time in Moscow before 1938 and was working in the Soviet apparatus at the time of the purges, was, in any significant sense, unaware of what was happening appears perverse. Quite apart from his stay in Moscow, he was conscious of the fate of victims such as Rose Cohen and Bennett/Petrovsky, his friends in London and Moscow. McLeod's recollection of a discussion in 1956 between Campbell, then *Daily Worker* editor, and Peter Fryer, whose despatches from Budapest he suppressed, is rather more convincing: 'Campbell said that he had been in Moscow during the purges of the 1930s; he had known what was going on. But what could he do? How could he say anything in public when the war was coming and the Soviet Union was going to be attacked?' (McLeod, 1997, p. 101). McLeod, an erstwhile admirer and honest witness, reflected: 'This might have been some excuse for silence. However, Campbell was not silent in the 1930s. He wrote a book, *Soviet Policy and its Critics* which was published by Gollancz in 1939. In this he defended every action of Stalin and argued that the purge trials were genuine' (McLeod, 1997, p. 101). Another colleague concluded: 'He must have known the truth for many years but his loyalty to the Soviet Union and the Political Committee overrode his conscience' (MacEwen, 1991, pp. 181–182).

There is some doubt as to whether Campbell joined the CPGB in 1920 or with the CLP the following year.⁵⁶ He came from a working-class family in Paisley, near Glasgow – his father died when he was 10 – and left school at 14 to work in a Co-op store. He joined the BSP two years later. Unlike most CPGB leaders, he enlisted in 1914, saw action at Gallipoli and in France, suffered major injuries to his feet and was awarded the Military Medal. Demobbed in 1918, under Gallacher's tutelage he became prominent in the revived CWC, the Scottish Workers' Committee, the rump NSS&WCM, the unemployed agitation, and persuading the CLP to join the CPGB. He edited the shop stewards' paper, *The Worker*,

before transferring to London as an EC member in 1923. The following year he was charged with sedition over an article in the *Workers' Weekly* of which he was acting editor, in an affair which contributed to the collapse of the Labour government. The case was dropped but with other party leaders he served time in 1925 (Macfarlane, 1966, pp. 106–107, 137).

Campbell was a stalwart of what he subsequently described as ‘the Rightwing Majority old Central Committee 1928–9’ which resisted the first rumblings of ‘Class Against Class’.⁵⁷ He defeated Pollitt in the election for ‘political secretary’ and in the aftermath of the Sixth World Congress was appointed general secretary by the EC (Thorpe, 2000, pp. 132–137). Given his abilities as a thinker, writer and organizer, he may have emerged *primus inter pares* but for the Comintern. He was handicapped by the fact he had never worked in a factory, lacked union experience and took too long to revise his objections to mass radicalization, ‘independent leadership’, and the theory of social fascism. He was retained on the EC but despatched to Moscow ‘to correct his right tendencies’ as an additional representative to the Comintern (Thorpe, 2000, pp. 160–167).

By 1932, he had rehabilitated himself, was lauded by Manuilsky and restored to the *Daily Worker* where he became foreign editor. For the remainder of the decade he was a pillar of the leadership and served a second term in Moscow at its end. *Soviet Policy and its Critics* (Campbell, 1939), together with sustained elaboration on the fictions and forgeries which framed Trotsky as Hitler’s confederate and his British followers as agents of the Gestapo, reinforced his reputation for reliability. But in 1939 he again blotted his copybook with an accomplished defence of the anti-fascist, war-on-two-fronts line (King & Matthews, 1990, particularly pp. 102–117). Exiled to Glasgow, his fortunes were restored by the German invasion of the Soviet Union. In 1949 he succeeded Rust as editor of the *Daily Worker* where he remained through the 1950s, retiring from the leadership in 1965 after more than 40 years on the EC.⁵⁸

Something of earlier experience sticks to the political psyche. But just as Gallacher appears relatively unmarked by either the BSP or syndicalist ideas, Campbell was substantially formed in the CPGB. The war may have played its part. But his emergence as a worker-intellectual and political leader took off from 1920. He strove to master Comintern theory but applied himself to practical issues, studying French and German, economics and industrial relations. He lived simply on a London council estate and was, by all accounts, kindly and considerate. The sagacity and geniality which endeared him to Communists should not obscure a life lived for the Soviet Union and a career devoted to justifying tyranny and terror; 1956 opened the eyes of at least some admirers. A long-time follower later reflected, ‘What shocked me was the realisation that Johnny Campbell whom I loved and admired ... might well have been one of my accusers and executioners in a British “people’s democracy”’ (MacEwen, 1990, p. 190). In 1920 he married Sara Carlin, a widow and member of the BSP and CPGB who brought him five step-children – one of whom, William, lived from the 1920s to the 1970s in Russia – and they added two more offspring. The marriage endured despite rough patches and his long-lasting affair with Isabel Brown.⁵⁹

A Comintern report at the start of our period observed: ‘Dutt is an Oxford man, half Indian with a clear mind and brilliant intelligence ... easily the most striking figure on the present Central Committee.’⁶⁰ At its end, he remained its outstanding intellectual force: ‘We have a good practical leadership in the British Party but none of us with the exception of Dutt can make much claim as exponents of theoretical Marxism.’⁶¹ His pedigree, scholastic personality, lack of experience of working-class struggle and probably his colour and initially fragile health, disqualified him from assuming the top position. His influence on party activists, existential commitment to the Soviet Union and standing in Moscow, helped guide Britain’s Communists through the intricacies and oscillations of Comintern policy, from ‘Bolshevisation’ to the changes of line on the war. He earned a reputation in the movement

internationally as an authority on colonialism, particularly in India, and as adviser to the sub-continent's revolutionaries.

Rajani Palme Dutt (1896–1974) was one of the youngest of the CPGB's early leaders. His father, the son of a Calcutta clerk, studied medicine at London University and practised as a doctor in Cambridge; his mother came from the Swedish bourgeoisie. Following the conventions of Comintern autobiography, he stressed that his father practised in a working-class neighbourhood; the family's financial difficulties; his youthful consciousness of class and racism; and his induction into anti-imperialism via Indian Nationalist and Labour figures visiting the family home. Privately educated at the Perse School in Cambridge, he was a socialist by 1914 and joined the ILP around the time he went up to Balliol College, Oxford. His education was interrupted in 1916 by conscription: refusal to obey orders saw him imprisoned and discharged as unamenable to military discipline. On his return to Oxford, he was sent down for socialist agitation, eventually graduating with double first-class honours. He worked as a schoolteacher and for the LRD where he was international secretary, joining the CPGB with the Guild Communists.⁶²

In 1921, with Comintern encouragement and resources, he established the technically non-party *Labour Monthly*, aimed at non-Communist activists. The following year he came to prominence when advocating party reorganization, Russification and organized activity in the unions and Labour Party. As editor of the *Workers' Weekly*, published to blaze the trail to mass work, Dutt practised what he preached. The inspiration of the party's younger intellectuals, he was referred to by irreverent proletarians as 'Old Plum Duff'.⁶³ Tall, short-sighted, reserved, his pedagogic manner was admired by some and resented by others as patronising and schoolmasterly, as he urged fellow Communists to abandon past traditions, transcend 'the sects', and replace the founding leadership with new blood uncontaminated by the old politics. To that end, he polished and pushed the malleable Pollitt for general

secretary, a project which failed to find favour in Moscow. Overwork caught up with him: in 1924 he suffered ‘a severe breakdown’ and moved to Brussels from where he continued to operate as an influential component of the party leadership.⁶⁴ In 1927–1928, he was the main author of the Dutt-Pollitt thesis which advocated ‘independent leadership’ in light of Labour’s evolution to the right and the ‘revolutionisation’ of the working class. He played a significant part in challenging ‘the right-wing CC majority’, mobilizing activists to support the Comintern’s move left and finally securing the appointment of his protégé as general secretary (Branson, 1985, pp. 23–25).

He had his reverses. In early 1928, his utilization of *Labour Monthly* to popularize the new, leftist politics provoked a censure motion which he contested until it was reversed by Moscow. At the Sixth World Congress, he was rebuked by Kuusinen for his argument that imperialism was stimulating the industrialization of India. With the ‘new line’ triumphant, he engaged in a dispute with Pollitt over trade union policy (Macfarlane, 1966, pp. 205–206, 209; McIlroy, 2015, pp. 553–558; Thorpe, 2000, pp. 126–127). His mind marched to the Comintern drum, although he sometimes misheard the drumbeats, as in 1924 when he painted over-optimistic scenarios of a radical MacDonald government (Macfarlane, 1966, pp. 104–105). He was slow to appreciate the dynamic unleashed by the turn to the united front in 1933 and remained influenced by ‘social fascism’. Nonetheless, his return to London in 1935 ushered in a period of renewed influence.

Where he had once argued that intellectuals possessed no special role in the party, he now emphasised their significance in winning hearts and minds and was instrumental in attracting middle-class admirers to the CPGB – one even discerned in his ‘luminous intelligence ... a mind in fact similar to Karl Marx himself’ (Cockburn, 1981, p. 162). *Labour Monthly*, particularly through his ‘Notes of the Month’, helped build the party’s periphery and popularized the pitch for alliances and respectability. Under his editorship between 1936

and 1938, the *Daily Worker* reflected the rightward thrust of Popular Front politics – there was little indication of the ‘purism’ often imputed to him (Callaghan, 1993, pp. 141–179; Thorpe, 2000, pp. 215–216). But his ear remained attuned to Moscow. In 1939, he mobilized the EC majority which ditched the ‘anti-fascist war’ line and headed the secretariat, operating as general secretary before giving way to Pollitt in 1941 (Johnstone, 1997; King & Matthews, 1990, pp. 67–90, 283–291).

In the post-war years, Dutt theorized the party’s international work, elaborated the idea that Britain was a US colony and continued to attend to anti-imperialism and Indian politics. When Stalin died, he celebrated ‘the radiance of the immortal creative genius whose lifework over half a century, has led the way in liberating one-third of humanity from the grip of the exploiters, brought socialism from a dream to joyful reality’ (Callaghan, 1993, p. 265). He brushed aside Khrushchev’s revelations of the despot’s record: ‘That there should be spots on any sun would only startle an inveterate Mithras worshipper’ (Flewers & McIlroy, 2016, p. 77). When he stepped down from the EC in 1965, he had spent 43 years in the leadership, all apart from 1924–1928 as a paid functionary. The devotion to the Soviet Union which infused his life continued to the end and he contested the CPGB’s condemnation of the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. Moscow continued to hold him in high regard, and he contributed to the official Soviet history of the Comintern published in 1971.⁶⁵

Encountering Dutt in the post-war years, Eric Hobsbawm admired his mind but retained ‘a lasting conviction that he was not interested in truth, but used his intellect exclusively to justify and explicate the line of the moment, whatever it was’.⁶⁶ Truth was what the Soviet elite found convenient and the Russian dictator was its final interpreter. Edward Thompson quoted from Dutt: ‘living Marxism finds its expression in the living person, and its highest expression in the “greatest head”, “the central figure”, the “genius and perfect understanding” whose theoretical and practical leadership most effectively carries

forward the fulfilment of Marxism’, observing: ‘The passage concludes with reference to Stalin’ (Flewers & McIlroy, 2016, p. 152). If Dutt moulded Pollitt, Salme Pekkala, whom he met in 1920 and married in 1924, moulded Dutt and Pollitt. The daughter of an Estonian lawyer and the wife of a Finnish Communist, Eino Pekkala, she studied in Moscow and was conversant with Bolshevism, and well connected in the Comintern. She arrived in London as an emissary from its Scandinavian bureau and deepened and extended Dutt’s understanding of the new state and its philosophy, becoming his lifelong collaborator.⁶⁷ His brother Clemens was a CPGB founder member and a prominent activist in the 1920s and 1930s. His sister Ellie, who like Clemens gained a first-class degree at Cambridge and worked for the ILO in Geneva, he described as ‘sympathetic to our views’ although she was never a member.⁶⁸

As general secretary of the CPGB from 1929 to 1939 and from 1941 to 1956, Harry Pollitt (1890–1960) came to personify the party. He combined decency and humanity in personal dealings with ruthlessness in politics and uncompromising denial of the inhumanity the Soviet rulers represented. Like Dutt, Pollitt was an apologist for Stalin. Assiduous in identifying socialism with a system which exploited and oppressed workers, he vigorously criticised those who spoke truth to Soviet power. His story illustrates how a committed trade unionist raised in the traditions of pre-CPGB socialism ‘came to subordinate his conscience and sacrifice his personal integrity to become a tool of Russian tyranny’ (Utley, 1949, p. 35).

He was born in Droylsden near Manchester in the closing decade of the Victorian era. The son of a blacksmith’s striker and a textile worker, he was, he recorded, brought up in ‘continual poverty’ and worked half time from the age of 12 before completing an apprenticeship as a boilermaker. Influenced by his mother, an ILP supporter, he joined the Openshaw Socialist Society which in 1912 became the local branch of the BSP. He was active as a propagandist and branch secretary, but took no part in the BSP nationally –

leaving aside an appearance as a conference delegate – although he was a conscientious trade unionist. In Southampton in 1915 and in London from 1918, he led strikes and became involved in the River Thames Shop Stewards' Movement and the London Workers' Committee. Honorary district secretary of the Boilermakers union in 1919, he remained a junior figure in trade union and rank-and-file circles and his politics were fluid: he applied for an organizer's position with the ILP and on his own account joined the Workers' Socialist Federation (WSF). His trajectory after the Russian revolution veered away from the BSP towards the left syndicalism, anti-parliamentarianism, anti-Labour Party affiliation of Sylvia Pankhurst and the NSS&WCM; it took the arrival of the shop stewards' delegates from the Second Comintern Congress to make him change course. His appointment as paid National Organizer of the 'Hands Off Russia Movement' at the instigation of Theodore Rothstein brought him into the CPGB's orbit but he attended the Foundation Convention only as a visitor, enrolling in its aftermath.⁶⁹

Belatedly breaking with syndicalism, he commenced his career as a professional Communist. He attended the founding congress of RILU and the Third Comintern Congress in 1921 as London organizer of BBRILU and in light of his role in the Committee on Reorganisation the following year, was elected to the EC with responsibility for industrial work. Ambitious and demonstrating a talent for organizing and man-management, but lacking experience and stature, he nonetheless accepted Dutt's suggestion he should become party leader. When the Comintern refused to gamble on a relative newcomer, he threw himself into the trade union work and continued to be active in the Boilermakers' union while serving as secretary of the Minority Movement. In Stalin's left turn, Dutt and Pollitt saw a second chance. There was little competition and their 1928 thesis and sustained orthodoxy convinced the Russians of Pollitt's reliability: 'together with Comrade Dutt I took a leading

part for [sic] carrying through the new line policy.’⁷⁰ In August 1929, ‘after discussions with the Comintern’, he became CPGB general secretary.⁷¹

He was far from well-read in Marxism and his self-education was limited: ‘in all cases my chief weakness has been that my studies have had to be carried on in an unorganised and spasmodic fashion owing to my commitments in other directions’.⁷² He never attended a party school, and his later reading was largely restricted to Lenin. He leaned politically on Dutt and Bennett/Petrovsky and in subsequent years on Dutt, Emile Burns and others to ‘put the Marxism in’ to speeches and documents. This mattered decreasingly in a movement increasingly dominated by the dictates of the Russian state. His elevation bred enhanced confidence and after 1934 Popular Front politics put a premium on his penchant for drawing in trade union allies and middle-class elements like Cripps, Gollancz, Laski and Strachey. He became an orator of the first rank who benefitted from ‘the build-up’ and personality cults associated with Stalinism – although as one former Communist reflected, ‘nothing could have been more absurd than the artificial puffing up of quite ordinary men into the great, gifted super-leader.’⁷³ In accordance with the Comintern’s ‘nationalization’ of its sections, he was presented as the quintessential, virtuous English worker who embodied the earlier traditions of radicalism and socialism the CPGB had disavowed in 1920.

Pollitt could be blunt and forthright in his dealings with the Comintern. He was proud of his party and his stewardship; conscientious and perpetually overworked, he sometimes bridled at the lack of recognition and respect from Moscow. But he implemented Soviet initiatives, from denouncing left-wing socialists and ‘no-platforming’ union leaders to cultivating ‘progressive’ Liberals and Tories, whitewashing the show trials and justifying the ‘the Great Terror’. When his friends Rose Cohen and her husband, Bennett/Petrovsky, were caught in the net, he contented himself with ineffectual private representations (Beckett, 2004, pp. 54–72). He was plausibly aware of the existence if not the detail of Communist

espionage; it would be naïve to believe he had objections in principle. His concern was to avoid compromising the party: clandestine work should not be mixed with legal activity – or detected.⁷⁴ There were disagreements with the Russians over, for example, his opposition to conscription in 1939; he always backed down. The evidence does not sustain his boast to Laski and Morrison that the CPGB represented, in any political sense, ‘a thorn in the side of the Comintern’: an accomplished actor-manager was playing to a Labour audience. The anecdote that he challenged the Stalin cult at the Seventh Comintern Congress stemmed retrospectively from Dutt, more Pontius Pilate than George Washington when it came to veracity (Thorpe, 2000, pp. 247–249; Dutt, 1966).⁷⁵ In 1937, Bela Kun named Pollitt under ‘interrogation’ as a member of a counter-revolutionary spy ring in the Comintern. Nothing came of an invention as improbable as the fabrications Pollitt himself circulated concerning Bukharin, Trotsky, Zinoviev and other innocent socialists – although Kun and Piatnitsky were executed (Starkov, 1994, p. 1306). Pollitt’s fleeting defiance of Stalin over the change of line on the war ultimately justified his statement during the EC debate: ‘I am as loyal a supporter of the Comintern as anyone in this Central Committee’ (King & Matthews, 1990, p. 199). He recanted and recanted again, the second time more abjectly when his first confession was rejected. He accepted the ‘pro-Nazi line’, stepped down as general secretary, published sanitized memoirs and returned briefly to industry (*Daily Worker*, 3 October, 23 November 1939; Attfield & Williams, 1984, pp. 167–168).

Restored to office in 1941, he applied the pro-Churchill line. Thereafter, his party endorsed each intonation of Soviet policy, from supporting the bombing of Hiroshima and the war guilt of the German people through advocacy of continuation of the wartime coalition, productionism in peacetime and the 1947 lurch left, to the denunciation and rehabilitation of Tito, and the Khrushchev thaw. Comfortable courting the mainstream, something went out of

him with the Cold War. But on Stalin's death his lack of purchase on the reality of recent history remained unimpaired:

Never the dictator, never one to lay down the law, always eager and willing to listen, to understand another's point of view ... No words, no monuments, no tributes can ever do justice to the revolution in people's minds and actions, in changing world history, in freeing millions from darkness, oppression, poverty and misery that have been brought about by the work of Comrade Stalin ... Eternal glory to the memory of Joseph Stalin (*Daily Worker*, 7 March 1953).

In 1956, the wheels came off. Pollitt's response to Khrushchev's revelations blended casuistry with defiance. A spent force who in the eyes of erstwhile admirers appeared 'incapable of abandoning the uncritical solidarity with the Soviet leadership on which he had built his political life ... I had by November 1956 no respect for him' (Flewers & McIlroy, 2016, p. 19; McLeod, 1997, p. 154). Struck down by a haemorrhage behind the eyes, he resigned as general secretary. He died in 1960 from a cerebral thrombosis.

Pollitt's mother and sister Ellie were long-time party members. Marjorie Brewer whom he married in 1925 was a CPGB member and schoolteacher victimized after the General Strike. Elected to the EC in January 1929 she studied at the ILS but was decreasingly active after the birth of her children, Brian, who became a party activist, and Jean.⁷⁶ MI5 relied on recorded statements by Isabel Brown and Pollitt in conversation with a party member which suggested he had an affair with sometime EC member Esther Henrotte while Marjorie was involved with an unknown Communist.⁷⁷

The CPGB leadership, 1920–1928, in retrospect

The 39 Communists who served on the EC between 1923 and 1928 examined in this and an earlier article (McIlroy & Campbell, 2021) were overwhelmingly white, male and working-class. Half were born in England, a third in Scotland and only 8% in Wales. Their mean age in 1925 was 36.4 years and 92% had joined the party in 1920–1921; all had joined during 'the long foundation period', 1920–1923. The largest proportion came from the BSP, although the

smaller SLP was over-represented in relation to its size. Metal workers and coalminers figured strongly, although not as substantially as sometimes assumed, while the group significantly reflected affiliation to the pre-1920 industrial movements, notably the NSS&WCM. There was high turnover but a ‘core’ of a third were ever-present while a further 15% served on four out of the five committees during this period (McIlroy & Campbell, 2021).

Comparison between the 1923–1928 leadership and that of the ‘long foundation period’, 1920–1923, (McIlroy & Campbell, 2020b), discloses similarities and differences. Each contingent was predominantly working-class, 84% and 74% respectively. But the proportion of skilled metal workers – often perceived to be the backbone of European Communism – increased from 26% of the total in the foundation years to 36% later in the 1920s. Miners, who made up the second largest group, are frequently associated with the CPGB in its first decade. However, their proportion of party leaders declined from 17% of the total in the foundation period to 10% between 1923 and 1928. Just under 13% of this latter cohort had attended university compared with 11% in the foundation years, a bigger proportion than in the party at large. There was little difference in age: the mean age of the first cohort in 1920 was 37.7 years, the median 34.5; the mean age in 1925 for the second group was 36.6, the median, 35. National origins afforded greater contrast: those born in England fell from 70% in 1920–1923 to just over 50% in the second period; the proportion of Scots increased from 22% to 36% while the Welsh remained a small minority: 7% and 8% respectively. In terms of antecedents, a declining majority of representatives came from the principal constituents of the CPGB: 41% BSP, 36% SLP of those for whom previous affiliation is known in the foundation years; 35% and 27% in the mid-1920s.

Our research into the 74 Communists who formed the leadership of the CPGB from its foundation (McIlroy & Campbell, 2020b) until the onset of ‘Class Against Class’

(McIlroy & Campbell, 2021), provides an unprecedented collective portrait of the contemporary party elite.⁷⁸ If we examine the EC population *over the whole period*, the mean age at 39 years in 1925 confirms these leaders were not as youthful as sometimes thought. However, the presence of only four women (5.4%), which compares unfavourably with a party membership of 11% in 1922 and 16% in 1928 reinforces prevailing ideas about the secondary role assigned females. Only two persons of colour occupied leading positions and while we lack information on three protagonists, almost all the remaining 71 leaders were British-born, over 60% in England, almost 30% in Scotland, and 8.5% in Wales, a finding which affirms the disproportionate weight of Scots at the top of the organization. The contingent remained overwhelmingly working-class, but the 17% from middle-class backgrounds was higher than the figure for the party as a whole and in the context of preoccupation with a proletarian party higher than Moscow might have liked.

The occupational distribution of the leadership, 1920–1928, also failed to reflect that of the membership. The party was dominated by miners, particularly after 1926. Yet only 15.3% of leaders were miners. The largest group, 26.4%, were skilled metalworkers, although they were not as strong a component of party membership as they became in the 1930s. Other skilled workers represented 15.3% of EC representatives, which brought the proportion of skilled workers, excluding miners, to over 40%, while unskilled workers accounted for only 15.3% and white-collar and clerical occupations 8.3%. In contrast with Comintern *desiderata*, a fifth of leading Communists before the Third Period can be classified as coming from middle-class occupations, although this category embraces those of independent means, small businessmen and writers and researchers. 11% had attended university although none (with the very brief exception of Dutt) were schoolteachers – an occupation strongly represented in the party from the following decade.

When we turn to previous affiliations, we find the largest contingent consisted of former BSP members (23) and ex-SLPers (16). Although five had been members of the CLP, three of these had previously been in the SLP and one in the BSP. Taking this into account, the near numerical parity between the two biggest founding entities is of particular interest: 24 ex-BSP, 34.7% of those for we have such information, against 19 (27.5%) who had been in the SLP. As observed earlier, this is remarkable given the numerical disparity between the two organizations in 1920. Those who joined from other bodies were less well represented: ILP, 7 (10.1%); Communist Party-British Section of the Third International, 3 (4.3%), Guild Communists, 3 (4.3%), Herald League, 2 (2.8%), WSF, 1 (1.4%).

The fluctuating composition of the EC in these nine years requires emphasis. More than half of our leaders – 45 (60.8%) – served on only one or two committees between 1920 and 1928. Moreover, they were not immune to the pressures operating on the rank and file: by the end of the decade at least 20 (27.0%) had left not just the EC but the party. In contrast, a handful sat on six or more of the 10 committees between 1920 and 1928: Inkpin (10), MacManus (9), Bell (8), Murphy (8), Gallacher (7), Stewart (7), Dutt (6) and Pollitt (6). In numerical terms, these eight individuals constituted the ‘core’ leadership of the party during this period.

If we glance beyond 1928, it is to observe limited continuity. While just over one third – 26 out of 74 (35.1%) – served on a subsequent EC, the figure is distorted by the fact that 10 of the 26 were re-elected only to the January 1929 committee, while Webb was re-elected once more in December 1929 and Joss was returned to both 1929 ECs. Only 14 – less than 20% – of the 1920–1928 group featured in the 1930s and, as we go forward, the strand of continuity in EC personnel increasingly diminishes. Of the 17 committees between 1920 and 1938, only a handful of our population of 74 sat on 9 or more. Arnot, Bell, Horner, MacManus and Stewart on 9; Murphy and Rust, 10; Campbell and Inkpin, 11; Dutt and

Pollitt, 12; Gallacher, 13. Bell, Inkpin and MacManus never served beyond the 1920s, nor Murphy after 1932. Arnot and Stewart did not survive the 1930s, although the latter stepped down to undertake clandestine activity and remained important, as did Robson, who featured on six ECs. Rust died in 1949 and Horner, an increasingly ornamental and infrequent participant, was replaced in 1952. When the watershed of 1956 arrived, only five of the leaders of the 1920s survived as the 'core of the core'. At that point, Dutt, Gallacher and Pollitt had served continuously since 1922, Campbell since 1923 and Kerrigan, with one absence, since 1927. Pollitt died in 1960, Gallacher remained as president until 1963 and Campbell, Dutt and Kerrigan stepped down two years later.

The thin thread of continuity frayed: with the passing years, the 'core' shrank to a kernel. The collective leadership was renewed but no individual emerged who achieved the stature of the 'Big Five' who led the CPGB for the best part of four decades. From 1920 to 1956, they were usually at the centre of power in the party although others also figured. Such estimations invariably contain an element of the subjective but between 1920 and 1923, MacManus, Bell, Stewart and Inkpin were arguably the most influential leaders. From 1923 to 1928, power was relatively diffused, with Dutt, Campbell, Murphy, Arnot and Pollitt playing important parts. Pollitt emerged from 1929 but initially worked closely with Rust and Gallacher while Dutt remained, albeit decreasingly, influential. In the later 1930s, Campbell and Dutt were significant actors as well as Pollitt, and in the 1940s Dutt, Rust, Campbell and Kerrigan.

Within the confines of a masculine working-class paradigm, the leadership of the 1920s was in many aspects heterogeneous. Even among categories, ex-BSP, ex-SLP, women, trade union activists, intellectuals, autodidacts and specialists in *konspiratsia*, background, education, experience, personality, temperament and abilities, generated diversity. 'Bolshevisation' stimulated debate and differences. There were competing views about united

front tactics, the MM, the first Labour government and how to react to it. There were conflicting assessments of the union bureaucracy and how to relate to it. The initiation of the Third Period produced clashes. This is important. But what is decisive is the nature and agency of conflict resolution: in each case, after differences were aired, the Comintern decided and its decisions were applied by CPGB leaders, subject to issues of interpretation. The leaders of British Communism possessed ‘implicit faith’ in the Comintern and the Soviet Union. ‘The ordinary membership of the Party including the Executive’, Dutt observed in 1923, ‘will agree to any Thesis that comes from the International.’⁷⁹ At the end of our period, Pollitt stressed: ‘From the moment the party was formed until January 1928, its policy had been that of the Comintern’ (Macfarlane, 1966, pp. 232–233). The following year, Campbell insisted that the entire party whatever their views ‘are all united in the fervent desire to carry out the general line’ (Branson, 1985, p. 45). Through the decade, directives on CPGB training courses emphasised in shorthand the ‘duty of individual member to familiarise himself with statutes and theses [of the Comintern] for the purpose of helping to make Party an efficient organ of the International. The International as a Final Court of Appeal (CPGB, 1924, p. 50). Looking back in the 1940s, Pollitt reflected on a process already in train in the 1920s, and concluded, R.W. Robson reported: ‘It’s no good kidding ourselves. The Party has become, in effect, a branch of the Russian Party’.⁸⁰

Diversity of attributes, character, style, changing political positions and shifting alliances within the leadership were conducted and ultimately circumscribed by protagonists’ primary allegiance to the Comintern. CPGB leaders were active agents not passive receptors. As such, they chose the Comintern as the arbiter of CPGB policy. That cemented them together politically. Shared faith cumulatively affirmed and reaffirmed in practice, facilitated greater cohesion and teamwork in comparison with the foundation years. Observing their solidarity in 1929 and asserting it could inhibit the necessity to go beyond episodic,

conjunctural differences and expose their roots, Manuilsky disparagingly labelled the CPGB leadership 'a society of great friends' (Branson, 1985, p. 46). The next few years would establish that friendship took second place to policy.

How should we judge them as leaders? It sometimes seems the closer they come to reformism, the more they display political and personality traits acceptable to commentators who do not share their *weltanschauung* or revolutionary mission, the more benign the verdict. It appears more logical to assess them in relation to their own purposes. In doing so we encounter the difficulties of evaluating human agency in relation to the opportunities and circumscriptions the context provides. Conditions in Britain yielded nothing approaching a revolutionary situation, rather they restricted the ability of Communists to progress their cause short of revolution. It remains at least arguable that the CPGB leaders failed to adequately exploit the opportunities that *did* arise, for example, during the mild upturn between 1924 and 1926. The General Strike and mining lockout were episodes in which by their own criteria they might plausibly, without creating anything like a mass party, have attained greater influence and attracted significantly more workers. The small gains that were registered were rapidly eroded. Party leaders proved unable to mobilize workers independently on a radical programme, make converts, and retain them. There was a gulf between influencing militants over economic issues and winning them in significant numbers to Communist politics. Those leaders with a pedigree as organizers, agitators and propagandists had their limitations exposed when it came to developing political mobilization. As Franz Borkenau observed, the authority mythologised leaders like Pollitt exercised within a small party was one thing, 'personal appeal to the masses' quite another – indeed, the first could militate against the second (Borkenau, 1938/1962, p. 395).

Internal charisma stretched only so far. Despite their commitment, dedication and willingness to undergo deprivation, victimization and imprisonment, they led no struggles on

any sizeable scale and their energies were in many cases devoted to the office, internal meetings and administration, the platform and the press. Arguably, they achieved greater success in their third major goal of 'defending the Soviet Union' which they saw as indispensable to the prospects of the international revolution it would come to replace. But sympathy for Russia had been strong in the labour movement in 1920 and subsequent successes such as the Anglo-Soviet Trade Union Committee proved ephemeral. There was, moreover, an increasing tendency to combine abstract support for the Soviet Union with concrete antipathy to the CPGB. The Russians ended the decade with less support than they enjoyed at its commencement.

No individual demonstrated the repertoire of the heroes of Soviet scripts, grounded in the theory and practice of Marxism, inspiring workers, transforming their consciousness, and mobilizing them in mass political action. It is difficult to see Dutt, Arnot, Rothstein, Brown, Inkpin or others as mass leaders; or Crawford, Gallacher, Pollitt, Rust, Stewart and many more as revolutionary thinkers and strategists. Campbell and Murphy, who had aspirations in that direction, exemplified, nonetheless, the fracture between 'party leader' and 'mass leader'. If they were not the 'steel-hard cadres' of iconography, one has only to recall Lenin's strictures on the Bolshevik Central Committee and the weaknesses as well as the strengths graphically revealed in Trotsky's *History of the Russian Revolution* for reality to reassert itself. The CPGB went a fair way to formally emulate the Comintern model; failure in this aspect is understandable.

Political subordination in the guise of discipline went hand in hand with theoretical limitations: the British leaders were ill-equipped to question the Comintern or conceive of alternatives to the new 'Leninism'. The seeds of subordination were incubating at the party's foundation. They flourished among those who maintained their allegiance and rendered them receptive to Stalinism. As it developed after 1924, they embraced it. At various way stations

– the Third Period, 1939, 1956 – a minority got off the train. Cocooned in casuistry and self-delusion, encased in the armour of aspiring men of steel, convinced the end justified the means and that the Russian leadership could do no wrong, the majority refused to properly consider the accumulating evidence that Stalinism was an obstacle to socialism not a route towards it, a new form of despotism Marx could not have foreseen. But as one of our group reflected: ‘The CPGB was supposed to be a Marxist party but there were few in it who had more than a nodding acquaintance with the writings of Marx’ (Murphy, 1941, p. 181). They possessed a sketchy, sanitized knowledge of Bolshevik history and uncritically endorsed ‘socialism in one country’ – foreign to Lenin but the coping stone of Stalin’s ‘Leninism’ – and ratified the militarized model of the party which emerged from 1920 as the key to re-running 1917 in Britain (See Draper, 1999; Lih, 2005, particularly pp. 459–469; Lih, 2013).

On a small scale, an apparatus increasingly separated from workers’ lives began to play an appreciable role in managing the party’s direction. Although these trends were undeveloped in our period, those who saw their vocation as full-time revolutionaries asserted expectations regarding status, salary and security. They also benefitted from employment of family members by Russian companies. In 1921 Lenin argued that Communists in bourgeois countries should conduct a ‘merciless struggle’ against financial abuse and ‘expel from the party anyone who uses Comintern funds to secure better than average living conditions’ (McDermott, 1992, p. 46). Yet there seems to have been no real attempt by the CPGB to tie party salaries to the average working-class wage. A party wage of £4 to £5 a week in 1925 exceeded that of the highest paid craft workers such as composers which stood at £3 13s 9d and bricklayers who earned £3 13s 6d (Hansard, HC Deb, 30 July 1925, vol. 187, c. 671). Accumulation of expertise facilitated by occupation of full-time positions strengthened internal demarcation and managerialism; the system by which the EC nominated its successors, and prohibition of rights to organise opposition platforms or express criticism

publicly, made for a degree of bureaucratisation and top-down control. Lenin, in contrast, favourably quoted Lassalle in a letter to Marx: ‘struggle within the party gives the party strength and vitality’ (Lih, 2005, p. 675). And in the 1930s, the tendency to assert relative autonomy as representatives rather than delegates, the consolidation of a ‘core’ of long-serving leaders, the drift of power towards the PB, and emphasis on Pollitt as ‘the leader’, would reinforce problems already apparent in the CPGB’s first decade.

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Appendix ‘Core’ Members of the CPGB Executive Committees, 1923–1928

Name Date/place of birth Nationality Age in 1925	Social origins	Occupation/ trade union	-Communist affiliations	a. ECs 1920–22 b. ECs 1923–28 c. ECs post- 1928	Joined/left CPGB (date of death) CPGB office	Spouse/partner Birthplace Occupation Father’s occupation Date of marriage Political affiliation
Robert ‘Robin’ Page ARNOT 1890 Greenock Scottish 35	Middle class F: Linen weaver; journalist and newspaper editor M: Linen weaver; housewife Liberal Presbyterian	Glasgow University; Secretary, Fabian Research Department/LRD; National Union of Clerks; CAWU.	USF; ILP; National Guilds League; Guilds League Communists [CO]	a.0 b.4 c.5	1920 (d.1986) DO; Comintern Congress delegate; ECCI; Comintern Rep.; Marx Memorial Library/Workers’ School	1. Leila Ogier Ward (1888–1932) London English F: Doctor 1916 2. Olive Elizabeth Budden (1892–1982) Macclesfield English London University; heating engineer; welfare superintendent; clerk F: Teacher 1936 USF; CPGB, 1920; Comintern Congress delegate; ILS; secretary, League Against Imperialism
Thomas Hargrave BELL 1882 Parkhead, Glasgow Scottish 43	Working-class F: Steelworker M: Textile homemaker Non-practising Church of Scotland	Iron moulder; munitions worker; journalist; Associated Iron Moulders of Scotland; National Union of Foundry Workers	ILP; SDF; SLP; IWGB; CWC; NSS&WCM; CUG.	a.3 b.5 c.1	1920 (d.1944) NO; Comintern Congress delegate; ECCI; Comintern Rep.; Friends of the Soviet Union; ILS section head.	1.Elizabeth “Lizzie” Aitkin (1882–1957) Ceres, Fife Scottish Dressmaker F: Stonemason 1910

						SLP; CPGB 2. [Adeline] Phyllis Neal (c.1894–1977) Surbiton, Surrey English Photographic re-toucher; F: Railway clerk CPGB; Comintern worker; No evidence they married.
Ernest Henry BROWN 1892 Bingley, Yorkshire English 33	Working-class F: Journeyman plasterer M: Woollen spinner Baptist	Boot repairer; assistant editor, New China News Agency; National Union of Clerks; CAWU	NCF; National Secretary for Conscientious Objectors in Camps; National Secretary, ILP Left Wing [CO]	a.0 b.4 c.1	1921 (d.1960) DO; Scottish Organizer; Comintern Rep.; Comintern Congress delegate; FSU	Isabel Porter (1894–1984) Tyneside English Teacher F: Joiner 1922 Labour Party; ILP Left Wing; CPGB, 1921. Various party posts.
John Ross CAMPBELL 1894 Paisley Scottish 31	Working-class F: Journeyman slater M: Shop assistant; housewife	Grocer’s shop assistant; journalist; Co-op Employees Union; National Union of Clerks; CAWU; National Union of Journalists; Army, 1914–18, awarded Military Medal.	BSP; CWC; NSS&WCM	a.0 b.5 c. 19	1921 (d.1969) BBRILU (Sec.); Editor <i>Worker, Workers’ Weekly,</i> <i>Daily Worker</i> ; Comintern Congress delegate; ECCI; Comintern Rep.; Scottish industrial organizer; general secretary.	Sarah Marie (“Mollie”) O’Donnell (1885 ¹ –1965) Paisley Scottish, from Irish family War widow F: Slater 1921 BSP; CPGB
Helen CRAWFURD	Middle-class	Married a Church of Scotland minister (d.1914)	Temperance movement;	a.0	1921 (d.1954)	1. Reverend Alexander Montgomery Crawford

1877 Glasgow Scottish 48	F: Owned bakery business M: Housewife F: Presbyterian M: Methodist Conservative	and a Communist businessman (in 1944)	WSPU; Vice- Chair, Scottish Division ILP; ILP Left Wing	b.5 c.1	Responsible for women's work, 1921–1922; Comintern Congress delegate; WIR; FSU	(1830–1914), a widower Scottish Church of Scotland minister F: Dyer 1898 Temperance campaigner; anti-militarist 2. George Anderson (1872–1951), a widower Scottish Master blacksmith F: Master blacksmith 1944 CPGB
Rajani Palme DUTT 1896 Cambridge English 29	Middle-class (Professional) Immigrant family F: Bengali doctor M: Swedish writer/housewife	Oxford University; school teacher; LRD; General and Municipal Workers' Union; National Union of Journalists.	ILP; National Guilds League; Guilds League Communists. [CO]	a.1 b.5 c.19	1920 (d.1974) Editor, <i>Labour Monthly</i> , <i>Workers' Weekly</i> ; Comintern Congress delegate; ECCI candidate (1935); 'General Secretary' (1939–1941)	Salme Murrik (1888–1964) Estonian Comintern representative in Britain, 1920 F: Estonian lawyer 1924 CPGB
Aitken FERGUSON 1890 Glasgow Scottish 35	Working-class F: Ironmoulder M: Housewife	Boilermaker; Army, 1916– 1919 Amalgamated Society of Boilermakers	SLP; CWC	a.0 b.4 c.0	1920 (d.1975) DO; Scottish organizer	Janet McGibbon Mitchell (1889–1984) Blairgowrie, Perthshire Scottish Coatmaker/tailor F: Housepainter 1932

William Jackson GALLACHER 1881 Paisley, near Glasgow Scottish 44	Working-class F: Agricultural labourer; foundry labourer M: Farm servant; washer woman Catholic	Brass finisher; munitions worker; United Brassfounders' Association; AEU	ILP; SDF/SDP/BSP; CWC; NSS&WCM; CLP.	a.2 b.5 c.18	1921 (d.1965) Vice Chair; BBRILU (Sec.); Comintern Congress delegate; Comintern rep.; ECCI; MP, West Fife (1935–1950); Chair (1943– 56); President (1956–1963).	Jeanie M. Roy (1884–1962) Greenock Scottish Dairy shopwoman F: Blacksmith 1913 CPGB
Walter “Wal” HANNINGTON 1896 Kentish Town, London English 29	Working-class F: Foreman bricklayer M: Housewife	Engineer (toolmaker); Amalgamated Society of Toolmakers; AEU	BSP; NSS&WCM; NUWCM	a.0 b.5 c.3	1920 (d.1966)	Polly Winifred Stanley (1911–1990) Kentish Town, London English F: Railway coal porter 1917 CPGB
Arthur Lewis HORNER 1894 Merthyr Tydfil, Wales Welsh 31	Working-class F: Chargehand railway porter English M: Housewife English, Conservative Churches of Christ	Grocer’s assistant; trained as pastor; coal miner; checkweighman; RILU worker; miners’ agent; President, SWMF; Secretary, NUM	ILP; South Wales Unofficial Reform Committee; SWSS [CO]	a.0 b.5 c.10	1921 (d.1968) Secretary, Miners’ MM; Secretary, MM; Vice-Chair, NUWCM; candidate member, ECCI; Executive Bureau, RILU	Ethel Mary Merrick (1895–1965) Merthyr Vale, Glamorgan Welsh (English parents) No occupation F: Pitman, Colliery surface 1916 CPGB
Albert Samuel INKPIN 1884 London English 41	Working-class F: Cabinetmaker M: Housewife Church of England	Office boy; clerk; National Union of Clerks; CAWU	SDF/SDP/BSP.	a.5 b.5 c.1	1920 (d.1944) Secretary; International Secretariat, FSU; Secretary, <i>Russia Today</i> Society	Julia Raven (1887–1959) Poplar, London English, Russian parents Later worked as telephonist. F: Cabinet maker 1910 SDP/BSP; CPGB

<p>Thomas Alfred JACKSON 1879 London English 46</p>	<p>Working-class F: Composer M: Housewife</p>	<p>Composer; social/political lecturer; writer; London Society of Compositors</p>	<p>SDF; SPGB; SLP; CUG</p>	<p>a.1 b.4 c.1</p>	<p>1920 (d.1955) Editor; DO</p>	<p>1. Katherine “Katie” Sarah Hawkins (1871–1927) Hackney, London School teacher F: Master mariner Cohabited, from c.1903, married 1911 CPGB?</p> <p>2. Lydia Packman (1894–1943) London English Dressmaker’s assistant; LRD worker F: Piano finisher 1927 CPGB Women’s Committee, 1920s</p>
<p>Arthur MacMANUS 1888 Glasgow Scottish 37</p>	<p>Working-class Irish immigrant parents F: Crystal packer; shipyard labourer; engineman M: Housewife Irish Nationalist Catholic</p>	<p>Engineer in sewing machine factory; munitions worker; journalist; ASE</p>	<p>SLP;IWGB; CWC; NSS&WCM; CUG.</p>	<p>a.5 b.4 c.0</p>	<p>1920 (d.1927) Chair; Comintern Congress delegate; ECCI; Comintern Rep.</p>	<p>Harriette Ann ‘Hettie’ Wheeldon (1891–1920) English School teacher; shop assistant F: Train driver; commercial traveller 1920 WSPU; Secretary, Derby NCF.</p>

John Thomas “Jack” MURPHY 1888 Ardwick, Manchester English 37	Working-class F: Blacksmith’s striker M: Domestic servant; housewife F: Catholic M: Baptist	Clerk; turner in toolroom; munitions worker; ASE	SLP; NSS&WCM.	a.3 b.5 c.2	1920; left 1932 → LP/Socialist League (d.1965) BBRILU; Acting Secretary, CPGB; Comintern Congress delegate; ECCI; Comintern rep.; correspondent <i>Pravda</i>	Ethel “Molly” Morris (1890–1964) English Nurse F: foreman cutter in rubber factory; unemployed 1921 WSPU; CPGB; nurse in Spain.
Harry POLLITT 1890 Droylsden, Manchester English 35	Working-class F: Blacksmith’s striker M: Textile worker ILP (M)	Boilermaker; Amalgamated Society of Boilermakers	ILP; BSP; WSF.	a.1 b.5 c.17	1920? (d.1960) BBRILU; Comintern Congress delegate; ECCI; secretary, MM; General Secretary (1929–1939, 1941–1956).	Marjorie Edna Brewer (1902– 1991) English School teacher; secretary Illegitimate; F: Cathedral choirmaster 1925 CPGB; Comintern Congress delegate; ILS.
Andrew ROTHSTEIN 1898 London British/Russian nationality 27	Middle-class Russian immigrant family F: Translator; diplomat M: Housewife Jewish heritage	Oxford University; Army 1917–19, journalist; Russian Trade Delegation; ROSTA; TASS correspondent; university lecturer; director, Society for Cultural Relations with the Soviet Union	BSP	a.0 b.5 c.1	1920 (d.1994)	Edith Lunn (1887–1970) Russian Clerk, Arcos F: Middle-class 1926 RSDLP; CPGB
William Charles RUST 1903 Camberwell, London English	Working-class F: Bookbinder M: Housewife	Office worker; National Union of Clerks; CAWU; National Union of Journalists	LP	a.0 b.5 c.10	1920 (d.1949) Secretary, YCL; Comintern Congress delegate; ECCI; DO; editor, <i>Daily Worker</i>	1. Kathleen “Kay” O’Donoghue (1902–1990s) Hammersmith, London English

22						Waitress; ROP worker; <i>Moscow Daily News</i> F: Stevedore 1924 CPGB 2. Tamara Regan (nee Kravetz) (1911 ² –2008) Georgia Russian Cotton worker; language teacher, Moscow F: Architect 1948. Russian party; CPGB; later National Women's Organizer
Robert "Bob" STEWART 1877 Eassie, Angus Scottish 48	Working-class F: Farm worker; carter; lorry driver M: Housewife	Jute mill worker; carpenter/joiner; political/trade union organiser; Amalgamated Assoc. of Carpenters and Joiners; Scottish Horse and Motormen's Association	Scottish Prohibition Party; Socialist Prohibition Fellowship; associated with CUG [CO]	a.2 b.5 c.2	1920 (d.1971) Comintern Congress delegate; ECCI; Comintern rep.; NO; Scottish Organizer	Margaret Purvies Lang (1879–1950) Glasgow Scottish Jute winder F: Painter 1902 CPGB
Beth TURNER 1895 Keighley English 30	Working-class	Textile worker		a.0 b.4 c.1	1920? National Women's Organizer, 1924–1929	

Notes:

1. On her marriage certificate to Carlin in 1906, Mollie gave her age as 21 and her birth certificate states she was born in 1885. On her 1921 marriage certificate to JRC, she recorded her age as 30, suggesting she was born in 1891.

2. Tamara Rust's place and year of birth is unclear. MI5, on the basis of her passport applications, stated Moscow, 1906 or 1912; her party biographies as an EC candidate implied 1912 (KV2/3057); it is recorded as 1911 in the 1939 Register of England and Wales; an obituary (*Camden New Journal*, 25 September 2008) claimed she was born in Georgia in 1913.

Abbreviations: **AEU:** Amalgamated Engineering Union; **ASE:** Amalgamated Society of Engineers; **BBRILU:** British Bureau, Red International of Labour Unions; **BSP:** British Socialist Party; **CAWU:** Clerical and Allied Workers' Union; **CLP:** Communist Labour Party; **[CO]:** Conscientious objector; **CWC:** Clyde Workers' Committee; **CUG:** Communist Unity Group; **DO:** District Organizer; **DPC:** District Party Committee; **ECCI:** Executive Committee, Communist International; **FSU:** Friends of the Soviet Union; **ILP:** Independent Labour Party; **ILS:** International Lenin School; **LP:** Labour Party; **LRD:** Labour Research Department; **MM:** Minority Movement; **NCF:** No Conscription Fellowship; **NO:** National Organizer; **NSS&WCM:** National Shop Stewards and Workers' Committee Movement; **NUM:** National Union of Mineworkers; **NUWCM:** National Unemployed Workers' Committee Movement; **ROSTA:** Russian Telegraph Agency; **RSDLP:** Russian Social Democratic Labour Party; **SDF:** Social Democratic Federation; **SDP:** Social Democratic Party; **SLP:** Socialist Labour Party; **SWMF:** South Wales Miners' Federation; **SWSS:** South Wales Socialist Society; **TASS:** Russian News Agency; **USF:** University Socialist Federation; **WSPU:** Women's Social and Political Union; **WSF:** Workers' Socialist Federation; **YCL:** Young Communist League.

Notes

¹ The committee was known at different points as the Central Executive Committee and the Central Committee (CC). For convenience and uniformity, we have referred to it throughout as the executive committee (EC).

² The paper acknowledged the relative arbitrariness of taking three out of five appearances as a dividing line and emphasised the distinction related to frequency of election and tenure rather than power and influence in the party.

³ If we consider the number of appearances made by individuals on the EC *into the 1960s*, then Peter Kerrigan can be seen as part of the ‘core of the core’ – see McIlroy & Campbell (2021) and below.

⁴ It was the start of 1915 before the party clarified its position on the conflict (Challinor, 1977, pp. 155–156; Kendall, 1969, pp. 110–111; *Socialist*, March 1915). It is difficult to pin down precisely when MacManus spoke out against the war but the retrospective accusation (Pankhurst, 1932, p. 281) that it took him eight months to adopt an anti-war position came from a hostile witness; nonetheless, it is consistent with the Glasgow SLP branch expressing public opposition to the war in early 1915 (*Socialist*, March 1915). For the shop stewards’ 1918 resolution opposing the war, see Kendall (1969, pp. 130–131).

⁵ On one recollection, MacManus later took up with the elusive ‘Billie’ (Brunel University, Burnett Collection Mss, Harry Young, Harry’s biography [hereafter Harry’s biography], ‘Impressions: Arthur MacManus’, p. 3).

⁶ McIlroy & Campbell (2020c); National Archives, UK (hereafter NA), CAB4/119/42, Report on revolutionary organizations, 3 February 1921. Gallacher claimed in 1923 that former BSPers were ‘drawing £6 and doing nothing and they were afraid to make a complaint against MacManus in case they were pushed out of their jobs ... Nothing could be done without his decision’ (Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History, Moscow [hereafter RGASPI], 495/38/1: 25, 28, ‘English’ Commission, June–July 1923). In comparison, the average weekly wage of a skilled engineer, MacManus’ former trade, in 1920 was £4 9s 5d (Hansard, HC Deb. 30 July 1925, vol. 187, c. 671).

⁷ RGASPI, 495/38/1: 40, English Commission, MacManus.

⁸ RGASPI, 495/38/1: 90–101, 105–139, English Commission.

⁹ NA, CAB4/119/42, Report on revolutionary organizations, 3 February 1921. According to the report, the CPGB leaders claimed they could not reveal such details to members given the need for secrecy about the party’s finances. McIlroy & Campbell (2005a, pp. 206–212).

¹⁰ <https://grahamstevenson.me.uk/2010/01/19/ferguson-aitken/>; NA, WO363, Record of Service Paper, Aitken Ferguson, 22 August 1916.

¹¹ RGASPI, 495/198/1235, J.T. Murphy; Darlington (1998, pp. 1–53).

¹² Communist Party Archive, Labour History Archive and Study Centre, Manchester, (hereafter CPA), CP/HIST/06/03, Transcript of Interview by Sue Bruley with Kate Loeber; information from Sue Bruley; Bruley (1986, p. 216, n.147); RGASPI, 495/100/597, CC, 23–25 March 1929; 495/100/617, CC, 11 January 1930.

¹³ Temple (2018); NA, KV2/1532–1537, Albert Samuel Inkpin, Julia Inkpin; RGASPI, 495/198/571, Albert Inkpin, 5 August 1937; 495/100/617, Inkpin to Bell, n.d. [1929]; KV2/1537, Bell to Pollitt, 2 October 1929; Bell to Inkpin, 10 October 1929

¹⁴ RGASPI, 495/100/507, Statement by Albert Inkpin, 6 June 1928; 495/100/497, Political Bureau (PB), 22 June 1928; Thorpe (2000, pp. 131–132).

¹⁵ NA, KV2/1537, Circular to Locals, 24 December 1929; RGASPI, 495/100/688, Inkpin to CC, 7 January 1930; NA, KV2/1533, Special Branch (SB) Report, 22 July 1929; KV2/1537, Letter from J.R. Wilson, 10 June 1930.

¹⁶ NA, KV2/1535, Albert Inkpin, History sheet.

¹⁷ NA, KV2/1536, Inkpin to Arthur, 15 July 1930; Inkpin to Julia, 21 August 1930.

¹⁸ Materials in NA, KV2/1533, 1534, 1537.

¹⁹ Saville, 1983; NA, KV2/1576, Andrey Fedorovich Rotshteyn, Teodor Aronovic Rotshteyn, alias Andrew and Theodore Rothstein.

²⁰ NA, FO371/11029, Rothstein, Andrew.

²¹ RGASPI, 495/198/560, Andrew Rothstein, n.d. [c.1937]; Burke (2018).

²² NA, KV2/2317, Edith Lunn, History sheet.

²³ NA, KV2/3199, Ernest Henry Brown.

²⁴ Laybourn & Murphy (1999, p. 67); RGASPI, 495/100/673, PB, 24 April, 3 May 1930.

²⁵ NA, KV2/3197, Ernest Henry Brown, History sheet; KV2/3198, Ernest Henry Brown, Information from CPGB Registration Cards, 1951–1958; *Guardian*, 17 December 2004.

²⁶ CPA, CP/IND/MISC/10/1, Helen Crawford, unpublished memoirs.

²⁷ NA, KV2/1180, Robert Stewart, Helen Crawford to Dutt, 10 December 1929.

²⁸ RGASPI, 495/198/124, Bob Stewart, n.d. [early 1930s]; Stewart (1967).

²⁹ Harry’s biography, ‘Impressions: Bob Stewart’, pp. 2, 4.

- ³⁰ NA, KV2/1536, Albert Inkpin, 'Discussion of EC slate, n.d. [late 1929]; KV2/1180, Robert Stewart, A. Inkpin to Mrs Ramsay, 4 November 1929.
- ³¹ NA, KV2/1181, Robert Stewart, History sheet; West (2014, pp. 516–517). Scotland Yard reported Stewart was involved in discussion about gathering information regarding the RAF as early as 1928 (KV2/1180, Extract, 23 January 1928).
- ³² NA, KV2/1181, Robert Stewart, History sheet; King & Matthews (1990, pp. 176–180, 292).
- ³³ NA, KV2/1181, Extracts, 9 September, 19 June, 9 December 1943.
- ³⁴ NA, KV2/1181, Extract, 5 August 1943.
- ³⁵ RGASPI, 495/198/124, Bob Stewart; 495/198/442, Robert Stewart [Jnr], 3 February 1934; Beckett (1995, p. 74); NA, KV2/1180, Robert Stewart, Report, 22 April 1932; KV2/1181, Robert Stewart, SB Report, 22 November 1941.
- ³⁶ CPA, CP/IND/HANN/7/5, Hannington to John Mahon, 4 July 1956.
- ³⁷ CPA, CP/IND/HANN/09/02, Outline draft chapter; Stevenson (2004); Polly Stanley, 1911 Census of England.
- ³⁸ RGASPI, 495/100/739, Arnot to Pollitt, 19 June 1931.
- ³⁹ RGASPI, 495/198/13, Robert Page Arnot, Biographical Note, n.d. [1938].
- ⁴⁰ RGASPI, 495/198/13, Robert Page Arnot.
- ⁴¹ RGASPI, 495/198/13, Robert Page Arnot.
- ⁴² RGASPI, 495/198/13, Robert Page Arnot; 495/100/673, PB, 26 February 1930; CPA, CI13, PB, 9 November 1932: dissatisfied with Arnot's performance, Pollitt suggested he be removed from the EC.
- ⁴³ RGASPI, 495/198/13, Robert Page Arnot; NA, KV2/1783, Robert Page-Arnot [sic].
- ⁴⁴ Marriage Register, St Luke's Parish Church, Chelsea, 1 January 1916; Leila Ogier Ward, 1901 Census of England; RGASPI, 495/198/586, Olive Scott (Olive Elizabeth Arnot); Campbell (2006, pp. 152–157). Applegarth (1834–1924) was general secretary of the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners and prominent in the 'junta' of New Model Union leaders.
- ⁴⁵ RGASPI, 495/198/15, Arthur Horner; McIlroy (2004, pp. 284–286).
- ⁴⁶ CPA, CI29, Resolution on the question of Comrade Horner.
- ⁴⁷ McIlroy & Campbell (2005b, pp. 267–283); NA, KV2/1525–1529, Arthur Lewis Horner.
- ⁴⁸ RGASPI, 495/100/597, CC, 23 March 1929.
- ⁴⁹ RGASPI, 495/198/1231, William Rust, 5 May 1932; NA, KV2/1050, William Charles Rust, Summary of File.
- ⁵⁰ RGASPI, 495/198/1231, William Rust, 20 July 1938; Flinn (2001, p. 94) ascribes this verdict to Pollitt, who might well have been referring to Dutt and Rust's opposition to him in 1932. The accusation of sectarianism could refer to Rust's later association with Dutt whose views on union activity and fascism during the transition from 'Class Against Class' in 1933–1934 were perceived in some quarters as sectarian. See, for example, CPA, CI4, CC, 14, 18 February 1933; British Library, R.P. Dutt Papers, Dutt to Rust, 8 February 1933.
- ⁵¹ Quotes from RGASPI, 495/198/1231, William Rust, 20 July 1938.
- ⁵² NA, KV2/3057, Tamara Rust; Foot (2008).
- ⁵³ MacDiarmid (1966, p. 153); Harry's biography, 'Impressions: William Gallacher', p. 2; Whitehead (1992).
- ⁵⁴ RGASPI, 495/38/1: 68, English Commission, Gallacher, Newbold; Martin (1969, pp. 29–30, 70); Thorpe (2000, pp. 68–70).
- ⁵⁵ Materials in NA, KV2/1600, Reginald Bishop; KV2/1754, William Gallagher [sic].
- ⁵⁶ His party card for 1949 states he joined in January 1921; that for 1952 records October 1920 (NA, KV2/1189, John Ross Campbell, British Communist Party Registration Form, 1949; Extract, 6 March 1952). Responding to a Comintern questionnaire in 1939 he stated he joined in 1921 (RGASPI, 495/198/4, J.R. Campbell, 7 February 1939).
- ⁵⁷ RGASPI, 495/198/4, J.R. Campbell, 7 February 1939.
- ⁵⁸ CPA, CI3, CC, 16–17 January 1932; NA, KV2/1188–1189, John Ross Campbell.
- ⁵⁹ NA, KV2/1186, John Ross Campbell; KV2/1187, John Ross Campbell, Material on Sarah Campbell; Campbell (1981). Some hazarded William's problems in Russia influenced his father's fidelity to the Soviet Union (Beckett, 2004, p. 149).
- ⁶⁰ RGASPI, 495/100/98, Report on the internal situation, 28 February 1923.
- ⁶¹ RGASPI, 495/100/440, William Gallacher, The British Party and the Lenin School.
- ⁶² RGASPI, 495/198/6, R.P. Dutt, 26 August 1935; Callaghan (1993, pp. 9–24); NA, KV2/1807, Rajani Palme Dutt.
- ⁶³ RGASPI, 495/198/6, R.P. Dutt; Harry's biography, 'Impressions: R.P. Dutt'.
- ⁶⁴ RGASPI, 495/38/1: 10–16, English Commission, Dutt; 495/198/6, R.P. Dutt.
- ⁶⁵ Callaghan (1993, pp. 274–293); RGASPI, 495/198/6, R.P. Dutt.
- ⁶⁶ Hobsbawm (2002, p. 209), continues: 'I now think I was unfair to the intellectual instincts still buried somewhere deeply inside him'.
- ⁶⁷ NA, KV2/513, Salme Annette Dutt.

- ⁶⁸ RGASPI, 495/198/6, R.P. Dutt.
- ⁶⁹ RGASPI, 495/198/1, Harry Pollitt, 6 December 1931; NA, KV2/1034, Harry Pollitt; Mahon (1976); Morgan (1993). He claimed foundation status as a member of Openshaw BSP (Pollitt, 1940, p. 126).
- ⁷⁰ RGASPI, 495/198/1, Harry Pollitt; 494/100/61, Report of Party Commission; 495/38/1: 16, 68, English Commission, Dutt, Newbold; Martin (1969, passim).
- ⁷¹ RGASPI, 495/198/1, Harry Pollitt.
- ⁷² RGASPI, 495/198/1, Harry Pollitt; Mahon (1976, pp. 489–497).
- ⁷³ Harry's biography, 'Impressions: Harry Pollitt', p. 4, naming Pollitt and Thorez.
- ⁷⁴ See, for example, the recorded comments of Robson, 24 June 1943, regarding Dave Springhall's arrest for espionage: 'there's nothing Harry didn't know'; and Betty Reid, 24 April 1945: 'she thought he did know but that he didn't want to admit it' (NA, KV2/1041, Harry Pollitt).
- ⁷⁵ Laski recorded Pollitt expostulating in typical Popular Front discourse: 'We get no money from Russia. We are independent and a thorn in the side of the Comintern' (Holmes, 1976, p. 29).
- ⁷⁶ RGASPI, 495/198/34, Marjorie Pollitt.
- ⁷⁷ NA, KV2/1041, Harry Pollitt, 16 December 1942, Isabel Brown; 26 May 1943, Pollitt in conversation with Jack Silver.
- ⁷⁸ Note that 13 of the 74 Communists – Bell, Brain, Deacon, Dutt, Gallacher, Inkpin, Jackson, MacManus, Murphy, Pollitt, Stewart, Watkins and Young – served on the EC in both periods.
- ⁷⁹ RGASPI, 495/38/1: 15, English Commission, Dutt.
- ⁸⁰ NA, KV2/1041, Harry Pollitt, Extract, 15 June 1943.

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