

The Origin
&
Development
of
REVISIONISM
in the CPGB
(Part II)

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THE LABOUR PARTY - PARTY OF IMPERIALISM OR THE "LEFT"

The question of relations with the Labour Party was a constantly recurring theme in the first two decades of the CPGB's history. Affiliation by the CPGB to the Labour Party was rejected from the start. Not just by the Labour leaders but at Labour Party conferences too. After the first rejection by the Labour Party Executive, the position of the CPGB was to agitate against it inside the trade union and LP branches. A struggle flared up inside the CPGB between supporters of this position and 'ultra-lefts' who used the rejection to justify a position of having nothing to do with the Labour Party. It is clear that the matter needed to be pursued and not just left following rejection. However, arguments in favour of continuing the struggle for affiliation inside the LP branches included a fear that without affiliation, the CP would be a sect in the wilderness. Here are the germs of the position which in practice was to place the CPGB in a strategic relationship with the Labour Party. Sometimes stated, other times implied.

Study of a resolution on 'Relations with the Labour Party' introduced at the 6th Conference of the CPGB in 1924 by Tom Bell is very revealing. Tom Bell's introduction is vigorous in its denunciation of the Labour Party. He calls for pressure on the Labour Government to fulfil its promises to the workers. It is worth making the point at this juncture that such demands on the Labour Party today are worthless. Firstly, the Labour Party does not make promises to the working class in the way that it did in the early twenties. Secondly, decades of experience of Labour in office have taught class conscious members of the proletariat to look elsewhere for a lead in the everyday struggle against the bourgeoisie. But this was not the case in 1924. However, it becomes apparent when reading Bell's introduction as well as the resolution before the 6th conference, that the only difference that is thought to exist between Labour and the CPGB is the role of Parliament and the need for violent revolution.

The outbreak of the first world war exposed the extent to which socialism had been corrupted by the bourgeoisie. All the declarations of war-on-war trumpeted by the 2nd International were abandoned in favour of cabinet posts and support for the imperialist war under the slogans of 'defence of the fatherland' or 'democracy against barbarism'. Social-democracy had developed into social-chauvinism. The Labour Party was no exception and was at one with British imperialism in prosecuting and winning support among workers for a predatory imperialist war. But in 1924, the CPGB, which was fully conversant with the meaning (in words at least) of the social-chauvinist betrayal of the Labour Party, was able to refer only to unmet promises as a platform of exposure. This reveals that the CPGB attached very little importance to the collapse of the 2nd International and the reasons for the split in socialism. Tom Bell, on this very question raised at the 7th Congress of the CPGB in 1925, replied to M. Ferguson who had called for linking the fight against imperialism with the MacDonald Government. Bell disagreed and said some of the leaders of the 2nd International were now doing good work for the cause of international trade union unity and that the CPGB must be careful not to alienate itself. Tom Bell had spoken very eloquently about communists not hiding their light under a bushel; and he had

described such avoidance of contentious issues as opportunism. He does not seem to have shone very well on this question raised by Ferguson. Tom Bell's reply clearly places trade union unity above anti-imperialist education and political exposure of the Labour Party.

At this time the emphasis seems to be on practical exposure of the Labour Party in Government. The Labour Government was brought down following its performance in what came to be known as the Campbell case in 1924. J.R. Campbell, editor of the CPGB paper "Workers' Weekly", was arrested for publishing an article addressed to the armed forces. The article appealed to soldiers, sailors and airmen not to fight in imperialism's unjust wars. There was a massive outcry against the arrests by workers which forced the Govt. to withdraw its case on the day of the trial. The Tories, incensed by this climb down forced the resignation of the Labour Government. The feelings which had built up amongst the workers about the case were utilized by the CPGB for a general campaign against imperialist war. This campaign met with some success. The working class clearly still held bitter memories of the 1914-18 war.

The Labour Government was not returned. The 'Zinoviev Forgery' made sure of that (19). What followed was the formation of the Baldwin Government and the capitalists' preparations for a confrontation with the miners leading to the General Strike of 1926. As already pointed out, one of the CPGB's slogans during these months was 'resignation of the forgers' Government'. This is despite the fact that Ramsay MacDonald had also falsely confirmed that the 'Zinoviev Letter' was genuine during the last days of being Prime Minister.

After the betrayal of the General Strike, the CPGB came in for considerable criticism from the Comintern for continuing to call for the formation of a Labour Govt. We have already shown that the 9th Congress in 1927 was marked by a blanket of demoralization. The Comintern criticized the line of the 9th Congress and said that the workers' experience of Labour treachery required new tactics against Labour. Instead of a Labour Government, the CPGB in its election campaigns should be calling for a revolutionary workers' government. But even this was seen to be not the most intelligent application of revolutionary tactics in this new situation. The Comintern was soon criticizing the British party for seeing only an electoral policy (20) in the criticisms carefully spelled out by the Comintern. It was only at the 11th Congress that the CPGB adopted a line in earnest of opposition to the Labour Party, characterizing it as a social fascist party.

TWO LINES AT THE 12TH CONGRESS, THREE YEARS AFTER THE 11TH ON THE QUESTION OF THE LABOUR PARTY

Harry Pollitt and Palme Dutt had led the struggle against the rightist line of the CPGB following 1926. For weapons in this struggle they relied very largely on the content of the criticisms of the Comintern, which were sound criticisms. However, accepting the criticisms made by the Comintern could not be the end of the matter. The line struggle inside the CPGB was bound to continue, even if only in the form of those criticisms emphasised and those played down. One recurring criticism of the leadership at this time was that of voting for Comintern resolutions but not implementing them. The new leadership elected in 1929 may have

implemented the line of the Comintern. However, whether he said it or not, Harry Pollitt did not support the line of opposing the Labour Party as a social fascist party. The three year interval between the 11th and 12th congresses clearly shows that he had set himself the task of reversing or taking the edge off the militant anti-labourism which was now strong in the CPGB. Maybe through failure to apply the line intelligently or lack of conviction, militant anti-labourism found itself out on a limb and its agitation made to look aimless and sterile. It must be said that agitation against the Labour Party which is not based on a Marxist-Leninist analysis of social-democracy and well thought out strategic opposition to Labour in the everyday class struggle, would seem to be just this - sterile and aimless.

For the first time at the 12th Congress an analysis of the Labour Party and the ILP (which 'broke away' from Labour in 1932) was made. Earlier, in January 1932, a resolution had been passed by the CPGB leadership strongly in support of a line of no compromise with the ILP. A line which Harry Pollitt totally endorsed.

A report to the 12th Congress entitled the 'Crisis Policy of the Labour Party, the TUC General Council and the ILP', is an excellent critique of social-democracy. It characterizes the Labour Party as the party of finance capital. Nationalization is exposed as being in the interests of monopoly capital. The state is clearly revealed as being the super-structure of capitalism and not some neutral force standing apart from capitalism. Keynesian public works 'socialism', which the Labour Party absorbed into its program very quickly, is carefully refuted. The insipid fascist nature of Labour corporativism and appeals to the 'national interest' are all clearly exposed. ILP pretences of Marxism are given no credence in this document. In fact great pains are taken to show that there is no difference between the aims and policies of the ILP and the Labour Party. The report on Labour's crisis policy concludes with a quote from the January resolution passed by the CPGB leadership:-

"In all its mass work, in the enterprises and trade unions and at the Labour Exchanges, in meetings and demonstrations, in the press, in its literature and in all agitation and propaganda, the Party must carry on a irreconcilable struggle against the Labour Party and the TUC leaders and particularly against the ILP. On the basis of the experience of the masses in all questions affecting the workers, the Party, in all its work, must bring out the difference in principle between the Communist Party, as the only representative of the interests of the working class and the Labour Party and the ILP as the agents of the enemy in the camp of the working class. Without this unmasking, there can be no revolutionary mass work and no success". (Report on the Crisis Policy of the Labour Party, the TUC General Council and the ILP page 18)

The merits in this clear statement are that it represents a definite stand against social-democracy. Its short-coming, however, is in the recurrence of this desperate belief that the future of the CPGB depended on the total exposure of social-democracy. Indeed such total exposure is desirable. But the class struggle is complicated and imperialism will foster ever new forms of reformist and opportunist leadership threatening to

hi-jack and divert the struggle of the working class into harmless channels, or paths at least less destructive to the interests of monopoly capitalism.

Indeed, there must be revolutionary mass work and leadership if there is to be revolutionary education of the working class. But what kind of revolutionary mass work? This is the question which dogged the CPGB. An orientation against imperialism and chauvinism and a Marxist-Leninist program of revolution for Britain would have gone a long way to answer this sticky question. Exposure of social-democracy would be more consistent and able to resist falling into the trap of seeing politics in vulgar terms of 'left' and 'right' with such a program to guide the party. None-the-less, this report in opposition to social-democracy was a development inside the CPGB which could have been the beginning of the deeper analysis which was needed of British Imperialism.

In the report on behalf of the Central Committee delivered to the 12th Congress, Harry Pollitt does not refer directly to the documents against social-democracy, but he does mention the January resolution of the Central Committee. The part Harry Pollitt's report stresses most about the January resolution is the need for members of the CPGB to become active in the trade unions. Harry Pollitt summed up what he regarded as new in the January resolution as follows:-

- (1) That it showed how to build our party from top to bottom;
- (2) That it stressed the decisive importance of work in the reformist unions;
- (3) It gave a correct appreciation of the General Election results, and particularly corrected the analysis that had been registered in the resolution of the Political Bureau, i.e., that the Labour Party was smashed and finished with.
- (4) It corrected the mistakes which appeared in articles to the effect that there was no way out of the capitalist crisis. For we have to remember, as Lenin said, that the capitalists have always got a way out, until the proletarian revolution has destroyed its power.
- (5) It gave us new revolutionary methods of mass work and indicated how to fight the daily struggle against reformism as the indispensable pre-requisite to winning the majority of the working class, and
- (6) It indicated a whole series of new methods of work which our Party should apply." (The The Road to Victory page 36 Harry Pollitt)

The report to the 12th Congress reproduced as a pamphlet called 'The Road to Victory' seems to be engaged in a polemic with the report on the ILP, Labour Party and TUC. 'The Raod to Victory' is pre-occupied with a different characterization of the ILP to that contained in the refutation of social-democratic slogans and policy. 'The Road to Victory' prefaces its argumentation for orientating the CPGB towards winning the rank and file of the ILP with a section attacking 'The Active Role of the Reformist Leaders in Defence of Capitalism'. The position being emphasised would have been greatly mistrusted and needed to be given some packaging. Furthermore, the analysis of the Labour Party and ILP in the document before the congress would have taken a lot of beating. What is wrong with winning the rank and file of the ILP, you may ask. But did Lenin ever address the RSDLP on the importance of winning over the membership of the Socialist

Revolutionaries, or the Mensheviks or any other of the many opportunist or petty-bourgeois socialist trends. Not at all. The point is that this perspective denied the need to put the ideological struggle first in dealing with the opportunist parties. Harry Pollitt's report sees only attitudes by CP members towards ILP members dividing the two. The following quote reveals what Harry Pollitt believed to be the underlying difference between the ILP and the CPGB:-

"And the basis of their opposition (as far as we can discover) to the Communist Party, can be summed up as this They say they agree with communism, they believe the Comintern is alright, but it is the rigid tactics of the CPGB which are wrong. Now we have to understand that for us this question of the ILP and what shall be done is of supreme importance. And we therefore, put the question to our congress, while recognizing that there is no difference between the policy of the Labour Party, Trade Union and ILP leaders, we put to the Congress this question. Can we believe that our own Party can be enormously strengthened if we could win away from the ILP leadership decisive sections of their Party. (The Road to Victory page 23)

Not liking an organization because of its tactics or shall we more precisely read it as disliking an organization because of its failure to accommodate itself to the opportunist line of the likes of the ILP, is the last refuge of any opportunist defeated by the strength of Marxist Leninist analysis. To give credence to this feeble point of view is an insult to the Party and the calibre of its members.

The report speaks of the ILP toying with militant speeches and 'left' phrases to mislead the working class. But in the argumentation for what is regarded as an easy task of winning the ILP rank-and-file, the document gleefully proclaims that the ILPers talk communism. The obvious contradiction here seems to lose Harry Pollitt and other authors of the report, no sleep at all. An impression is given of taking all the arguments against the ILP into account. But it seems clear that the author or authors of the CC report either do not understand the documents analysing the Labour Party and Co. or are in total disagreement with it. In which case the reasons should be clearly stated as opposing views without wriggling and squirming.

However, in spite of all the time spent on the ILP in the Central Committee's report, the question was not taken up during the discussion by the delegates at the Congress. This can mean either that there was a great deal of confusion among the delegates as to what was being called for, or an unquestioning acceptance. It is worth remembering that, at this point, the Central Committee was not calling for a united front with the ILP or the Labour Party. Indeed, opinion in the CPGB against the Labour Party was still very strong and consciousness of their treacherous activities against communists high. So the report could not hope to get away with opposing head-on hard hitting ideological struggle. But the leadership did want the membership to go soft on the ILP. Such a line sought to tie the members hands in dealing with the ILP and confuse people into mistrusting their own judgement. This would mean not struggling vigorously against

social-democracy and the ILP for fear of alienating possible recruits. The only lasting effect of such a muddled policy would be to undermine and even liquidate the CPGB's militant stand against social-democracy, which had been policy since 1929 and prevent the Party really becoming a vanguard party.

According to a speech delivered by Harry Pollitt to the 7th World Congress of the Comintern, the CPGB had made agreements on united front activity with the ILP since 1933. At the same time he noted that enthusiasm for this policy was lacking. He refers to complaints from Party members that unity was for abstract reasons and not based on principle. Clearly the Party members did not understand Pollitt's insistence that there would be no revolution without the united front. And with good reason. Harry Pollitt was forced to recognize that the united front policy proposed by Dimitrov was a tactic. However, in practice, the Party policy has always made the development of the CPGB conditional on the CPGB's relationship with social-democracy.

In his speech to the 7th Congress of the Comintern, Harry Pollitt totally misunderstood Dimitrov's report when he said in the first paragraph:-

"It is a report that will take the international labour movement a big step forward to overcoming the split created in 1914 by the war policy of the social-democrats" (Unity against the National Government. Page 1)

Nothing can heal the breach between Marxism-Leninism and social-democracy which is a clear division on principles. Here, yet again, Harry Pollitt reveals his weak grasp of Marxist-Leninist revolutionary theory. After the 12th Congress of the CPGB in 1932; militant struggle to expose the Labour Party was not revived until the out-break of the 2nd World War and Harry Pollitt's removal from the position of General Secretary. So incensed by the CPGB's campaign of exposure of Labour leaders was Walter Citrine, leader of the TUC, he brought a libel case against the 'Daily Worker' in 1940.

The January resolution referred to at the 12th Congress in 1932, insisted on the CPGB having a clear line of opposition to the Labour Party, ILP and TUC. This contrasts with a short pamphlet published around 1935 called 'The CP., LP and the United Front'. In this pamphlet it is even stated that the working class nature of the Labour Party and the ILP have been usurped by the middle class leaders. For the first time, the pamphlet declares the CPGB's intention to change the leadership of the Labour Party.

THE 2ND WORLD WAR - HARRY POLLITT'S REMOVAL FROM THE POSITION OF GENERAL SECRETARY - REVIVAL OF REVOLUTIONARY EXPOSURE OF THE LABOUR PARTY.

The question of the outbreak of a new imperialist war was an issue as early as 1929 at the time of the Wall Street crash. Tom Bell wrote a pamphlet called 'Heading For War' which raised the question of Anglo-American imperialist rivalry as 'at present the fundamental imperialist antagonism'. While opposing pacifist illusions promoted by social-democracy, the pamphlet pin-points the growth of fascist repression as a feature of bourgeois preparations for a new round of imperialist wars.

The pamphlet concludes with the clear statement:-

"War is inevitable under imperialism. The contradictions of the capitalist system cannot be composed or reconciled permanently. At what point when and where it will break out we cannot tell. Of this we are sure - the next war will be a world war." (Heading for War by Tom Bell page 47)

In 1932 the attitude of the proletariat to war was again prominent in discussion. A collection of documents published by the Comintern were brought out under this title. The first document published in this pamphlet is 'The resolution of the Berne Conference of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party' and some notes on imperialist war produced by Lenin in December, 1922. The Berne conference resolutions state clearly the position of the Bolsheviks on transforming the imperialist war into civil war against the bourgeoisie in each country. They particularly emphasise the importance of communists guarding against and combatting pacifism in the struggle against imperialist war. Lenin in his notes on imperialist war bitterly scorns carelessness and frivolity in the formulation of slogans against imperialist war. He particularly singles out the methods of social-democracy in postponing organizing the opposition of the masses against the danger of war with declarations like 'war on war' or call a general strike if war is declared.

1932 was the year when the Japanese imperialists invaded Manchuria. This was regarded by communists as the beginning of a new imperialist re-division of the world. However, it seems that the CPGB did make pacifist errors regarding the gathering storm of war. With regard to the coming to power of Nazism in Germany, the CPGB lost sight of the imperialist character of the British bourgeoisie vis-a-vis German fascist imperialism. In fact the CPGB got into a tangle over the question of the growing danger of imperialist war and united front tactics against fascism. The threat of intervention and war against the Soviet Union was a new feature when considering the international situation characterized by growing imperialist rivalry and expansionism. Palme Dutt in a report on the 'The Fight For Peace' missed the point, however, when he failed to draw the correct conclusion from the fact that this expansionism was at the immediate expense of British imperialism. Invasion of the Soviet Union as a probability was not yet an actuality. Therefore, opposition to the military build-up of British imperialism was not just a question of opposition to Britain seeking to turn Germany East against the Soviet Union. This was certainly a matter of deep concern to the Soviet Union and the Comintern. Consequently, the USSR's peace and treaty proposals to Britain and France aimed at forming an alliance against Nazi Germany were absolutely just and needed to be firmly supported by the CPGB. But to interpret from this that British imperialism, with its massive colonial possessions was less of a cause of the growing war danger was wrong.

Wars of intervention against the Soviet Union since 1917, had created the belief among communists that the contradiction between capitalism and socialism was the main cause of war. The fact is that the imperialist powers were unable to unite to crush the Bolshevik revolution in 1917 because they were locked in battle. A significant cause of the failure of the 14 power

invasion was the contradictions between the separate imperialist powers. And, it turned out that the 2nd World War started as a war between the imperialist powers. It followed from the position that the main contradiction in the world was between capitalism and socialism that combatting the most bellicose anti-communists was the most important feature of the struggle against war.

Imperialism leads to war. This is a basic principle of Leninism which must be bluntly stated by communists in the course of struggle to educate the working class that imperialist wars are unjust wars. However, at the 14th Congress of the CPGB the cause of war is clearly thought to be fascism rather than imperialism. Mixed up with this disregard for the essence of British imperialism, were mistakes about how to combat imperialist war. Mistakes based on assumptions similar to the position taken by social-democracy toward the 1st World War. Platitudes bewailing the fact that there were divisions in the Labour Movement towards war replaced determined leadership by the CPGB patiently explaining that the imperialist war must be transformed into civil war and the Soviet Union defended. However, even though I feel that this general point can be made and must be made, it is difficult for Marxist-Leninists to speak concretely today about which slogans should have been coined in order to realize the education of the class conscious vanguard on this point. It must be said that a general campaign for peace did not warn the masses against the imperialist character of the rivalry as well as the collaboration between Britain, Germany and Italy against the Soviet Union. In fact the slogan for peace could easily be manipulated by British imperialism headed by Chamberlain to confuse the public and hide the robber agreements being concluded with the Nazis - Munich.

A number of errors committed by the CPGB on the question of the impending war are evident. First, the Party denied or, at least, disregarded the imperialist character of the rivalry between the fascist axis imperialist powers on the one hand, and Britain, France and America on the other. The Comintern's correct tactics of uniting all who could be united behind the CP in an anti-fascist front against the bourgeoisie in each country was transferred to the international arena. Here I am not speaking of the direct aid given to the Spanish anti-fascist fighters - assistance which was given in the full spirit of internationalism. Rather, I am speaking of the exhortations by the CPGB for Britain to intervene in the Spanish civil war or Abyssinia which was grabbed by Italy. This could only spread confusion among the working class about the role of British imperialism in the redivision of the world taking place. The cornerstone of the CPGB's agitation against imperialist war was that the National Government was sacrificing the independence of nations by doing deals with Hitler. It is easily presumed by any thoughtful worker that if the Nazis cannot be contained by Peace pacts between Britain, France and the USSR, or if Britain is unwilling to take part in such pacts, when British imperialism switches from appeasement to war, then the war is still against German fascism. All that is wrong is that Britain made a mistake in trying to buy off the Nazis. This also presumes that British imperialism is itself capable of being the guardian of the independence of nations. Soviet proposals for a peace pact against the aggressive fascist powers were not expected by the USSR to permanently prevent imperialist war. They were made in order to exploit

contradictions between the imperialists and prevent a united imperialist invasion of the Soviet Union. The USSR's proposals were designed to give the Soviet Union additional time to defend itself. As it was, Britain was seeking to turn Germany East and the USSR was forced to sign an agreement with Ribbentrop effectively re-asserting a non-aggression pact that had existed between the USSR and Germany during the Weimar Republic.

Secondly, the CPGB in its application of the united front policy against fascism went further in its denial that the Labour Party is a party of imperialism. In his opening address to the 15th Congress, Willie Gallacher made the United Front against fascism conditional upon the affiliation of the CPGB to the Labour Party. Gallacher even went so far as to say:-

"We appeal to all members of the Labour Party, the co-operatives and the Trade Unions. We are bone of your bone, flesh of your flesh. We, like you, are members of the Labour Party, though we are denied our democratic rights within the Labour Party. We like you are co-operators and trade unionists. Let us get together before it is too late and save this country and Europe from the disasters that threaten" (For peace and Plenty Report of the 15th Congress page 15)

Now, this is not a agitational speech to a workers meeting, and it is difficult to justify such argumentation even then. It is part of an analysis of the situation to a communist party congress(21). The CPGB's appeals for unity are not based on struggle but are dreamlike and utopian. They do not educate the working class politically and leave the mass movement in a passive state and wide open to manipulation by social-democracy. Workers are not educated to support the Communist Party by its appearing reasonable vis-a-vis the 'unreasonable' demands of social-democracy.

Harry Pollitt in his report to the 15th Congress opened with an attack on the Chamberlain Government, saying that it was 'betraying the national interest of the British people'. He made a desperate call for 'reason to prevail' and for the release of Britain from the 'Chains of Chamberlain'. On the question of defence he stated:-

"We are perfectly willing to support any measure necessary to defend Britain from fascism, either from British or foreign sources" (Ibid page 33)

what is clearly meant here is that the CPGB will support British imperialism against German fascist imperialism. A truly vanguard communist party would not stand by while troops of another imperialist power invade and add to the oppression suffered by the working class. It would take the lead in struggle against such an invasion. But one aspect of communist organization against such an invasion are appeals to proletarian internationalism and anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist work among the invading troops. Fraternization against imperialist war. Not lining up behind national frontiers and the national bourgeoisie. The character of the 2nd World War was not an exact repeat of the 1st World War. War is a continuation of politics by other i.e. violent means and the international situation differed in some important

respects; not least the existence of the first socialist state the USSR. However, the Versailles Treaty, which the victor imperialist powers imposed on Germany, was bound to lead to a revival of German militarism and a new contest for imperial supremacy. Appeasement and war were both expressions of Britain pursuing its imperialist interests.

The only conclusion that can be drawn from Pollitt's statement is that the policy of the CPGB toward British imperialist re-armament (the subject under discussion) depended on Britain adopting a war policy rather than an appeasement policy towards the fascist axis. A very messy argument indeed. On proposals by the Soviet Union, for collective security and a peace front against fascism, Harry Pollitt in his reply to the conference discussion flew into a flight of fancy and declared:-

"If we could achieve this it would completely transform the entire situation. Britain and Europe would be places in which war tensions would disappear and the air be easier to breathe." (Ibid page 121)

A Comintern document on Soviet disarmament proposals carefully explains the tactical nature of exposing the mask of bourgeois, imperialist pacifism and states that 'not a single communist thought for a moment that the imperialists would accept the Soviet disarmament proposals'. The same goes for Soviet peace proposals. It is clear that the leadership of the CPGB behaved like non-communists and had forgotten the object of these Soviet tactical proposals.

It is a very serious matter for communists to confuse strategy and tactics. Tactical demands and slogans aimed at exposing the enemy are absolutely necessary. But if they are not coupled with strategic opposition to the bourgeoisie and imperialist war, the tactics are made to become the aim in themselves and can only mislead the working class. The CPGB's presentation of the National Government as the enemy and not British imperialism, distorted the clear aim of fighting British imperialism into one of removing Chamberlain. The role of Parliament and the state is completely distorted in the name of the struggle against fascism.

At the time of the 15th Congress, the bourgeoisie were frightening and intimidating the population with the prospect of war. It was especially necessary for the CPGB to make a sober Marxist-Leninist analysis of the situation. The speeches of Harry Pollitt, Dutt and Gallacher pointed out that the National Government were creating a 'war scare'. Desperate language was used to describe the consequence of British imperialism not adopting a peace policy in the course of refuting the 'war scare' propaganda. But Chamberlain claimed to have a peace policy, it was one of colluding with the Nazi invasion of Czechoslovakia. British imperialism, which was making secret deals and war preparations, could not agree to a policy of peace of the kind which the Soviet Union strived to achieve in its relations with capitalist countries. The Soviet Union's tactics exposed the war aims of British imperialism as well as the Nazis. British imperialism sought to dress up its war aims behind all kinds of false slogans. As well as appealing to the masses desire for peace they exploited anti-fascist sentiments to justify support for their own predatory interests. Although the term fascism had not emerged in the first world war, German

militarism and the reactionary rule of the German Junkers were the object of social-democratic and bourgeois appeals to the working class to support the war. Defence of the Soviet Union was a new feature of the build-up to the 2nd World War, but this could only be dealt with concretely and not as a justification for opposing German fascist imperialism whilst going soft on and disregarding the powerful role of British imperialism.

There can be no mistake that when Harry Pollitt referred to traitors to the national interest of the British people he was defending the interests of British imperialism. In his pamphlet published in mid-1939 called 'Defence of the People' he declared:-

"Whole areas of the country cry aloud for new constructive developments that would bring work, wages, health and happiness to millions of our people. The skilled workers of Lancashire are driven into unemployment or under-employment because the National Govt.'s policy of encouraging Japanese aggression has particularly destroyed the China market for British goods. Chamberlain's policy hands over the markets of Spain and South East Europe to Nazi Germany depriving thousands of our workers of employment"(Page 7)

In this pamphlet, Harry Pollitt strives with fantastic imagery to paint a glorious picture of what non-political national unity against fascism can achieve. He refers to rent struggles in the East-End in which whether the tenants are tories, liberals or communists does not matter. The Labour Party seems to have disappeared altogether here. However, it is irrefutable that class interest cannot be judged on the voting habits of workers or tenants. As long as the tenants are prepared to unite and fight against their landlord political differences are secondary. Harry Pollitt then transfers this situation to the kind of national unity required against Chamberlain. The next step from here, since the only imperialist alternative to Chamberlain was an immediate declaration of war, was national unity against German fascism. But he employs the hypocritical language of the bourgeoisie and describes a Government that will take a determined stand against the fascist aggressors to be a Government of peace. The world would heave a sigh of relief and the 'insatiable maw of brutes and maniacs' would be checked and 'we would be proudly leading the world in a indestructable peace alliance of all nations which have no interest in war'. These are strong words aimed at appealing to the best feelings of workers who hate fascism. But they are words which carelessly mislead the working class into supporting the non-the-less brutish imperialist interests of the British bourgeoisie.

When war was declared, Harry Pollitt issued a pamphlet printed in the 'Daily Worker' entitled 'How to Win the War'. Britain is an imperialist power but...is the theme of this pamphlet. Right up until the eve of the declaration of war, the 'Daily Worker' published articles declaring it was still possible to prevent the war. The 16th Congress which was due to take place on October 7th, 8th and 9th of 1939 was postponed. A month later after the publication of 'How to Win the War', a statement was carried in the 'Daily Worker' reporting a resolution moved by Palme Dutt describing the war between Britain and Germany as unjust because Britain was not interested in defeating fascism but pursuing its

own imperialist interests. Two members of the Central Committee voted against the resolution - Harry Pollitt and Campbell. Harry Pollitt was compelled to resign and make a self-criticism which was published. Palme Dutt took over the position of General Secretary.

The 'Daily Worker' carried many articles agitating on the question of air-raid protection for the working class. Other articles appeared attacking anti-strike decrees and the removal of civil liberties as the rule of fascists during a war allegedly against fascism. Strong articles against the Labour Party and its support of imperialist war also appeared. The TUC General Secretary and other members of the TUC General Council brought a libel case against the 'Daily Worker'. The case was held on April 29th to May 6th in 1940, and concerned articles in Mid-December 1939 exposing the anti-working class objects of conferences between the British TUC and the French CGTI. French anti-working class war legislation was notorious for being in line with those of Nazi Germany. The implication is clear. During the trial the TUC big-wigs placed their hands on their hearts and declared that no such decrees would be made in Britain and certainly not with the connivance of the TUC. But Walter Citrine also said that laws against communists in war-time are a different matter. The trial lasted 6 days and heavy fines on the 'Daily Worker' were awarded to the TUC.

However, the Comintern in its documents against the 2nd World War was very clear on the imperialist character of the war and the line communists must take. In the 'Communist International' No. 5 1940, journal of the Comintern, two very important articles were published. One called 'Lenin verses Social-democratism' and the other headed 'No national unity with the imperialists'. The first article, while stressing the decline of the labour aristocracy in the economic crisis since the 1st World War, makes the following point:-

"Lenin said that as the class struggle between the working people and their exploiters becomes more acute, which will be reflected in the intensification and increased acuteness of the struggle between the two tendencies revealed in the international labour movement, the upper stratum of international Social-democracy would degenerate still further." (Page 7)

This quote again shows that in no way can the united front tactics carefully explained by Dimitrov at the 7th World Congress of the Comintern be regarded as a strategy. The united front was and is, where it applies, tactical unity between communists, social-democrats and other non-communists, against fascism. But this could not mean it was correct for the communists to abandon struggle against social-democracy for fear of upsetting the Labour big-wigs. This interpretation of the united front would only serve to dull the wits of the working class and make it easier for social-democracy to carry out its treachery in the united front. The whole point about the importance of understanding that the upper stratum of the Labour movement, the labour aristocracy, are bribed and corrupted by imperialism, is that this represents the economic basis which gives the labour aristocracy a stake in the continuation of imperialism and hence an hatred of communism and proletarian revolution.

In the second article called 'No national unity with the imperialists', which also makes an analysis of the practice of social-democracy, it is exposed that the leaders of the German Social-democratic party who fled into exile. never gave up in their attempts to ingratiate themselves with the German bourgeoisie. Taking no part in any proletarian struggle against fascism, the German social-democrats lectured to the German capitalists that fascism was not serving their best interests. Always they encouraged the Nazis to attack the Soviet Union. When the Nazis were at war with Britain and the allies, the German social-democrats asserted their support for the allies and declared that the Nazis had made a mistake by invading Europe and being at war with Britain. The German armies should attack in the east they demanded.

When dealing with the need to oppose national unity with the imperialists, the pamphlet emphasises the need for communists to adhere firmly to proletarian internationalism. The imperialist bourgeoisie seeks to disguise its moves to annex territory or maintain its domination of smaller nations by posing the bellicose imperialist character of enemy nations as the threat. In this respect, British imperialism toys with exposure of the 'undemocratic' bestial features of fascism but avoids any mention of its class nature. This way the bourgeoisie educates the working class in the belief that the German nation as a whole is synonymous with fascism. As already mentioned, opposition to the Versailles treaty was aroused among the German masses to justify German expansionism and opposition to Britain and France as a whole. Exposure of hardship imposed by the Versailles treaty was always very weak in CPGB propaganda. In the same way that anti-imperialist, anti-chauvinist agitation by the CPGB was weak. While the imperialist character of Britain was forgotten and fascism, rather than imperialism came to be regarded as the cause of war, internationalism towards the German workers subsided even further during the build up of the anti-war movement.

AFTER THE NAZI INVASION OF THE SOVIET UNION

The 16th Congress of the CPGB, which was due to take place in Oct., 1939, did not take place until 1943. However, a national conference did take place in May, 1942 at which Harry Pollitt outlined a policy of national unity, strengthening the national Government and increasing production in the war against Hitler Germany(22). In dealing with the importance of opening the second front as the necessary condition for victory in 1942, reference is made to the abortive attempt of a small force of commandos landing at St. Nazaire to defeat the Nazis. The population of St. Nazaire fought heroically alongside the handful of soldiers believing that the second front had at last started. Great losses were suffered by the soldiers and the people. Such a farcical and disasterous exercise by British imperialism was a clear indication that whatever illusions Harry Pollitt may have had about the objectives of British imperialism in the international united front against fascism, Britain's ruling servants of the monopoly bourgeoisie had none. Class struggle had not ceased in the anti-fascist war. This blatant sacrifice of soldiers was an attempt to publically 'justify' delaying the second front until the imperialists deemed it necessary

The character of the 2nd World War changed with the invasion of

the Soviet Union by the German fascists in June 1941. New tactics needed to be adopted by the communist parties which defended socialism and continued the struggle against the rule of the imperialist bourgeoisie of the communist's own country. In the international united front against the fascist axis, there was bound to be a certain relaxation by communists in Britain of the class struggle. But not abandonment of the class struggle and a complete failure to expose the class nature of German fascism and British imperialism's delay in opening the 2nd Front. The class reasons for Britain's participation in the war against fascism became particularly important for communists to expose when dealing with such questions as failure to arm the Indian workers and peasants against invasion by Japanese imperialism. With the victory of the Red Army in pushing back the Nazis and liberating the peoples of Eastern Europe, British and American imperialism were frantic to protect their imperialist interests against revolution and socialism. This had to be exposed among the workers in Britain in order to educate and arouse the working class for winning the fruits of the war against fascism and to prepare for socialist revolution.

The CPGB did not do this. Instead, the Party sacrificed its independence and placed itself almost totally at the service of the National Government. In this respect, at the May 1942 conference Harry Pollitt offered the following promise to the National Government if the ban on the 'Daily Worker' were to be lifted:-

"If the 'Daily Workers' were allowed to appear, we could count on certain very important results taking place. First, there would be a greater unity of the people behind the Government. Second, there would be a greater drive for increased production. Third, the Government candidates would not be defeated in by-elections. Fourth, the demand for the second front would be infinitely stronger. Fifth, the working and fighting morale of the people would be increased. And sixth, the hands of solidarity between the the British people and the peoples fighting fascism all over the world would be stronger" (Way to Win page 26)

The 'Daily Worker' was banned under the Defence Regulations on January 21st, 1941. It was lifted on August 26th., 1942. In the pamphlet by William Rust about the 'Daily Worker', he refers to a decision not to bring the paper out secretly as this would, he claimed, detract from the beat the ban campaign. Some abortive attempts to produce the paper underground were made. However, when the Nazis invaded the Soviet Union, it was declared by telegram from the CPGB to the Home Secretary that he was bound to lift the ban as the Government and CPGB were now on the same side. The beat the ban campaign won widespread support. Even the Labour Party congress in 1942 narrowly passed a resolution against the ban. But it must be said that the CPGB in not producing the paper secretly and thereby showing its self-reliance and ability to maintain its organization in the face of the capitalists' attacks, had revealed its achilles heel.

By the time the 16th Congress (23) of the CPGB was held in 1943, Harry Pollitt was firmly back in the driving seat. His report on behalf of the Central Committee at the conference held in 1942 boldly declared that the CPGB was not sacrificing its independence

in the united front. The CP would support all Government candidates at the bi-elections. The traditional Labour/Tory arguments were dropped. Instead, Pollitt posed the defeat of the Government candidates as bringing encouragement to the fascists at home and abroad. The masses are clearly regarded as passive and unreliable. Just were was the independence of the CP if it had not been sacrificed. It is of course true that the election of fascist sympathisers may increase speculation as to the formation of the second front. But what right does the CP have to regard the only alternative to a Government of vacillating bourgeois politicians to be one of fascist sympathisers. The CP cannot make itself the slave of the inconsistency of the bourgeoisie who in its class interests were delaying the 2nd Front. Only when it was absolutely clear that the Soviet Union were heading for resounding victory, did the allies make a dash for Berlin.

At the 16th Congress, however, Harry Pollitt back-peddled on this position and begun to stress the discontent of the working class who regard themselves as the victors in the war against fascism. The masses want a government of their choice. They are not fighting the war in order to lose the peace. Pollitt's answer to this situation was not one of encouraging these working class political interests and democratic aspirations in a war against fascism. Instead, he prattled on about conferences between the Labour, Tory, Liberal and Communist Parties in order to choose the best anti-fascist candidates. Fear of the masses is clearly revealed here. Despite Harry Pollitt's recognition of the feelings of the workers in a war against fascism, he shows more faith in a conference of Tories, Liberals and Labour aristocrats.

The slight change of emphasis and move toward a stand more in opposition to the National Government was not reflected in statements issued by the CPGB after the 16th Congress. Especially since the invasion of the Soviet Union, the CPGB Central Committee had concentrated its political activity on moralizing statements addressed to the bourgeoisie. In its political statements to the workers, especially the miners, the class interests of British imperialism in the war and the class character of fascism is underplayed and even ignored. The main emphasis of the statements to the workers is increased production in order to make the second front possible sooner. It is evident from this that the bourgeoisie was justifying delaying opening the second front on the grounds that there was not enough war materials and this was so because of low levels of coal output. To this the CPGB responded by addressing appeals to the miners to mine more coal posing the prospect of a Nazi victory as more terrible than the miners existing working conditions. It is in statements like this that the failure of the CPGB to take an independent class stand becomes most marked.

In mid 1942 (August 9th) British imperialism arrested and imprisoned the leaders of the Indian National Congress. A declaration in favour of armed resistance to Axis aggression had been made and a demand for self-government. Failure by British imperialism to grant self-government would be met by a campaign of civil disobedience. In a letter to Churchill, Harry Pollitt's response to this is to deplore the threats of the Indian National Congress which, he argued, gives a chance to fascism to sow disunity. At the same time he pleaded with Churchill to meet the justified demands of the INC. What an appalling great power

chauvinist position. At a stroke of a pen, Harry Pollitt, on behalf of the CPGB Central Committee denies the right of the Indian National Congress and the Indian people the right to struggle against British imperialism as well as the aggression of the Axis powers. In the same manner, as a 'solution' to speeding up the second front or granting independence to India, the Central Committee demanded, no less, the 'reorganization of the Government'.

Also, developing at this time of 1942/43, is the question of post-war Britain. The CP's immediate response to this was that this question detracted from speeding up victory in the war. Undoubtedly, the view of the bourgeoisie also. The Central Committee, however, was apparently afraid of raising this matter for discussion as it sharply exposed the Party's lack of a revolutionary program and how much it had betrayed Marxism-Leninism for the war effort. However, as the feelings among the soldiers, sailors, airmen and working class of Britain became stronger, the CP was forced to give the matter serious attention. The working class and servicemen wanted to know who was going to benefit from the fruits of victory. A resolution passed at the 16th Congress opened under the heading, 'The first Step Military Victory Over Fascism'. Following this introductory section, various reforms are outlined. On social-insurance, the resolution called for immediate implementation of the Beveridge report.

Among the other demands, a National Health Service is called for and a 'pay-as-you-earn' taxation system mentioned. On the question of state control and industry, the use of state emergency powers against 'vested interests' in order to intensify war production is demanded. This is a peculiar demand which seems to regard state monopoly capitalism as more efficient than private enterprise. Here we have a failure to understand that capitalism in its monopoly stage is capitalism in decay. This goes for state and private monopolies. The main contradiction in capitalist society (monopoly capitalism is moribund capitalism) is the contradiction between the private ownership (state capitalist ownership does not essentially alter the private appropriation of the nationalized industries) and the social character of production. Furthermore, it is a matter of folklore that state-monopoly in monopoly capitalist Britain is not more efficient but more bureaucratic and decadent. Labour Party and Keynesian policies for public works programs in order to alleviate unemployment were never adequately refuted theoretically by the CPGB. The 12th Congress came closest. Here, however, it is accepted without question and a call made for state-control of industry not to be done in the capitalist's interests. As an allegedly more just system of ownership, 'national ownership' rather than state ownership is presented as the ideal. The theoretical failings revealed show a fundamental failure to grasp the nature of the state and bourgeois rule, and Harry Pollitt cannot be forgiven even though the point is made that people must not be deceived that such policies:-

"...for strengthened monopoly capitalism in association with the state capitalist monopoly are equivalent to a basic social re-organization supposedly eliminating the evils of private competitive capitalism..." (Unity and Victory page 52)

A number of other points regarding Harry Pollitt's speech on behalf of the Central Committee to the 16th Congress are also worth noting. In dealing again with the matter of affiliation to the Labour Party, the question of the CPGB's support for force in the workers' struggle for socialism is dealt with. This being one of the objections by the Labour leaders to CPGB affiliation. The report criticizes the notion of Labour leaders who advocate that 'a new Britain' can be built in 'peaceful co-operation with the great monopoly capitalists'. This can only be regarded as a sop to satisfy possible objections to the CPGB's post war reconstruction program. Speaking more directly on the question of force, Pollitt uses the war against fascism as an example of necessary force. But nowhere is the need for seizing power by violent means dealt with directly. Now that the Comintern had been dissolved (something which must have delighted the opportunists in the leadership) it was argued that the labour leaders' charges that the CPGB was a puppet of Moscow no longer had any meaning. In asserting that the CPGB was born of the British Labour Movement, Harry Pollitt said:-

"Its principal leaders were all members of the Labour Party, ILP, Social Democratic Federation or the British Socialist Party before they merged to form the CP"
Page 17 Unity and Victory)

A conspicuous omission from the list is the Socialist Labour Party, the second largest founding constituent organization of the CPGB. It is really to their honour that they are not included among Pollitt's chosen organizations in this grovelling address to the Labour Party.

Finally, at the end of his report to the 16th Congress a rallying call is made to them 'most glorious principles that humanity has ever known, socialism' which here is referred to as that 'state of classless society'. In the same way that the CPGB's proposals on post-war reconstruction deny the capitalist nature of the state in Britain, Harry Pollitt exhibits confusion and woolly-mindedness on the nature of the state under the dictatorship of the proletariat. This is a succinct testimony to the theoretical bankruptsy of Harry Pollitt, the General Secretary and the low theoretical level of the whole party. That the CPGB should have forgotten, or indeed never grasped, the elementary principles spelt out in the Communist Manifesto nearly one hundred years previous, shows that years of placing short term gain before long term aims, the essence of opportunism, was at the root of the degeneration of the CPGB.

The Teheran conference between comrade Stalin, Churchill and Roosevelt marked a new stage in the position of the CPGB during the war. More emphasis is placed on international co-operation of the democratic nations in the defeat of fascism and post-war peaceful construction. In the manner of more moralizing statements addressed to the bourgeoisie, attention is drawn to the apparent increase in international co-operation against fascism while in Britain there is increasing discontent. Mosley had been released from prison and public anger was aflame. Did the CPGB use such questions to expose the class interests of British imperialism in the war? Certainly not at the level of the Central Committee where the National Government is merely blamed for damaging national

unity by such actions.

Following the Teheran conference, a declaration was made that the second front under the command of Eisenhower would be opened and victory in Europe achieved by the end of 1944. One of the reasons for the delay in the opening of the second front was disagreement between Britain and America as to who should have overall command. A sign of imperialist rivalry between the two powers. However, this was not dealt with by the CPGB at the time.

The CPGB's support for the National Government was total. There were spontaneous strikes on economic questions during the war. Long hours were the rule and the workers' discontent was not misplaced as the CPGB's position implied. But economic struggle was not the order of the day. Having said this, political education of the working class would have found an eager response at a time when only a great deal of consciousness and hatred for fascism could have made the working class of Britain make the sacrifices that they did. Besides this, the working class were quite capable of being organized for revolutionary struggle against British capitalism whilst understanding the need to defeat fascism and defend the Soviet Union. A genuine vanguard party would have had the foresight and understanding to continue to prepare the working class for the struggles ahead even in the conditions of the international united front against fascism. The first condition was for the CPGB to be completely independent of British imperialism with its own revolutionary line and program. It was here that the CPGB failed.

REVISIONISM FULLY DEFINED!

The adoption of the 'British Road to Socialism' marked the complete triumph of revisionism in the CPGB. The ideological justifications and assumptions had been laid down most especially during the years of World War 2, after June 1941. 'National Unity' in the war against fascism had enabled opportunists in the Central Committee and Party, lead by Harry Pollitt, to miseducate the members and working class generally into denying the need to defeat their own imperialist bourgeoisie. The state is presented as a neutral force which can be utilized in the interests of the people and not particularly the working class. Revolutionary struggle at this time is not repudiated but regarded tacitly as un-necessary during or after what is regarded as a just war against fascism in which the whole nation has taken part.

In polemic with Party members who exposed the situation following World War 1, in 1918, Harry Pollitt argued in a pamphlet called 'How to Win the Peace', that in 1918, the Labour Movement was divided. He praised the monopoly capitalists as being far-sighted and able to see that the working class are not prepared to return to pre-war unemployment and insecurity. The position is put this way - "If there can be full employment during the war, then so can there be after the war" etc. It was felt that the struggle against fascism had produced international co-operation between capitalism and socialism which would bring everlasting peace and abolish poverty, want and war. Although it may not be denied that imperialism inevitably leads to war, by this logic imperialism had not been abolished but had become irrelevant. In response to those who were politically conscious enough to see the real world and not indulge in the flights of fancy of the petty bourgeoisie,

Pollitt laughed and jeered. This is how Harry Pollitt's misleadership of the Party and deceiving of the masses served the bourgeoisie:-

"Who really believes the scare stories of the coming domination of the rest of Europe by Anglo-American imperialism". (How to win the Peace - page 16)

As it turned out, British imperialism didn't get a look in and US imperialism became the overlord in Europe. Against this American control of Britain, Harry Pollitt later shouted himself hoarse. In attempts to justify the CPGB's position of treating nationalization and state control as socialism, Harry Pollitt sneered obliquely at those he branded as indulging in 'wishful thinking'. He said that they are not 'adopting strategy and tactics to facts as they are in reality..' Such sophistry is the stock in trade of revisionism and opportunism. The truth is that the CPGB had abandoned its revolutionary aims and had no revolutionary strategy. It had only spontaneous reactions to events and a program of short term reforms, most of which the Keynesians and social-democrats had trumpeted from the roof-tops as the new order. With regard to nationalization, Harry Pollitt in his pamphlet 'How to win the Peace', hurriedly assured the bourgeoisie that his aim was not confiscation without compensation. That may inflame passions. They should be bought out with state bonds at a low rate of interest. Strong stuff.

A study of this pamphlet reveals perhaps the first statements and justifications of the 'peaceful road'. It is not categorically stated that it is possible to achieve socialism peacefully, but it is an implication which cannot be regarded as a mere oversight. Pollitt attempts a class analysis which lists the different strata within the capitalist class and the middle class. It is emphasised that the capitalists are a handful of the population. The analysis also gives a breakdown by occupation and industry of the working class. The Tories are isolated as the representatives of capitalism who have widespread connections with all sections of big-business. Pollitt then switches to the question of state-control of industry which had increased during the second world war. He argues that the capitalists do not mind a measure of state control provided the Government is reliable i.e. a Tory Government. He adds that state-control is even regarded as beneficial to the capitalists as long as the bourgeoisie can be sure that it will remain their state. It will always be their state since the proletariat as no use for a bourgeois state. However, the argument continues somewhat inconsistently, that the capitalists fear state-control which may inhibit anarchic development of one industry at the expense of society. Here planning is presented as the condition which will bring socialism. Revolution becomes 'irrelevant' according to this scheme. This is how Pollitt presents matters and concludes:-

"Under Parliamentary democracy after the war state control could still serve the monopolists if there is a tory majority, or if the Labour movement has Mondist illusions of salvation through giving way to the policy of big business. But with a Parliament dominated by a Labour and progressive majority with their representatives in the key positions, and a united and watchful labour movement outside Parliament many of the monopolists feel

that even existing controls are still dangerous
(Ibid page 38)

The sleight of hand at the end of this quote does not alter the conclusion suggested i.e. that a Parliamentary majority can beat the monopolies - with a 'watchful Labour Movement', of course.

At the 19th Congress in February 1947, the tone of Harry Pollitt's report is desperate and indignant. Capitalist crisis had been allowed to loom again. Nowhere, however, does the report refer to the crisis being a crisis of capitalism. Euphoria that building socialism is merely a question of increased planning of production, had created the assumption that socialism had been almost achieved in Britain. The report barks out demands for more planning and nationalization. The Coal Board must be run by the NUM. There must be increased production and although working class distrust of this demand is 'understandable' Pollitt asserted that it was mistaken. He came out with the same capitalist arguments that have been used to intimidate the working class for decades:-

"...our movement must understand that if we do not use our existing productive possibilities to their limit, we have to face the possibility that many of our hard-won working conditions and social gains may be placed in jeopardy. We can become a nation isolated from the rest of progressive Europe." (Britain's Problems can be solved page 18)

To achieve this increased production the report demands the use of emergency powers and the defence regulations - directed against vested interests of course.

The CPGB tailed after the coat-tails of the Labour Party more than ever after the war. The Party was placed at the service of the Government and monopoly capitalism, particularly state monopoly capitalism, as a force which can organize the working class for post-war reconstruction.

It must be concluded from the CPGB's post-war line that the Party leadership betrayed the working class from the point that victory against fascism was assured and completed. During the war, the CPGB had campaigned for opening the second front. As long as this was not a reality, the CPGB could be considered to be playing a progressive role in defence of the socialist Soviet Union. But the victory over fascism created new conditions yet again. During the war, the CPGB's class collaborationism could even be considered secondary in conditions of the international united front against fascism. However, after the victory over fascism, there can be no doubt that the CPGB's class-collaborationism was the principal aspect of the contradiction in the line of that Party. Revolutionary opportunities created by the anti-fascist temper of the working class were lost and betrayed by the CPGB which in its agitation demanded the subservience of the working class to the imperialist bribed Labour Movement and its program of nationalization. The National Government was supported even after the war, as the bourgeoisie demanded.

Following on so soon after a war against fascism, the CPGB had a fully expressed line which presented the corporate state as socialism. Defence of the nation and the 'national interest' is regarded as the priority and the unifying factor. What does this

reveal except that the CPGB leadership were either a load of muddle-heads who did know or realize the ultimate conclusions of their position; in which case they did not deserve to be in leading positions. Only confusion is being spread by such thoughtlessness. Or, the CPGB leadership headed by Harry Pollitt consciously played a counter-revolutionary role. This latter conclusion is the only one that has any meaning. Especially considering that the British Road to Socialism was soon to follow. Pollitt and Dutt were not political novices. But they did depart from Marxism-Leninism.

However, opposition to the CPGB's treacherous line was developing in the Party. State and Revolution by Lenin, which most clearly exposes opportunist distortions of the nature of the state was a weapon in the hands of these early anti-revisionists. Opportunism had no answers to these criticisms. Instead it sought to head them off by appearing to make self-criticism on secondary questions while going further down the road of revisionism.

It was in the struggle against these anti-revisionists that the 'British Road to Socialism' was hatched out. They were frantic to prove that 'State and Revolution' did not apply to Britain. Their revisionist line was presented as an application of Marxism-Leninism to British conditions. Nationalization, it was cautiously argued had introduced a new factor which given Britain's 'democratic traditions' had made it possible for the CP, by getting a majority in parliament, to ensure that the planning of these industries is done in the interests of the working class. By extending nationalization, the capitalist class can be bought out. Such sophistry is well exposed in State and Revolution, but the CPGB leadership were careful to avoid making this document the main text for discussion. In addition to this, years of opportunist recruiting and miseducation of the membership with distortions of Marxism-Leninism had taken its toll.

Such had been the criticism of the line of the 19th Congress in the Party, the Executive Committee were forced to make a self-criticism. The report to the 20th Congress refers to the importance of self-criticism and how a communist's attitude towards it separates communists from social-democracy. However, nowhere is a real self-criticism made, except for a suggestion under a part of the report headed the 'Role of Marxism' that insufficient attention had been paid to theory. 1948 was the centenary year of the 'Communist Manifesto' and this document is made the principal classic for study. This is how the CPGB leadership headed off study of 'State and Revolution'. Earlier in the report, under the heading 'Right Wing Social-Democracy', criticism of the CPGB's line of distorting the nature of the state is apparently criticised as being the policy of right wing Labour leaders:-

"Their theory is based on the denial of class struggle... Capitalism they say, will grow over into socialism...The state is presented as a neutral force, standing above society and classes, loyally fulfilling the instructions of whatever party is elected as a majority..."

But immediately following these correct points comes the distortion which was to leave the way open for the 'British Road to Socialism':-

"...the parliamentary majority is considered by itself, as sufficient guarantee of peaceful tranquil transition to socialism." (Britain Free and Independent - Harry Pollitt pg 30)

Nervousness at being forced to go into questions of theory is shown by more attention being given to distorted warnings that Marxism is not a dogma but a guide to action. In making this point, Harry Pollitt was not combatting dogmatism in the Party. Dogma which asserted that Labour is better than tory was not criticised by the CPGB Central Committee. The report was demanding that the study of theory must not lead to too much criticism of the line of the Party. In the discussion at the 20th Congress on the Communist Manifesto, the speeches of professors and doctors were reproduced in a pamphlet 'The Battle of Ideas'. The first speech by a professor describes professors and intellectuals in the CPGB as the Marx and Engels in the Party, who like the founders of Marxism have broken with capitalism. Theoretical leadership is the job of this section of the Party membership, who must organize into their professions in the Party. Besides this assertion being a monstrous insult to the working class, who are placed in a fixed position of learning from bourgeois intellectuals, the theory these intellectuals expound is not Marxism-Leninism but bourgeois liberalism. This is well typified by the following distortion which poses individual 'emancipation' as the condition for 'socialist development'.

"Under socialism, the free development of each, is the condition of the free development of all" (Battle of Ideas pg 4)

Other speeches reproduced in this pamphlet speak out not on points of analysis contained in the 'Comunist Manifesto', but reiterate the importance of this document. There is no criticism of the CPGB's line at any time in its history. Just repetition that the 'Communist Manifesto' is a weapon in the workers' hands. What seems to have shaken the Communist Party into reviewing its line and development since the war was the sudden wave of anti-communism in which the Labour Government took a leading part. The move to study theory was a genuine move in the Party. The membership had witnessed the Party's class-collaborationist line reach a very low ebb. But this healthy mood was headed off with general talk about the need for study and self-criticism. As already pointed out, no meaningful self-criticism is made in the report to the 20th Congress. However, in a speech made by Harry Pollitt to the Executive Committee held on Feb. 26-27, 1949, Pollitt criticizes the CP's post-war line and the EC's part in it, particularly his own responsibility. He says that it is easy for the EC to make self-criticism now and goes on to blame the right-wing labour leaders for making the working class cynical about calls for increased production. Harry Pollitt was clearly defending himself. But is he making a genuine self-criticism? No! It is still stubbornly argued that had the Labour Government carried out more nationalization albeit 'genuine nationalization', then the workers would have responded.

As an apparent means of getting the CPGB out of the doldrums, Harry Pollitt proposed putting up 100 candidates at the coming elections. For this election the whole policy of the Party was

placed on the scales. The 'peaceful road' again is not specifically argued for as it is in the 'British Road to Socialism' which was adopted by the Executive Committee in January 1951. But there is no other conclusion the reader can come to:-

"These measures represent the essential first steps to combat the present crisis, win improved conditions for the people, end dependence on American imperialism and safeguard peace. They can be won by the strength of the united mass movements fighting against the big monopoly interests and their supporters. Complete fulfilment of this program will require a Government based on a united Labour Movement and fully representative of the mass of the people, and with participation of the CP in such a Government". (The Socialist Road for Britain page 6)

The British Road to Socialism was born in conditions of criticism and struggle against the CPGB's post-war line. The revisionists won again in this struggle and had permanently written revisionism into the already opportunist line of the CPGB.

NOTES

19) The Zinoviev Letter was a forgery purporting to represent a communist/Comintern conspiracy to begin an armed insurrection in Britain.

20) The new line of the CPGB on Labour adopted at the 10th Congress was against affiliation, the political levy and the 'Left-wing', and a call for abstention in elections where CP candidates were not standing.

21) It is worth noting here the composition of the delegates at the 14th and 15th Congresses:-

14th Congress -----		15th Congress -----	
Up to 6 months members	25	Up to 1 year's members	138
6 months to 1 year	51	1 to 2 years	96
1 to 2 years	97	2 to 3 years	56
2 to 3 years	60	3 to 4 years	37
3 to 5 years	88	4 to 5 years	32
Over 5 years	72	5 to 10 years	68
Over 10 years	108	Over ten years but not founding members	72
		Founding Members	38

For those at the 14th Congress who had been in the Party for less than 5 years the average length of membership was 2.15 years as against 1.7 years at the 15th Congress. The CPGB's constant turn over of membership is reflected here rather than extension of organization. The number of Party organizations represented at the 15th Congress is 274 compared with 259 at the 14th Congress.

22) At this conference there were 1323 delegates of whom 1178 were full delegates representing branches and factory groups of the party. Of these delegates 762 had been members for less than 5 years and 440 had been members for less than 1 year. In his report, Harry Pollitt refers to the membership being 50,000. At the 15th Congress he claimed that the CPGB had only 15,750

members.

23) The composition of the Congress regarding length of membership was as follows:-

Over 20 years	19
Over 10 years	51
Over 7 years	63
Over 5 years	68
Over 2 years	118
Over 1 year	73
Over 6 months	4

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