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Michal Schatz   April 16, 2013

Shattered: Intellectual Life in Communist Britain, 1945-1962

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Abstract

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In 1956, the British communist world was knocked out of its ordinary orbit by a series of events beginning with Nikita Khrushchev's "secret speech" at the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in February. As a result, communist parties around the world, and particularly those in the West, were thrown into a state of crisis—one of faith, of theory, and of identity. In Britain, this crisis especially affected intellectuals, who perceived their roles in the Party to rest rather heavily on the idea that they were pioneers of a Marxist theoretical frontier. The British Party leadership's refusal to deviate from the Soviet line threw this self-image into disarray, resulting in a heightened degree of dissent within the conventionally (ostensibly) united Party.

There is little to debate here as regards empirical facts. Yet, that a crisis exploded within the British Party is often taken for granted by scholars of British communism and deserves a more critical evaluation if we are to understand the development of British Marxist thought, as well as the emergence of "cultural studies" fields, all of which grew up in the decades succeeding this crisis and continue to play a vital role in shaping the way we think about humanistic questions today. There is not yet a comprehensive study of British communist intellectual life that offers a fuller frame as to the reasons Party intellectuals would have reacted as they did. This thesis therefore aims to provide a foundation for a more in depth investigation into British communism's intellectual domain by painting a picture of intellectual life and thought during the decade following the Second World War in order to evaluate the many dimensions of opposition (and loyalty) that manifested in 1956.

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List of Abbreviations

CC – Central Committee

Comintern – Communist International

Cominform – Communist Information Bureau

CPGB – Communist Party of Great Britain

CPHG – Communist Party Historians' Group

CPSU – Communist Party of the Soviet Union

CUSC – Cambridge University Socialist Club

DC – District Committee

EC – Executive Committee

ECCI – Executive Committee of the Communist International

NCC – National Cultural Committee

NLR – New Left Review

NR – New Reasoner

PC – Political Committee

PCF – Parti Communiste Français

PCI - Partito Comunista Italiano

ULR – Universities and Left Review

Introduction

> The mechanist division in Marxist thought is responsible for such diverse phenomena as the bad journalism of the [*Daily Worker*] and the considerable, sometimes very unfortunate, confusion of Soviet culture. Because of the mechanist idea that changes occur in the substructure which are reflected in the cultural levels, most Marxist critics write of cultural phenomena as a series of separate events. Something happens below, and something abruptly happens above. These sheer gaps between cultural events are natural with the mechanist approach. But if the dialectical relation is seen, then it is clear that the cultural levels do not sink and rise like graphs of the economic tensions. … In a class-society, the veiled action of money veils in turn the relation between production and culture, and though the relation is not so hard to see in the long perspective of history, the individual can lose himself in the working out of formal relations within one of the spheres of culture, abstracting them almost altogether or admitting only a partial interaction with the economic levels or with society in general.[1]

With this extraordinary analysis of the deficits latent in contemporary Marxist cultural theory, Jack Lindsay daringly challenged economic determinism within the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) in 1945. The essay was neither public nor antagonistic – it was meant only for the Party's benefit and delivered faithfully to the leadership. His was an endeavor of incalculable risk and he must have known it. But in the interest of "dialectical unity" within the Party and the Labour Movement, Lindsay took a gamble and, against all likelihood and precedent, his argument was reluctantly accepted—Communist Britain was to have a cultural theory of Marxism.

Yet, most existing historiography does not acknowledge the development of a cultural Marxism until the late 1950s, stigmatizing British communist intellectual life as largely sectarian and uncritical. As the quote from Lindsay's essay reveals, however, the intellectual world of British communism may be more complex than has been recognized. Questions of culture were by no means absent from British Communism and though the Party's Executive Committee (EC)

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[1] Communist Party of Great Britain Archive, Betty Reid's NCC Papers, Jack Lindsay, "Marxist Theory of Culture" (1945), p. 21, CP/CENT/CULT/04/11, Labour History Archive and Study Centre [LHASC]

most commonly stuck to an orthodox line, it did not necessarily prevent the development of more progressive conceptions of Marxist theory in every scholarly field. In order to understand the history of more popular leftist movements in Britain, such as the first New Left of the late 1950s, scholars must understand the political and cultural dimensions of intellectual life within the CPGB.

In writing this thesis, I aim to provide the foundation for such an understanding by exploring the intellectual culture of post-war British communism and the 1956 crisis that "shattered" the faith of the men and women who brought it to life. There is a strange tendency in much of the scholarship that centers on British communist culture to keep the emotions of historical actors quite distant from the narrative. Yet, communism itself—particularly in Britain—*was*, in fact, necessarily emotional. Thus, I also seek to give voice to the experiences of esteemed intellectuals (primarily historians and writers) who committed themselves to the communist cause with a "passionate conviction" in hopes of "transforming" Britain into "a class-less society," as well as to illuminate the significance of communist intellectualism within the broader British left.[2] This is not to suggest that scholars have ignored important figures like Edward Palmer (E.P.) Thompson or John Saville – there are indeed a several useful biographical studies, not to mention Saville's autobiography, *Memoirs From the Left*. Yet, there is an unfortunate deficit in the CPGB's historiography where intellectual life within the Party is concerned and an effort has not yet been made to paint a clearer picture of what being a communist meant to intellectuals in Britain.

In the context of British politics, the CPGB is somewhat of an anomaly. A country with an ostensibly non-revolutionary tradition, Britain never embraced Marx and his revolutionary

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[2] CPGB Archive, Letter from John Saville to Harry Pollitt (September 7, 1956), CP/CENT/ORG/18/04; CPGB Archive, Issues Nos. 1-3 of *The Reasoner*, John Saville and E.P. Thompson, "Why We Are Publishing" in John Saville and E.P. Thompson (eds.), *The Reasoner* No. 1 (July 1956), p. 3, CP/CENT/ORG/18/03, LHASC

program as occurred in other Western European countries like France and Italy. The communist community in Britain was always small, tight-knit, and, much to its members' dismay, quite unpopular. Yet, in spite of its marginalized position on the political stage, those who did belong to the Party tended to commit to it with a passion that is quite rare. This makes it crucial to understand what it meant to identify as a communist—especially for intellectuals, who are, according to Marx, inherently antagonistic to the working-class movement.

Oddly, it is precisely this consuming commitment to Marxism and the communist movement that has led many scholars to criticize these men and women for being "delusional" or "overly idealistic." Consequently, there is a lack of clarity as regards the nature of intellectual culture within the British communist milieu that has led a great deal of scholarship to largely sidestep the communist roots of influential British Marxist intellectuals, such as Thompson and Saville, as well as Victor Kiernan and Christopher Hill, justified by a sense that intellectuals' experiences in the Party consisted wholly of dogmatic appeals to doctrine and that it was therefore their break with Soviet communism that led them to seek the cultural interpretations of Marxism for which they are famed. It therefore seems necessary to state that passing judgments as to the "practicality" of these intellectuals' involvement in the Party is not the point of this thesis. Rather, I am primarily interested in how communist intellectuals imagined the nature of their involvement in the class struggle and the ways in which this conception manifested in the scholarly, political, and social dimensions of their lives.

Eric Hobsbawm describes his Cambridge University Socialist Club (CUSC) comrades as "the reddest and most radical in the history of the university."[3] As his description suggests, there was certainly a sense of distinction amongst those who joined the Party during the decade

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[3] Hobsbawm, *Interesting Times*, p. 100

leading up to the war that transcends institutional and age-related boundaries. The greatest consensus perhaps was that the British Communist Party of the 1930s was one of unparalleled intellectual activity mixed with passionate political activism, facilitated by the fact that fascism posed a threat that demanded both national and international unity. John Saville, who claims to have been "ignorant of much of the detail of the political discussions" upon his arrival at LSE perhaps speaks for the majority when he says, "I joined the Communist Party with a growing sense of excitement at the widening intellectual horizons that Marxism offered."[4] For many, the time spent at university offered an opportunity to become politically engaged to a degree virtually unattainable during grade school. "To join the student communist party at the end of 1934," according to Saville's memory, "was to belong immediately to a network of comrades and friends whose intellectual sophistication was both encouraging and intimidating."[5] Even more interesting, the intellectual allure of the Party during this time was not limited to university students. Jack Lindsay, for example, who attained his university degree from Australia's University of Queensland in the early 1920s before moving to Great Britain in 1926, claims that he "came through to [his] own brand of Marxism" around 1936 (though he did not join the CPGB until he entered the army in 1941 due to geographic limitations).[6]

As we will see, Party intellectuals perceived political work and scholarship as mutually exclusive. The origins of this relationship are easily found in the university branches, where "if a Communist student wanted to do work, he was expected to do work within the existing terms of the course, because it was important to have people within the Party who were academically

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[4] Saville, *Memoirs from the Left*, pp. 3, 9
[5] Ibid., p. 10
[6] Victor N. Paananen, *British Marxist Criticism*, p. 55

successful."[7] This is Raymond Williams' reflection on the atmosphere at Cambridge, but it is easily applied to the Party rhetoric of other institutions such as LSE, where the student members' "intellectual sophistication" demanded a certain level of academic excellence.

While at Cambridge in the late 1930s, Williams joined the Party a month after joining the CUSC and was subsequently assigned to Cambridge's CP Writers' Group, based on his position as a student in the English Faculty. In an interview with the New Left Review (NLR) forty years later, he describes the work assigned to him:

> We were often called on to do rush jobs in propaganda. An example of the sort of task one was given was the pamphlet Eric Hobsbawm and I were assigned to write on the Russo-Finnish War… We were given the job as people who could write quickly, from historical materials supplied for us. You were often in there writing about topics you did not know very much about, as a professional with words.[8]

Saville's experience at LSE was similar, where the Party held internal meetings "largely concentrating on political work within the School" and encouraged student members to "read the radical literature from the rest of the world."[9] In this vein, we can consider the work of the CP Historians' Group and other intellectual sub-branches of the National Cultural Committee (all of which will be discussed in detail in chapter one) after the war as a continuation of pre-war traditions rooted in members' student lives. It would be impossible to understand the intellectual life and scholarly work of the CPGB's post-war decade without giving close attention to the connection between political activism and intellectual production rooted in the communist students' activism of the 1930s.

There is a second matter that cannot be divorced from post-war intellectual activity: the distinction between Marxism and Communism. Most people who joined the Party already had at

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[7] Williams, *Politics and Letters*, p. 49

[8] Ibid., p. 42

[9] Saville, *Memoirs from the Left*, p. 11

least a basic knowledge of Marx and had committed themselves to his doctrine before taking the political plunge. This is perhaps a generally expected fact. Significantly less recognized is the functional difference between Marxists and *Communists* as perceived by those involved in the Party. Being Marxist and being politically aware were not synonymous. While many intellectuals had knowledge of Marx prior to taking up Party membership (albeit, not much in some cases), it was the act of joining and participating in the CPGB – the choice to actively support the Soviet Union – that made one *political*. This is not to say that one could not be politically active outside of the Party, but those who identified as communists perceived the nature of extra-Party activism to be fundamentally different and, on some level, inherently counter-productive. Thus, Saville's proclaimed ignorance of political discussions during his initial encounters with elder "reddish" students at LSE does not necessarily imply an ignorance of Marx. As Hobsbawm explains, "for most interwar communists joining the Party was a further step on this road for someone who was already 'on the left'…"[10] To be a Marxist was to think and talk like the left; to be a communist was to embody it.

What is striking about the shared experience of becoming card-carrying members during the 1930s is the intellectuals' profoundly different reasons for their initial attraction to the Party. Unquestionably, there are some fairly universal sentiments, the most immediately obvious of these being the continuity of the Party's hardline policies against Fascism as Hitler's Germany became increasingly menacing. Even on this front, however, the deeper meaning of being "anti-Fascist" varied from person to person. Hobsbawm, a Jew who had moved from Vienna to Berlin in 1931 after the death of his parents, had personally witnessed Hitler's acquisition of power and

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[10] Hobsbawm, *Interesting Times*, p. 102

was subsequently forced to flee to England shortly after in 1933.[11] The fight against Fascism would thus naturally have a markedly different meaning for Hobsbawm than Saville's general "opposition to injustice and oppression," never mind how "unyielding." Hobsbawm had become infatuated with Marxism and the Soviet Union as a teenager during his short-lived residence in Berlin, but was prohibited from joining the CPGB while living with his aunt and uncle in London. Upon arriving at Cambridge, therefore, he was already "quite determined to join the Communist Party at last and plunge into politics."[12] Yet, Hobsbawm represents a distinct minority of the post-war British communist intelligentsia in that he was of partial Austrian descent and had experienced Fascism firsthand.

Edward Palmer Thompson presents us with a quite different story. Thompson, born and raised in England, was drawn to Marxism and communism partly due to his father's influence, but especially as a result of his admiration for the ideas of his brother, Frank Thompson. Frank, who joined the CPGB while at Oxford after the Party had implemented the popular front line, was drawn to communism for its anti-fascism and proclaimed commitment to equality, but nevertheless remained a passionate British patriot—a quality that Edward certainly adopted and maintained throughout his life, as well.[13] Although Edward's patriotism is rooted in his personal history, he is by no means alone in his strong commitment to the *British* Labour Movement, which is made abundantly clear by the rigorous intellectual work conducted in the post-war decade—almost all of which concentrates on questions relating to the British working-class.

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[11] See Hobsbawm, *Interesting Times*, especially pp. 43-82

[12] Ibid., p. 100

[13] Scott Hamilton, *The Crisis of Theory: EP Thompson, the New Left and Postwar British Politics* (2011), pp. 11-46. Any attempt to summarize the foundation of Thompson's thought in a few mere sentences could only be done in vain, but in the interest of time and space, I sacrifice deserved meticulousness for brevity. We will, however, discuss E.P. Thompson in a bit more detail later on in the thesis.

Figures like Thompson and Hobsbawm travelled quite distinct paths on their roads to political discovery, but it is important to remember that they reached the same destination: Communism. This holds for each of their contemporaries, as well, and thus, the personal questions that the events of 1956 forced intellectuals to address, while inevitably different, were equally as challenging for each individual; there was no "obvious" choice. Fascinatingly, the subtle differences underlying intellectuals' various logics for pledging commitment to both Marxism and Communism rarely manifest themselves in scholarly production (though it does happen occasionally) before or after 1956. This in itself poses interesting questions that we will consider further on. As we will see, only once confronted with the loss of their political identities, were intellectuals forced to dig into the very core of their Marxist principles and it is *here* that individual conceptions of Marxism and Communism assume a vital role.

1

Soviet Marxists or Marxist Soviets?
The Post-war Decade and 'The Cage of Party Orthodoxy'

In a reflective essay on the Communist Party Historians' Group (CPHG), formed in 1947

as a subdivision of the CPGB's National Cultural Committee (NCC), Eric Hobsbawm

perplexedly recalled that after the conclusion of the Second World War, "the bulk of British

Marxist theoretical effort was directed into historical work."[14] The decade succeeding the war

witnessed the flourishing of a significant amount of British Communist scholarship as the Party's

intelligentsia committed itself to rethinking contemporary issues with a mind to offering a

Marxist understanding of familiar topics in a range of subjects—namely, economics, history, art,

theatre, and literature. Books such as economist Maurice Dobb's *Studies in the Development of

Capitalism* (1947) and historian E.P. Thompson's 1955 biographical study of William Morris

gained considerable respect and recognition that transcended Party boundaries, regardless of

whether non-Party readers agreed with the authors' Marxist methods.[15] The books, essays, and

articles produced by members of the CPHG in particular commanded a scholarly acceptance that

defied ideological boundaries—a phenomenon which can perhaps partially be attributed to the

interdisciplinary wealth of knowledge at the group members' disposal. Though the Group was,

naturally, made up primarily of historians, Party intellectuals from numerous disciplines and

trades, ranging from literature and economics to politics and varying degrees of industrial work,

participated in Group discussions because, as Hobsbawm explains, "some of us knew more about

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[14] Eric Hobsbawm, "The Historians' Group of the Communist Party" in Cornforth, Maurice (ed.), *Rebels and Their Causes: Essays in Honour of A.L. Morton*, p. 21

[15] See, Maurice Dobb, *Studies in the Development of Capitalism* (1947), and E. P. Thompson, *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary* (1955). For examples of Marxist and non-Marxist reviews of both of these works, please refer to the following reviews and essays. For *Studies in the Development of Capitalism*: Brenner, Robert, "Dobb on the transition from Feudalism to Capitalism" in *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (1978), pp. 121-140; Laffer, K., "*Studies in the Development of Capitalism* by Maurice Dobb, Review" in *The Australian Quarterly*, Vol. 19, No. 1 (Mar., 1947), pp. 98-101

some subject or period than others, but all of us were equally explorers of largely unknown territory."[16]

For those who joined the Communist Party Historians' Group, the ten years after the war are remembered as a time of "physical austerity, intellectual excitement, political passion, and friendship."[17] Yet, in recounting the British Communist intellectuals' post-war Party devotion, the British and Irish Communist Organisation (BICO) writes, "The most striking thing about the view of Stalin held by the intelligentsia of the CPGB is not any inaccuracy of detail, but an essential unreality of conception, and a profoundly unpolitical idea of politics."[18] In a similar vein, Marxist (though not Communist) historian Ian Birchall argues that "the CP's sectarianism drove it into a ghetto of intellectual sterility. Almost any historical or social problem of real interest was too sensitive to be touched."[19] It is true; the end of the Second World War quickly bore witness to some of the most suffocating Soviet policies that international CP branches had seen since the "class against class" era, which we will discuss in detail further on in this chapter. So, how can Hobsbawm talk about "intellectual excitement" and "political passion" while reflecting on a time so representative of Stalin's tightening, post-war grip? Moreover, in light of these sentiments, a substantially more puzzling question that arises is how intellectuals in the British Communist Party were able to publish anything of note at all?

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[16] Hobsbawm, "The Historians' Group of the Communist Party," p. 27; Saville expresses the same sentiment in his autobiography. See *Memoirs from the Left* (2002).
[17] Ibid.
[18] The Cult of the Individual: The Controversy Within British Communism 1956-1958, Raymond Danowski Poetry Library (Emory University. General Libraries)], Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University. p. 5
[19] Ian Birchall, "The British Communist Party 1945-1964" in *International Socialism Journal* 50 (Jan. – March 1972), p. 8

That quality work was produced during the ten years after the war would certainly be a difficult point to debate.[20] Beyond contributing interesting academic work, the British communist intelligentsia's drive to reassess various fields through Marx-tinted frames ultimately revolutionized theoretical dimensions of literary and historical analysis, developing new methodological approaches to social, literary, and historical questions that remain unwaveringly popular today.[21] While some historians would perhaps tell us that the development of such techniques does not necessarily make for substantive scholarship aimed at confronting a "problem of real interest," it *does* suggest a degree of autonomy and free-thinking that much of the current literature concerning the intellectual life of the CPGB tends to strip away from the Party members in question.[22] Rather than focusing their efforts entirely towards individual contemporary problems, the British Communist intellectuals worked tirelessly throughout the post-war decade to cultivate a new landscape that would alter the atmosphere in which such issues were approached in general. To assert that "a ghetto of intellectual sterility" impeded Communist intellectuals' ability to produce meaningful scholarship, or that they held an "unpolitical idea of politics," is to undermine their important multi-disciplinary contributions and

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[20] One need not look further than e.g. John Saville (ed.), *Democracy and the Labour Movement; Essays in Honor of Dona Torr* (1954); and E. P. Thompson, *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary* (1955); not to mention the still-thriving, non-Party affiliated journal *Past & Present*, created in 1952 by Party members Gordon Childe, Maurice Dobb, Christopher Hill, Rodney Hilton, Eric Hobsbawm, and John Morris, along with two non-Marxist scholars, A. H. M. Jones and R. R. Betts. The simple fact that the Party allowed the publishing of such a journal outside of its jurisdiction is itself an interesting topic that is worth discussing.

[21] E.g. the historical approach of "history from below" has its origins in the Historians' Group during the post-war decade. For more, see, Dennis L. Dworkin, *Cultural Marxism in Postwar Britain: History, the New Left, and the Origins of Cultural Studies* (1997); E.J. Hobsbawm, *Interesting Times: A Twentieth-century Life* (2002); Victor N. Paananen, *British Marxist Criticism* (2000); John Saville, *Memoirs from the Left* (2002).

[22] Some examples of such works are Ian Birchall, "The British Communist Party 1945-1964" (1972); Neal Wood, *Communism and British Intellectuals* (1959); Eaden, James, and David Renton, *The Communist Party of Great Britain since 1920* (2002). Although virtually all scholarship on the development of cultural studies and British Marxism acknowledges the CPHG's role in rethinking historical methodology, none of these studies situate the Group in the larger context of the Party and most tend to treat it like a bizarre phenomenon as opposed to a product of its situation as part of the CPGB.

to dismiss their personal political situations without any attempt to develop a deeper understanding of what it meant for Marxist intellectuals to belong to the CPGB during this time.

Achieving Socialism was, for the majority of British intellectuals, the primary goal that trumped all else. As Hobsbawm explains,

> We [the historians] were as loyal, active and committed a group of Communists as any, if only because we felt that Marxism implied membership of the Party. To criticize Marxism was to criticize the Party, and the other way round.[23]

Intellectuals in the CPGB conceived of the "road to socialism" as a process wholly inseparable from Marx and Marxism; as long as the Soviet Union remained the untainted example of "really existing socialism," Party membership appeared to be the only viable option. In other words, the Party was a means to an end—not an end in itself. For most, loyalty to the Party was contingent upon the belief that the Soviet Union represented the real-life manifestation of Marx's theory and a movement towards the abolition of the world's injustices. These notions will be particularly important later in our investigation as we begin to consider the various dimensions of the 1956 crisis. Individual motivations for affiliating with the CPGB, along with the "inter-ideological" renown of communist intellectual work calls reductive arguments like those of Birchall and BICO into question. Rather than the delineation of a wholly stifling situation in which Party dogma suffocated any trace of creativity or critical analysis, it would appear that the relationship between the Party line and CPGB intellectual production, thought, and loyalty demands an in-depth analysis of the discrepancies between theory and praxis regarding that line and its reception/implementation within the British Communist Party.

British Labour historian Andrew Thorpe is perhaps the first to recognize this complex reality in his study of the relationship between the CPGB and the Communist International

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[23] Hobsbawm, "The Historians' Group of the Communist Party," p. 26

(Comintern) to which it belonged. As he demonstrates, the relationship between the CPGB and Moscow must be treated not as a static phenomenon, but rather as a constantly changing dynamic in which the historical contexts of both sides must be considered. He predicates his argument upon three postulates: (1) the frequent (though by no means constant) flexibility of the Party line; (2) official policy, while ultimately determined by Moscow, could be negotiated by the upper echelons of the CPGB with varying degrees of success depending on the political climate; (3) the line, though official, was not absolute—that is, exceptions were made and meanings were stretched in accordance with certain situations.[24] Thorpe's argument for the ways in which the British Party leadership exercised its autonomy as a branch of the Comintern bears similarities to those of social histories, which tend to emphasize the *agency* of marginalized peoples in (to some degree) oppressive situations beyond their control. An obvious counterargument, therefore, is that regardless of whatever flexing Moscow tolerated, the Party line was always strictly imposed when, where, and how the CPSU saw fit—hence dramatic shifts in policy such as that of the CPGB's support for the Labour government from the end of the Second World War until the start of the Cold War, when the Soviet Union no longer deemed such endorsement appropriate. Put simply, Moscow did not engage every battle that arose, but it won each one it considered worth fighting.

While this would not be an unfounded claim, it seems irrelevant to our current purposes. As opposed to the experience of obtaining and retaining Party membership in Eastern European countries under Communist rule, becoming a member of the British Communist Party was a definitive choice, and not an easy one. As Hobsbawm explains in his autobiography *Interesting Times*,

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[24] Andrew Thorpe, *The British Communist Party and Moscow, 1920-43* (2000), p. 11

> The Communist Parties of the Comintern era were of an entirely different kind…
> They were Lenin's 'professional revolutionaries,' that is to say necessarily a
> relatively or absolutely small selected group. To join such an organization was
> essentially an individual decision, and was recognized as life-changing both by
> those who invited a 'contact' to join in the Party and by the man or woman who
> joined it.[25]

To join the Party during the interwar years—as was the case for most intellectuals who gained

eminence within the Party in the post-war period—was to recognize a particular way of life and

to choose, consciously, to align one's own with it. Those who chose the life of a British

communist did so as an act of free will and remained in the Party under the same condition.

Acceptance of the general Party line should not, therefore, come as a surprise. The intellectuals

we are considering here were not politicians, but academics (albeit exceptionally politically

aware ones). They did not agree with every policy laid out by the Soviet leadership prior to 1956

and in some instances disregarded it entirely.[26] Certainly, there were those who encountered

irreconcilable conflicts between their personal conceptions of morality or politics and the

"democratic centralism" dictated by the CPSU. One such character is J.B.S. Haldane, a biologist

and philosopher of science who left the Party in 1950 once his tolerance for the Party's

fallaciousness—first challenged in 1948 by the "absurdities of the Lysenko affair"—reached

capacity. It seems safe to say, however, that Haldane is part of only a small minority in this

period (though the Lysenko controversy did spark the resignation of a significant number of the

CPGB's most eminent scientists and doctors). For most during the post-war decade, the vision of

a socialist Britain kept them in the Party even when blatant flaws in Party leadership (both

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[25] E.J. Hobsbawm, *Interesting Times: A Twentieth-century Life* (2002), p. 128-9

[26] This was especially true during the CPSU's "neutrality" stance during the first two years of the Second World War. Those who were called upon to go to war—Hobsbawm, Thompson, John Saville, and Raymond Williams, to name a few—went without reservations about betraying the Party line (though Hobsbawm does say that his time spent in the British army encompassed "the least satisfactory years in my life." [p. 154]). For more, see, Scott Hamilton, *The Crisis of Theory: EP Thompson, the New Left and Postwar British Politics* (2011); Hobsbawm, *Interesting Times,* especially Ch. 10: War; John Saville, *Memoirs From the Left* (2003); Raymond Williams, *Politics and Letters: Interviews with New Left Review* (1979).

domestic and abroad) revealed themselves. The devoted words of Jack Lindsay, a literary critic

and founding member of the Communist Party Writers' Group who endured significant amounts

of scrutiny within the CPGB in the late 1940s and early '50s, perhaps articulated it best: "They

can kick me out, but I'll never quit."[27]

The point is that the flexibility allotted to the CPGB leadership concerning the official

Party line extended, with even more slack, to the intellectuals who were not in the difficult

position of directly communicating with Moscow on a regular basis. Most were not employed by

the Party and thus not dependent upon it in the same way as those who held leadership positions.

Although Thorpe is dealing explicitly with the interactions between the British Communist Party

and the Comintern, which Stalin disbanded in 1943, his observations remain relevant after the

Second World War. Furthermore, the CPGB was, in some respects, inadvertently granted

increased autonomy once it was no longer officially a satellite of the Soviet Union. Thorpe's

postulates will thus prove useful as we explore intellectuals' interactions with the Party.

Yet, it would certainly be naïve to assert that the Soviet line did not influence or affect how and

which intellectual work was produced. Communist intellectuals engaged in a constant balancing

act between their commitment to intellectual integrity and their dedication to meeting the Party's

demands—few were willing to compromise on that integrity entirely, even during the post-war

decade. This naturally points to a further question: Why retain Party membership at all?

What follows is an elucidation of the topics we have hitherto touched on. As I have

suggested above, aspirations of achieving socialism in Britain explain the choice to associate

with the Party in part, but this does not give us a full picture. In order to tackle such problems,

we must first understand intellectuals' motivations for joining the Party in the first place and the

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[27] Victor N. Paananen (ed.), *British Marxist Criticism* (2000), p. 55.

conditions under which they chose to do so, which can only be understood in the context of the Party's history itself. In the interest of inclusivity, the rest of the chapter will be organized thematically. Once we have a solid grasp of the roots of intellectual involvement in the Party, we will investigate the orthodoxy that is purported to have been so intellectually suffocating.

This will be followed by an examination of the intellectuals' post-war involvement "on the shop floor"; their real-world activism, so to speak. Communism takes on a dual character for British devotees. The British Party recognized itself as part of a (much) larger international movement and was always proud of its association with Moscow as such. The goal of effecting communism globally, however, was of a secondary nature. Despite communism's ostensible hostility towards nationalist sympathies, most British communists' primary objective was generally domestic. It would be impossible to grasp British intellectuals' post-war pursuit of communism—both as they experienced it and its actual manifestation—without exploring their duality of purpose.

History of the CPGB: Foundation to 1945

> …to hasten the world revolution accruing, **a Communist Party is wanted**. A party of action. One that will wage the class war up to the point of revolution, rejecting with disdain all compromise and truckle with capitalist reform, but ever seeking to organize and rally the working-class to the standard of international communism.[28]

On Sunday, August 1, 1920, a group of British radicals congregated at a Rank and File Convention in London driven by a desire to "help to lay the foundations of a real revolutionary Communist Party."[29] Vladimir Il'ich Lenin, leader of the newly established Soviet Union, founded the Communist Party of Great Britain in an effort to expand the Comintern (hastily

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[28] "A Call for a Communist Party: To the Communists and Socialists of Great Britain," July 7, 1920; (original document) photographed in Klugmann, *History of the Communist Party of Great Britain,* Second page of fourth photo between pp. 168 and 169. Bold type in original.
[29] Ibid.

formed in 1919) with the hope of securing a hegemonic position over a global working-class movement, rooted in Marx's doctrine, by replacing the 1889 Second International (a movement he considered tainted, if not failed completely, due to its members' nationalism at the outset of the First World War). From its foundation until its demise in 1991, the CPGB never qualified as a mass political party, boasting just under 60,000 members at the height of its popularity, unlike other Comintern branches such as the Parti Communiste Français (PCF) in France or the Partito Comunista Italiano (PCI) in Italy, both of which enjoyed enough support to hold significant sway in their respective countries' political domains. Britain's first political working-class organization, the Labour Party, mobilized the majority of working-class support prior to the First World War and managed to sustain it throughout the twentieth century, although the trade unions tended to offer their loyalty to the CP after the General Strike and coal-mining lockout in 1926 (in August 1939, for example, 64 members of the CPGB also sat on trade union executive committees).[30]

Still, the CP of the interwar period fancied itself Britain's vanguard working-class Party, steadfastly dedicated to bringing revolution to British society. It resented the reform tactics of the Labour Party, calling instead for "the establishment of a *Communist* Republic of a socially and economically equal people… the total abolition of the present system of wage slavery through a social revolution."[31] Essentially, in pledging commitment to the Party, members were expected to "conduct an unflinching campaign against the power of capitalism."[32] Concerned with

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[30] Thorpe, *The British Communist Party and Moscow*, p. 249. For more on these events, see: James Klugmann, *History of the Communist Party of Great Britain, Volume 2: The General Strike, 1925-1927* (1969); Kevin Morgan, Gidon Cohen, and Andrew Flinn. *Communists and British Society: 1920 – 1991* (2007); James Eadon, and David Renton, *The Communist Party of Great Britain since 1920.*

[31] Quoted in James Klugmann, *History of the Communist Party of Great Britain, Volume 1: Formation and Early Years, 1919-1924* (1968), p. 199; original emphasis. Here, Klugmann quotes the CPGB's first official Constitution, drafted at the Third Congress of the Communist Party in Manchester, April 23-4, 1921.

[32] Ibid.

effecting such radicalism in post-First World War Britain, the CPGB found itself in the unfortunate position of being, as Henry Pelling puts it, "a revolutionary Party in a non-revolutionary situation."[33] While countries such as Germany were boiling over with political malcontent, interwar Britain rested in a markedly docile state. In fact, the country saw a large extension of individual rights, beginning with the granting of women's suffrage (to a limited degree) in 1918 and then universal male suffrage in 1928. In other words, liberal democracy reigned supreme.

Despite Party members' unfaltering dedication, the fact remains that their main political competitor, the Labour Party, dramatically overshadowed them. If communism were to be successful, establishing some sort of policy for confronting the obstacle posed by Labour could not be avoided. Deciding how to interact with Labour proved to be one of the greatest challenges faced by communists in the Party's formative years. The CPGB's radical objectives led the Labour Party to oppose any semblance of collaboration, making it difficult for communists to attempt to take over from within. The Comintern's shifting demands further complicated matters as the British CP attempted to act such that it could appeal to the particular interests of the British public while simultaneously maintaining loyalty to its Soviet headquarters. Ultimately the CPGB was met with little success. This has most frequently been attributed to the Party's "un-British" radicalism and "zigzagging" stance. In total, between 1921 and 1943, the Comintern established five major Party lines: the united front, class against class, popular front, wartime neutrality, and allied war effort. For our current purposes, the Popular Front period will be the most important interwar policy, since it was the Party's staunch opposition to Fascism that drew into the Party the majority of those people who made up the CPGB's post-war intelligentsia. It is

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[33] Henry Pelling, *The British Communist Party: a Historical Profile* (1958), p. 182

worth briefly detailing each of these policies, however, so that we understand the CPGB's

evolution and the nature of the movement to which the post-war intellectuals committed

themselves in the 1930s.

From December 1921 until February 1928, the CPGB officially operated in accordance

with the Comintern's "united front" line, the aim of which was to forge an official association

with working-class organizations—particularly Labour—in hopes of broadening communist

support. While officially adopted as a Comintern objective at the tail end of 1921, the need for

collaborative tactics in Britain had been a point of emphasis for Lenin since mid-1920 (though he

was sure to be clear that "the Party of Communists can join the Labour Party only on condition

that it preserves full freedom of criticism and is able to conduct its own policy").[34] Before the

CPGB had even been formally established, the British branch's founding members had already

decided, by a small majority, to apply for affiliation to the Labour Party during the 1920 London

Unity Convention.[35] In the CPGB's first volume of its "official history," designated Party

historian James Klugmann described this application as "no diplomatic document. It set out the

revolutionary programme of the Communist Party—its belief in the revolutionary path to

socialism, in the dictatorship of the proletariat, its rejection of reformism…"[36] Unsurprisingly,

the Labour Party happily denied the CPGB affiliation with a vote of 4,115,000 to 224,000 at the

Annual Labour Party conference in June 1921.[37] Under the dictates of the united front policy, the

Party could continue its efforts to append itself to Labour with a clear conscience.

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[34] Vladimir Lenin, *Speech On the Role of the Communist Party* at the Second World Congress of the Comintern (July 23, 1920)

[35] That only a "small majority" approved the policy is important. Close to half the members opposed any form of collaborative objectives, making efforts towards affiliation a dual battle; one with the labour party and the other within the party ranks themselves.

[36] James Klugmann, *History of the Communist Party of Great Britain* (1968), p. 167

[37] Thorpe, *The British Communist Party and Moscow*, p. 46

Generally speaking, there were two ways by which the CPGB could attempt a united

front with the other working-class bodies: from above and from below, to use Thorpe's terms.

Pursuing this policy "from above" meant trying to negotiate terms with the other Party's

leadership. This method is reflected in the early applications for affiliation and appeals in

response to rejection.[38] Alternatively, a "below" approach involved interacting closely with

lower-level members of rival organizations whilst bad-mouthing their respective leaderships. In

keeping with the CPGB's proclaimed radicalism, this second approach tended to be more

popular with CP supporters who resented the alternative for being too bourgeois and reformist.

On the whole, neither approach proved particularly effective. With the exception of an upsurge

of nearly 7,000 members to make the Party total just under 12,000 (a number that had shrunk

back down to 6,396 within a year) correlating to the CPGB's support for workers during the

General Strike and coal-mining lockout in 1926, the Party made little progress in its aims to

revolutionize social, economic, and political life in Britain.[39] By early 1928, the seemingly

barren united front policy made way for the profoundly different and even less effective class

against class directive.

"Class against class" marks a radical jump to the left. Quite unlike the united front, this

policy was one of uncompromising exclusivity. In a letter to Party members announcing and

delineating the new line, the Central Committee (CC) summarized its principal objectives:

> 1. *The greatest possible extension of our independent approach to the masses in all industrial disputes and political campaigns…* 2. *The utmost possible intensification of our campaign to 'cleanse the leadership'* [of the 'reformist' labour movement]… 3. *The sharpest possible intensification of the party's exposure, by concrete examples, of the reformist leaders,* both right and sham

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[38] For a full account of these appeals and other examples of "above-driven" united front actions, see, Eadon, and Renton, *The Communist Party of Great Britain since 1920*, Ch. 1: High Hopes; Thorpe, *The British Communist Party and Moscow*, Ch. 3 & 4.

[39] Thorpe, *The British Communist Party and Moscow*, p. 95

'left'… 4. The *linking up* of all the principal party slogans of action…with these campaigns.[40]

The change in policy, first imposed from above in February by the Ninth plenum of the Executive Committee of the Communist International (ECCI) and then sustained in August at the sixth world congress of the Comintern, was allegedly intended to address the problems arising as a result of the Party's increasing influence among the working class. As John Saville explained in a critical, unpublished letter to the editor of World News and Views (a weekly paper published by the CPGB) in 1956, "[the Comintern and the Party leadership] argued that the right wing of social democracy was 'avowedly counter-revolutionary' and the left wing, while playing with phrases, in practice betrayed the workers in critical situations and was 'therefore the most dangerous faction in the social-democratic parties'."[41] As Saville suggested in his letter, the reasoning put forth by Comintern argued that the success of the Party was becoming intimidating for all opposing parties—certainly the Conservative government, but also the Labour Party and trade union leaderships—prompting them to focus all their efforts on sabotaging the CPGB. Being wildly untrue, these assertions became the subject of passionate debate between the CPGB leadership and that of the Comintern.

The historiography on this policy has been a point of contention where the Comintern is concerned. Traditionally, this period had been viewed as largely demonstrative of Stalin's ascension and the "cleansing" of party leadership that he sought to carry out.[42] Privileged with access to archival materials previously untouchable under the yoke of the Soviet Union, however, Thorpe's study, along with Matthew Worley's book, *Class Against Class: The*

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[40] The Central Committee of the Communist Party of Great Britain, "Open Letter to All Members of the CPGB" (London, 1928), quoted in Matthew Worley, *Class against Class: The Communist Party in Britain between the Wars* (2002), p. 89. All emphases original.

[41] Letter from John Saville to World News and Views (June 29, 1956)

[42] See Noreen Branson, *History of the Communist Party of Great Britain, 1927-41* (1985); Pelling, *The British Communist Party*, pp. 39-53.

Communist Party in Britain Between the Wars, published shortly after, elucidate the finer details

of the implementation of class against class in the British case.[43] While pressure from the

Comintern to adopt the new policy was undeniably present, both Thorpe and Worley argue that

the policy's acceptance was a negotiation, not a dictate. Harry Pollitt, CPGB General Secretary,

initially fought adamantly against it for fear that such a stance would result in "the complete

isolation of the party in the British labour movement."[44] The change was ultimately accepted

when CPGB leadership could not deny members' desire for a new tactic after repeated failed

endeavors to gain political influence—especially during 1926—in addition to pressures from

Moscow.

By the early 1930s, however, the CPGB had already begun to move more towards the

center-left of the political scale, so when the Comintern officially decided that the popular front

replace class against class in 1935, the new policy was mainly a formality.[45] John Saville, who

arrived as a first year student at the London School of Economics in 1934, placed the origins of

his communist involvement in "the sense of belonging to a world movement dedicated to an

unyielding opposition to injustice and oppression."[46] This is certainly not the reflection of a man

who felt (at the time) that he had joined a Party driven by wholly divisive policies. Even if the

leadership was still struggling to give Moscow the illusion of staying true to the Party line, the

intended intensity of the class against class policy was no longer felt by the general rank-and-file.

The significance in this, Thorpe and Worley will argue, is that the British Communist leadership

did not crumble at the Comintern's whim, but rather appeased its Russian counterparts while

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[43] Thorpe, *The British Communist Party and Moscow* (2000) – see especially pp. 117-55; Worley, *Class Against Class* (2002).

[44] Worley, *Class Against Class*, p. 93. Worley is quoting a letter sent by the Political Bureau to the ECCI in Moscow, November 23, 1927.

[45] One of the most indicative signs of this shift is the leaderships resumed attempt to gain the support of trade union officials in the early '30s.

[46] John Saville, *Memoirs from the Left* (2002), p.11

acting as best it could in order to serve the particular interests of the British movement. Taking their claim a step further, it would seem that, as a general rule, the autonomy exercised by the CPGB Sectariat trickled down to its lower-level members, which would explain Marxist literary critic Raymond Williams' sentiment that "[the Party branch at Cambridge] was…at all its essential points fairly tightly directed. But on the other hand all its immediate activities were very open."[47]

As the CPGB quietly softened its line, the manifestation of Fascism in Spain, Italy and Germany generally, and the Spanish Civil War in particular, along with the coming-of-age of the generation born during the First World War and in its immediate aftermath, gave rise to an uncharacteristic zeal for radical politics amongst the youth in Britain. It was into these peculiar conditions that the majority of the intellectuals who were to become eminent communist and Marxist scholars post-1945 entered their university educations, and perhaps only within the context of such an environment that such radicalism could have been fostered. In Saville's reasoning, the fuel for communist sympathies amongst university students was ignited by the fact that "the general view that capitalism was a degenerate and declining system was contrasted with what was believed to be the bright star of Socialism in the Soviet Union."[48] With the adoption of the popular front policy in 1935, British students were given a link to the "bright star" in the form of a common struggle—the fight against an actually looming threat of Fascism was an objective almost everyone could support. Despite ostensibly rigid Party policies and regimented

[47] Raymond Williams, *Politics and Letters: Interviews with the New Left Review* (1979), p. 40
[48] Saville, *Memoirs from the Left*, p. 8

bureaucratic functioning, the student communists of the 1930s felt drawn in by the lively spirits of their respective university branches.[49]

The Soviet Union's shift to a line of neutrality in 1939 was, at the time, surprisingly unproblematic for most of our young intellectuals. The CPSU, which had been avidly advocating that the imminent war would be a just one in which bourgeois democratic governments shared the Soviet objective of opposing fascism, changed its stance entirely when on September 7, six days after Hitler's invasion of Poland, Georgi Dimitrov (head of the Comintern) informed Pollitt that the war was actually not a battle against fascism, but rather a struggle between imperial nations for expanded power. As such, the Soviet Union proclaimed, the working-class movement had no business involving itself. The new line infuriated Pollitt, who stepped down from his position at General Secretary, though he remained in the Party and resumed the role once the Soviet Union entered the war in 1941.

As for lower-level members of the CPGB, the new line on war did not seem to stir much controversy. As we discussed above, the Party's line did not do much to influence party members' involvement in the war and there was little fluctuation in Party membership, which had increased to slightly less than 18,000 during the popular front era.[50] Once Germany invaded Russia in June 1941, the line quickly changed again and the Soviet Union entered the war as an ally of Britain and the United States. Membership shot up to just shy of 60,000 between 1942 and 1945, creating quite favorable conditions for communists to return to England and resume their political endeavors once the war came to a close.

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[49] In fact, there is a general consensus among intellectuals such as Saville, Williams, and Hobsbawm that the Party's strict organization actually allowed for the creation of much more effective political work than their rival university counterparts were able to produce.

[50] Thorpe, *The British Communist Party and Moscow*, p. 249

The Anatomy of Orthodoxy

With the Comintern's disestablishment in 1943, the CPGB itself was in a far less constricted position during the two years immediately succeeding the war. Express dissent from the Party line, however, remained unacceptable. For many scholars, the nature of orthodoxy within the Communist Party is a point of contention. Until recently, a significant portion of the literature concerning the CPGB held the view that life within the Party was one of complete subordination.[51] Yet, as Thorpe and Worley suggest, this may be too narrow a conception of the experience of being a British communist. In order to gain an understanding of the lives British communist intellectuals chose through their involvement in the Party, it will be helpful to investigate orthodoxy both as it purported to function in theory and as it manifested in practice.

No longer subjected to the Comintern's dictate (which had in any case ceased in the late 1930s to maintain the level of unrivaled influence it had enjoyed over the CPGB in the 1920s), the Party adopted a policy of unwavering support for Clement Attlee's newly elected Labour Government in 1945 in an attempt to appeal to the more moderate majority of British citizens.[52] Rajani Palme Dutt (best known as R. Palme Dutt), founder and editor of *Labour Monthly*—a Party publication that Saville posits was "the only intellectual journal read by working-class militants"—from 1921 until his death in 1974, was one of the most vocal propagandists of this new line:

> …the working class, as the ascending class, takes over the leadership of
> the nation, at the same time as the bourgeoisie moves to the position of the
> enemy of the nation. True patriotism and class-consciousness merge in a

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[51] Pelling, *The British Communist Party: a Historical Profile.*

[52] For an interesting discussion on how this decrease in radicalism actually hurt the CPGB politically (e.g. in terms of membership and perceived consistency of purpose), see Eaden and Renton, *The Communist Party of Great Britain since 1920*, pp. 98-113.

common stream of struggle; the old pseudo-patriotism and jingoism of reactionary flag-wagging and enslavement of nations is exposed.[53]

That this gives the sense that the communists themselves had just acquired power is an evident oddity. How strange that the language here treats the election victory of a party once decried by communists as "the most dangerous faction in the social-democratic parties" as an event demonstrable of the triumph of communist objectives.[54] But this is a shining example of the type of passionate support that the Party demanded of its members—membership was theoretically defined by an unfaltering disciplined devotion and Dutt served as its poster child.

Organizationally, the Soviet Union, and thus the CPGB, operated within the strict bounds of what is called "democratic centralism;" a system in which open debate and criticism is (in theory) encouraged and expected until elected bodies reach a final decision, at which point everyone is obligated to accept and abide by the chosen line. One-time communist and historian Raphael Samuel summarizes the principle of democratic centralism well: "There were no such things as majorities and minorities in the Party, but rather, on all occasions, the appearance of a general will."[55] Despite the debates and negotiations that we discussed regarding the Party line during the 1920s and early 1930s, an expectation existed that a policy, once chosen, would be embraced. As Worley shows, upon the CPGB's adoption of the radical class against class policy, more than comply, some members actually took it further than the Soviets themselves.[56]

Democratic centralism naturally remained a fundamental component of Party organization after the war, as exemplified by Dutt's faithful support for the CPGB's moderate post-war line. When the Cold War broke out in late 1947, the CPGB was accordingly forced to

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[53] Saville, *Memoirs from the Left*, p. 11; Dutt, R. Palme, "Notes of the Month – Prospects for 1946" *Labour Monthly*, Vol. 28, no. 1 (January 1946), p. 7

[54] CPGB Archive, Letter from John Saville to World News and Views (June 29, 1956), CP/CENT/ORG/18/04, LHASC

[55] Samuel, *The Lost World of British Communism*, p. 81

[56] See Worley, *Class Against Class*.

abandon its collaborative efforts in favor of a more radical, explicitly pro-Soviet program.[57]

Obediently, Dutt shifted too:

> In Britain the Government is reorganised to the Right; economic policy is subordinated to American pressure; nationalisation schemes are delayed; and a heavy offensive, in close association with the Federation of British Industries, is opened against the living standards of the people, while monopoly interests are protected…[58]

> Yet, CPGB propaganda, such as *Labour Monthly*, did not necessarily represent

individuals' sentiments regarding Party policy. Despite Dutt's ever-loyal account of the changing

political situation in 1945, there were few who had actually considered Labour's election success

a "W" for the CPGB, seeing as the 1945 government was, as Hobsbawm puts it, "no more

'revolutionary' than the state-directed war effort of the past six years."[59] Saville too was filled

with misgivings about Labour, the post-war foreign policy of which, he remembers:

> was for me a confirmation of the conservative iniquities of British labourism. The modest improvements in social welfare…were the least that could be expected to be introduced and full employment, common to all the advanced industrial countries, was the most significant part of the general increase of living standards. Far too many of the conservative structures of our society were left untouched…[60]

The shift to a more radical line in 1947 therefore did not spark much controversy amongst the

more actively involved, radical members of the CPGB intelligentsia. Labour had already failed

to enact the type of radical changes many Party members thought necessary to promoting the

working-class. Considering these misgivings about the earlier pro-Labour policy, one may

venture to ask why comrades like Hobsbawm and Saville put up with it?

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[57] In response to the stormy political environment, in 1947 the Soviet Union formed the Communist Information Bureau (Cominform) to unite the Eastern European CPs; the only Western Parties represented were the French and Italian Parties, leaving the CPGB to rely on the PCF for news of the Party line. For more on the establishment of the Cominform, see Thorpe, *The British Communist Party and Moscow*.

[58] Dutt, R. Palme, "Notes of the Month" in *Labour Monthly*, (November 1947)

[59] Hobsbawm, *Interesting Times*, p. 175

[60] Saville, *Memoirs from the Left*, p. 76

The fundamental parameters of democratic centralism were strict and did not allow for open, critical discussion of the Party line. There is no denying the authoritarianism latent in such a policy and there is certainly no shortage of literature criticizing it. In asserting that any member in good standing with the Party remained (at least publicly) largely uncritical of the Party line, scholars like Birchall are certainly on point. In the case of F. M. Roy, a District Committee (DC) member in the Welwyn Garden City branch, the CPGB Executive Committee (EC) determined to expel Roy from the Party for "abstaining from voting" when his DC branch was presented with "a resolution pledging support for the decisions of the last Party Congress."[61] Roy's appeal to retain Party membership was revoked; any expression of dissent, including silence, was considered intolerable.

Nevertheless, the way scholars of British communism conceive of the constraints democratic centralism imposed on intellectuals seems to result from a misapprehension. Where these critics fall short is their assumption that the intelligentsia's uncritical attitude towards the CPGB and the Soviet Union necessarily means that intellectuals approached their individual work in the same manner. Despite sidestepping any questions pertaining to the Soviet Union, the politico-ideological work in which intellectuals engaged after the war was anything but uncritical, raising questions that remain central in the humanities and social sciences today. Moreover, in pursuing a cultural conception of Marxism, many intellectuals actually strove to undermine the Party's central principle of economic determinism—this was no small breach of Party orthodoxy.[62]

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[61] CPGB Archive, "Report of the Appeals Commission on the Roy Case," CP/CENT/EC/01/06, LHASC

[62] Certainly, it could be argued that Stalin himself defied the principle of economic determinism with the application of his five-year plan, but the British intellectuals' repudiation of this pillar was fundamentally different from that of Stalin's, not least because it explicitly denounced economic determinism in favor of a more cultural reading of Marx, whereas Stalin still purported to be operating fully in accordance with it.

Of course, this type of freethinking was not always possible, or even coveted, within the Party intelligentsia. It was, rather, a product of both the post-war environment and the CPGB's popular front allure in Britain's leading universities during the years preceding the war. With the addition of the comrades drawn into the Party by the popular front's zeal and the wartime Anglo-Soviet alliance, the nature of CPGB membership and, subsequently, the overall conception of democratic centralism had evolved by 1946. This is not to say that it was not adhered to—most assuredly it was—but the way in which the majority of the new members of the CPGB's intelligentsia regarded it differed from that of the veteran militants.

Running the risk of overgeneralization, we can see two (loosely defined) groups when considering the intellectuals' relation to the CPGB during the post-war decade: the "orthodox" and the "popular fronters".[†] Intellectuals who belong to the "orthodox" group share the belief that the Soviet Union *is* the working-class movement; there is no distinction between the two. The second, more populated grouping sees the CPGB as a vehicle within which the working-class could drive British society to a communist reality. Thus, in this alternative conception, the Soviet Union, as the functioning model of "really existing socialism," served as the director—not the *commander*—of the British Marxist political movement.

Dutt, along with prominent British Party figures such as Emile Burns, Maurice Dobb, and James Klugmann, belongs to the orthodox group of communist intellectuals whose commitment to communism is defined by an uncompromising Party—meaning Soviet—devotion. Accordingly, Dutt mournfully writes of Stalin in the April 1953 edition of *Labour Monthly*:

> After nearly six decades of tireless theoretical and practical activity and political leadership, rising from height to height of achievement from triumph to triumph,

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[†] Whether or not one joined during the popular front era is less important here than whether one shared the Marxist outlook that grew up in that period.

the greatest disciple and successor of Marx and Lenin completed his lifework on March 5, 1953.[63]

In an equally doctrinaire fashion, James Klugmann exclaims:

> Those who hate the working class and the people, those who hate peace, those who hate and fear the conception of international fraternity, have always hated and feared Stalin, the man of peace, of international fraternity, the champion of the working class and the people who labour.[64]

For the orthodox intellectuals, membership in the CPGB implies not only an *a priori* acceptance of all policy and leadership, but a genuine belief that any private doubts are simply signs of personal weakness or cognitive limitations. Dobb exhibits such behavior in *Studies* when he briefly acknowledges an ostensible paradox of Soviet economic policy through his discussion of "State Capitalism." This system, he contends, was implemented by Lenin during the 1920s to enable the "unification of small-scale production" in order to exercise control "over a mixed type of economic system." Yet, he also asserts that this approach can easily be applied to Germany's war economy, a notion he attributes to Lenin himself.[65] Dobb reconciles this obvious contradiction, however, by explaining that "the difference depends on the form of the State, the condition of prevailing class relations, and the class interests which the State policy serves."[66] Evidently, Dobb determines that the Soviet state tenaciously serves the interests of the working class, making this potentially oppressive system of State Capitalism an effective one in the Soviet context. He would not dream of the alternative.

The popular fronters' conception of Party devotion is bound up with the Soviet Union only indirectly. Insofar as the Soviet Union could retain its position as "the bright star of Socialism," this group would remain equally as uncritical and dedicated to the Soviet Union and

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[63] R. Palme Dutt, "Notes of the Month: Stalin and the Future" *Labour Monthly*, Vol. 35, no. 4 (April 1953), p. 145-6
[64] James Klugmann, R. Palme Dutt (ed.), "Stalin's Legacy" *Labour Monthly*, Vol. 35, no. 4 (April 1953), p. 168
[65] "[Lenin also] used the term with reference to the war economy of Germany in the First World War." Dobb, *Studies,* p. 384
[66] Dobb, *Studies*, p. 384

the CPGB as those who fall into the orthodox category, but their primary dedication was to the "working-class struggle," not to the Party. Thus, in a letter to Saville discussing a potential book, Christopher Hill wrote that he wanted to be sure that they were "producing what the movement wants"—his scope of concern exceeded the Party's bounds. Hobsbawm provides a further insight into the fronters' conception: "Both we and the party saw ourselves not as a sect of true believers…but ideally as leaders of a broad progressive movement such as we had experienced in the 1930s."[67] Whether or not this held true for "the party," we may certainly infer that during the post-war decade Hobsbawm felt himself to be a part of a movement that pushed beyond the sectarian tendencies of the CPGB's pre-popular front years.

In a different way, Raymond Williams' close relationship with the Historians' Group during the post-war decade is particularly telling of the fronters-orthodox ideological divide. In spite of his pre-war persona as "a militant and obviously high-flying recruit to the student Party," Williams is the only one of the individuals we have discussed thus far who neglected to return to the CPGB after the war.[68] "I did not resign," Williams explained while trying to make sense of this decision: "I never consciously decided to leave the party, or resigned from it. I was conscious in 1945 that I would not rejoin it."[69] Yet he nevertheless claims, "I saw the whole course and character of the War, from the invasion of Russia to the fall of Berlin, in precisely the way a Party member did."[70] Though no longer a card-carrying member of the CPGB, Williams frequently participated in the meetings and discussions of the CPHG and even attended the

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[67] Hobsbawm, "The Historians' Group of the Communist Party," p. 32; It seems unlikely that leading Party functionaries like Klugmann (whose book, *From Trotsky to Tito*, is widely regarded as one of the most appallingly and blatantly fallacious pieces of literature produce by the CPGB) or Dutt (whom Saville characterizes "as an utterly disastrous influence within the British Communist Party") could be regarded as anything other than "true believers."[67] What exactly Hobsbawm means, then, by "the party" and whether his statement retains its validity when considered in such a context presents an interesting point for debate.
[68] Hobsbawm, *Interesting Times*, p. 154
[69] Williams, *Politics and Letters*, p. 52-3
[70] Ibid., p. 54

Group's 1955 "British Labour History" school, a week-long program held at Netherwood (a

CPGB guesthouse near Hastings) in hopes of organizing a complete history of capitalist

development, which Hobsbawm reckons was the Group's "most ambitious effort."[71] How could

Williams partake in such communist endeavors when he had already elected to divorce himself

from Party ideology?

Famed for his contributions to the development of cultural Marxism, Williams'

conceptual understanding of Marx after the war, as we will see, paralleled that of the fronters' in

virtually all facets save his lack of Party membership. The differentiation between the orthodox

and popular fronter conceptions will prove helpful to understanding this peculiarity as we

explore the intellectuals' post-war political objectives and the work conducted in accordance

with those aims.

Intellectuals and Political Activism on the Home Front

> As a complete philosophical method and system, Marxism has in many ways
> ceased to develop since Engels. Failure to develop always means certain
> recessions, and there has therefore hardened a mechanistic use of the concepts of
> economic activity and social relationship … Marxism, as part of the
> backwardness indicated, has failed to produce an adequate theory of culture. Yet
> such a theory is now urgently required by the nature of world-developments.[72]

Finding V. Gordon Childe's, *What Happened in History*, a "disquieting" account of the

debilitating effects of Marxism's general emphasis on economics, Jack Lindsay drafted an essay

in 1945 on the "Marxist Theory of Culture" in an attempt to pinpoint the deficits of Party

ideology. The primary culprit, he concluded, was the Party's "confused pragmatic attitude, with

an undialectical effort to connect up culture and politics in a direct way, [which] is quite contrary

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[71] Hobsbawm, "The Historians' Group of the Communist Party," p. 37

[72] Jack Lindsay, "Marxist Theory of Culture" (1945), p. 21 CP/CENT/CULT/04/11

to the real spirit of Marxism."[73] In his view, communists' religious focus on economic determinism and the "scientific analysis" of Marx was impeding the entire Labour movement's progression. The emergence of this manuscript seems to mark the moment when the popular fronters' perspective penetrated the barred-walls of Party orthodoxy.

Predictably, the EC's reception of this text was not one of overwhelming enthusiasm. The Party leadership's orthodox belief in economic determinism and its view of Marxism as "a study of facts, not theories," made Lindsay's essay quite disconcerting. In a compilation of denunciatory notes prepared for an EC discussion on the matter, executive member Colin Chambers expressed the following view:

> The whole argument is intended to cut out the social relations and the institutions to which they give rise, and at the same time to divorce culture in the sense of artistic activity from its basis. As a result of this the whole of the following pages takes no account of the actual growth of knowledge and social experience, but flutters off into excursions of the minds into the stratosphere of mental frolic.[74]

At first sight, the Party leadership's reaction was clearly to reject Lindsay's analysis as overly theoretical, accusing him of holding "all too simple an understanding of Marxism."[75]

Yet, despite its initial rejection of "Marxist Theory of Culture," the EC seems to have taken Lindsay's points seriously.[76] Just two years later, surrounded by thirty-eight carefully listening comrades, Emile Burns, Chairman of the recently formed National Cultural Committee (NCC), spent a Friday evening in November discussing the CPGB intelligentsia's "need to grasp that ideological struggle is part of class struggle." Aiding the class struggle thus demanded

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[73] Ibid., p. 20

[74] CPGB Archive, NCC Papers, Colin Chambers, "Notes On Jack Lindsay's Paper On 'Marxist Theory of Culture'" (1945), p. 2, CP/CENT/CULT/04/11, LHASC

[75] Ibid., p. 1

[76] Although Lindsay's efforts clearly aimed at promoting the CPGB and helping it to progress (this essay was, to my knowledge, never publically published, in keeping with the Party's compulsive concern with maintaining the appearance of total unity), the Party kept a careful eye on him throughout the post-war decade to make sure that his nuanced perspectives on Marx did not undermine the line or leadership.

rigorous ideological work, meaning "those qualified to take part in it must see it as [an] important job."[77] As the establishment of the NCC and its professed principles indicate, the CPGB recognized the need to humanize its rhetoric in order to appeal to the general British population. Of course, this goal aligned quite well with the fronters' purposes, which (for most) had always pointed towards a more humanistic conception of Marxism anyway.

To say that the perceived significance of intellectuals' political activity matched that of scholarly production in the post-war decade would therefore be misleading; the two were considered inseparable forces. As opposed to the forceful militant tactics that informed the Party's political efforts in the fifteen years leading up to the popular front, the CPGB sought to demonstrate the necessity of communism after the war by appealing directly to the heart of British culture. The Party determined to "promote the widest use of our forces" for this task, thus entrusting its intellectual comrades with the responsibility of reconceiving every aspect of their respective fields. Inspired also by a more general determination to promote peace and universal equality in the aftermath of total war, communist intellectuals accepted their task, venturing into uncharted ideological territory with a mind to rethinking British culture in Marxist terms.

In spite of the zigzagging Party line in the mid-1940s, a particular anxiety in the minds of communist intellectuals during this time was the prospect of another war. In the wake of the Second World War, much of the Party intelligentsia advocated the *sine qua non* of maintaining peace, while simultaneously condemning the use or possession of nuclear weapons.[78] From 1946 through 1955, there was at least one article in each edition of *Labour Monthly* dedicated to

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[77] CPGB Archive, NCC Papers, "Report on Extended Meeting of National Cultural Committee" (Friday, November 14, 1947), CP/CENT/CULT/1/1, LHASC; The thirty-eight attendees served as representatives for various NCC cultural groups: "Psychologists, Musicians, Writers, Films, Economists, Historians, Philosophy, Artists, National Student Committee, as well as several journals and Daily Worker."

[78] This is especially true of E.P. Thompson, who would become a founding member of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) in 1957.

discussing the signs of an imminent outbreak of war. In the January 1952 issue, every featured

article discussed the topic, each attributing the potentiality of conflict to power-hungry imperial

and, of course, capitalist nations—primarily the United States and Great Britain. Unlike Dutt's

consistently dogmatic "Notes of the Month," these were not all sectarian polemics:

> There are considerable numbers of people who…are critical and suspicious of the Soviet Union. They believe in stories of 'the terror and ruthlessness of Communism'… But that does not mean that their minds would not be open to a convincing case against the foreign policy of America and her satellites. While it is, of course, not possible that we should cease to expose these anti-Soviet fabrications, it is helpful that there should be sincere and influential people who honestly believing the basis of the American case, can yet condemn with cogent reasoning the policy based on that case…[79]

Despite the compulsory disclaimer promoting the Soviet Union, the concerns of this article

clearly transcend the communist–non-communist divide. Although their personal values

certainly rested with the CPGB, fronter intellectuals sought to present a genuine case for peace to

the British people and elected to do so through the same ideological appeals that they were

developing for the Party. Thus, they constructed their arguments for the CPGB, but did so in a

way that could be received by non-communists, as well. The point was to unite with, not alienate

unconverted compatriots.

Intellectuals' work was not, however, limited to the topic of war. In a proposal for a

"Union of Intellectuals," presented to the NCC in 1947, Jack Lindsay expressed that

intellectuals' responsibilities "range from everything connected with Reconstruction – e.g.

housing, community centres, playgrounds – and the initiation and planning of national schemes

for Theatre, Music, etc."[80] Here we see beyond British communist intellectuals' simple

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[79] D. N. Pritt, "Through Error to Truth," R. Palme Dutt (ed.), *Labour Monthly*, Vol. 34, no. 1 (January 1952), p. 40
[80] CPGB Archive, NCC Papers, "Union of intellectuals: proposals by Jack Lindsay," (1947), CP/CENT/CULT/1/1, LHASC

opposition to war, for we can also see the role they conceived of themselves assuming within both the Party and society in general.

Communist intellectuals saw themselves as a sort of vanguard within the vanguard, faithfully carrying out the mission of leading British society towards the light of socialism. Lindsay imagined that, employing their intellectual powers, they would "support all movements of the peoples to fuller control of their own lives" and "if necessary, plan and produce pamphlets, books."[81] With the Labour government supporting the United States in its anti-Soviet campaign, thus threatening the possibility of a new military endeavor, the NCC determined that the best way to "campaign against attempts by reactionaries to pervert minds of the people and prepare them for war" would be to educate the British masses through "many arguments in [the] sphere of science, literature, etc., as well as politics,"[82] which naturally demanded heightened intellectual production.

Participants in all of the NCC's intellectual groups conceived of their mission as one of the utmost importance and took to their tasks accordingly. The point was to engage the working masses of British society, so as to incite in them a sense of active involvement in effecting the functioning of that society. Some of the most important political work of the historians lay in their efforts to inspire working-class comrades "to find out more about their own *local* history in order to make their political work more effective"[83] through the publication of its *Local History Bulletin*. The Group held the belief that such an endeavor

> will not only help us to do this but will also provide us with vital material for local propaganda which, by reviving the old traditions of militancy and solidarity

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[81] Ibid., p. 1

[82] "Report on Extended Meeting of National Cultural Committee" (Friday, November 14, 1947), CP/CENT/CULT/1/1, LHASC

[83] *Local History Bulletin*, No. 1 (October 1950), p. 1

in the working class organisations, will help to make possible the united action without which we cannot achieve socialism and peace.[84]

The idea of advocating such work is, on its own, rather remarkable for 1950s Britain. Even more impressive, however, is its popular reception. In Hull, Saville took up working with local laborers interested in studying their city's history, which resulted in a 1955 article on the Hull dock strike. Upon hearing of it, a comrade Betty G. wrote enthusiastically to Saville explaining, "things in London have now reached the point where the dockers themselves (i.e. our chaps) are definitely asking for a history of their struggles."[85]

The publication of journals was also particularly popular form of politicizing intellectual endeavors. We have already discussed *Labour Monthly* in some detail. Another is *Modern Quarterly* (*MQ*), an intentionally intellectual journal purportedly aimed at providing a foundation upon which contemporary political and philosophical "struggles" could be "fought out."[86] Though doubtless dogmatic at times (e.g. Dutt was a frequent contributor), *Modern Quarterly* boasted a multi-disciplinary appeal that attracted intellectuals from all fields such as the economist Maurice Dobb, biologist J. B. S. Haldane, and historian Christopher Hill.[87] Yet, its intellectual focus attracted some criticism from anti-intellectual corners of the Party. Compared to other Communist Parties, such as the PCF, anti-intellectual sentiment within the CPGB was fairly low, but it was nevertheless present. A report on *MQ* accusing the journal of being "too academic in its nature" and thus failing to address "the present preoccupations of the people" provides an excellent example of such anti-intellectual sentiment. Even this report, however,

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[84] Ibid.

[85] John Saville Papers, Letter from Betty G. to John Saville (April 28, 1955), DJS 10: CP Historians' Group Correspondence, Hull History Centre (HHC)

[86] John Lewis, "Editorial," *Modern Quarterly*, Vol. 1, no. 1 (December 1945), p. 1

[87] See e.g. Maurice Dobb, "Marxism and Economic Theory," John Lewis (ed.), *Modern Quarterly*, Vol. 3, no. 2 (Spring 1948), pp. 65-79; J. B. S. Haldane, "Intellectual Liberty and Spiritual Values," John Lewis (ed.), *Modern Quarterly*, Vol. 1, no. 1 (December 1945), pp. 6-14; Christopher Hill, "Society and Andrew Marvell," John Lewis (ed.), *Modern Quarterly*, Vol. 1, no. 4 (Autumn 1946), pp. 6-31.

does not denounce the importance of intellectual efforts entirely: "We believe that there is an important place for a fundamental Party journal…aimed at the whole people and covering all aspects of the ideological struggle." The authors merely felt that the journal's overly academic focus made it "too narrow in scope" to be useful for the Party or the British working-class movement.[88]

It is worth noting that in the political conditions of the late 1940s, regressing back to the ultra-sectarianism of class against class would have been an easy option, yet amongst the larger part of the intelligentsia, this was not the case. Deviating from the approach taken during the era of class against class, the NCC actually stressed that intellectuals' "arguments" *not* become sectarian, suggesting instead that they "must learn to discriminate between the leaders of certain reactionary trends and those misled by them, so that our attack is in [the] right direction."[89] Undoubtedly, the concept of "the enemy" still had a steady heartbeat, but for fronters like the author of the *Labour Monthly* article quoted above, it beat to a different rhythm as their perception of *who* qualified as the enemy changed. Rather than considering any non-communist an automatic opponent to the Labour Movement, they set out to appeal to non-communists in hopes of guiding them to an understanding of the necessity of communism. Thus, the Writers' Group defined its purpose as follows: "to discuss theoretical and practical problems of literary work, so as to be able to improve the quality of [writers'] own creative and critical work and *to influence other writers towards Marxism and the Party*."[90]

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[88] CPGB Archive, NCC Papers, Barbara and Angus McPherson, "Discussion Statement on the 'Modern Quarterly' for National Cultural Committee" (November 24, 1950), CP/CENT/CULT/1/1, LHASC

[89] "Report on Extended Meeting of National Cultural Committee," (Friday, November 14, 1947), CP/CENT/CULT/1/1, LHASC

[90] CPGB Archive, NCC Papers, "Report on Writers' Group" (August 30, 1947), CP/CENT/CULT/1/1, LHASC; emphasis added.

Contrastingly, CPGB leadership did indeed assume a sectarian stance akin (but by no means equal) to the one promoted under the dictates of class against class.[91] In a 1948 draft resolution on "The Mining Industry" discussing the ill-functioning of Labour's nationalized mining program, the Party's Executive Committee (EC) charges the Labour government with betraying the interests of the working-class:

> The essence of the policy supported by the Tories and the American business men is to make nationalisation (which they could not prevent), serve the interests of capitalism… The name of nationalisation is to be used to get the miners to acquiesce in what is really Tory policy. And unfortunately certain right wing Labour leaders in the Government are in full agreement with this policy of 'getting tough with the miners'.[92]

The EC clearly had no problem labeling Labour and its supporters "enemies of the people." Of course, as an official Party branch, the NCC espoused policies approved by the EC, but the ways in which intellectuals themselves received and acted upon such policies did not necessarily reflect the EC's original intentions.

We may propose a number of reasons for this. It is clear that the threat of taking a "plunge deeper into war"[93] played an important role in motivating intellectuals to pursue a less exclusory stance and soften the CPGB's more hardline policies, but this certainly does not suffice as an explanation on its own. A further cause requires us to rewind to the atmosphere of the popular front period. As we saw earlier in this chapter, in the 1930s many intellectuals perceived supporting the communist cause as equivalent to joining a campaign against all the world's injustices—poverty, colonialism, fascism, etc. In some ways, in the context of their own national Party branch they were not entirely off. Despite the EC's sectarianism and frequent

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[91] In their (somewhat faulty) study of the CPGB from its foundation until its demise, James Eaden and David Renton assert that, while returning to the sectarianism of class against class, it "coloured its sectarianism with a different touch of left patriotism," but achieved the same effects—i.e. to isolate itself from mainstream British politics. See, James Eaden and David Renton, *The Communist Party of Great Britain since 1920* (2002), p. 105.

[92] CPGB Archive, "Draft Resolution On The Mining Industry" CP/CENT/EC/01/06, LHASC

[93] R. Palme Dutt, "Peace or War in 1952?" *Labour Monthly*, Vol. 34, no. 1 (January 1952), p. 1

intolerance of internal criticism, it would be wrong to assert that it did nothing to speak out against such inequalities. Putting aside for a moment the leadership's dramatic rhetoric accusing Labour of conspiring with the Tories in its evaluation of the mining industry, the draft resolution does point out genuine legislative deficiencies and advocate that "the N.U.M. [National Union of Miners] should be directly represented on all national and regional Boards by men who keep their connection with the Union and the members instead of being artificially cut off from democratic discussion" so as to ensure that the miners' interests are adequately represented.[94]

Certainly, most intellectuals still held the view that the Party stood for a pursuit of justice and conducted their political work as such. Thus, in its nineteen-page plan for "improving ideological work," organized and outlined by Edwin Payne, the Historians' Group proposed to counter the historical "approach [that] tends to deny or to *justify every injustice perpetuated by modern capitalism*" in hopes of "assisting the general ideological work of the Party, especially through the writing of books and articles."[95] In keeping with their image of the Party as an organization rallying against the world's inequalities, communist intellectuals imposed their own perceptions on the EC's dictates.

A third and perhaps most critical explanation stems from the communist intellectuals' dual roles as both Party militants and professionals. Hobsbawm suggests that, in the case of the historians, many (though certainly not all)[†] held academic posts at universities and recognized that their positions as Marxists certainly put them in a minority among professional historians. "This very isolation," Hobsbawm recounts,

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[94] CPGB Archive, "Draft Resolution On The Mining Industry," CP/CENT/EC/01/06, LHASC

[95] CPGB Archive, NCC Papers, "Notes for meeting on *Ideological Work*" (May 1955), CP/CENT/CULT/1/2, LHASC; italicized portion underlined in original.

[†] Any CPGB member who did not hold a university position by spring of 1948 was unlikely to be hired for an academic post for at least a decade due to a blacklist enacted shortly after the start of the Cold War.

enforced a certain unsectarianism on us, since many of our colleagues would have been only too ready to dismiss our work as dogmatic oversimplification and propagandist jargon, had we not proved our competence as historians in ways they recognized and in language they could understand.[96]

Though Hobsbawm speaks only for those who belonged to the CPHG, the historians were certainly not alone in the effort to legitimize their Marxist methods to non-Marxist colleagues. A statement entitled "Improving Our Ideological Work," issued by the NCC in 1955, tells us that communist intellectuals in all fields felt pressure to produce scholarship that their non-Marxist counterparts would consider seriously. Asking each intellectual group to outline a plan for confronting the task implied by the title, the committee considered such work an absolute necessity "because only on this basis can we fight successfully for the Party's policy and for Marxism among our colleagues, win their respect for our views."[97]

The intellectual groups were not official independent branches of the CPGB, but rather sub-sections of the NCC. Thus, the reasoning behind the need to improve ideological work speaks not to a problem for one or two particular fields, but to a task endured by all professional intellectuals represented in the NCC, which included fields as diverse as psychology, music, economics, arts, etc. Regardless of one's particular discipline, each communist intellectual was obligated to maintain a certain level of intellectual integrity so that "non-believers" could not lightly dismiss his or her Marxist work.[98]

On this note, let us now return to Hobsbawm's quote, which we discussed briefly at the beginning of this chapter, concerning the historians' theoretical efforts. Whereas Hobsbawm

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[96] Hobsbawm, "The Historians' Group of the Communist Party," p. 32

[97] "Improving Our Ideological Work," (National Cultural Committee), CP/CENT/CULT/1/1, LHASC

[98] This certainly illuminates the difficult position in which the communist scientists found themselves in light of the "absurd Lysenko controversy" when the Sigerist Society, a group comprised of communist doctors, upheld Trofim Lysenko's theory of the inheritance of acquired characteristics, accusing Mendelian genetics of being "philosophically unsound with ideas rooted in the social ideology of the bourgeoisie." (Sigerist Society, no. 15, 6/12/1948, p.5) Papers of the Sigerist Society can be found at the CPGB Archive, CP/CENT/CULT/17/3, LHASC.

considers the reasons for the historians' theoretical undertaking "even now difficult to understand," we may venture to say that, in fact, in light of the objectives set forth by the NCC and embraced by intellectuals, it is not so perplexing after all. Throughout the post-war decade, intellectuals perceived a "link between [the] ideological battle and the warmongering campaign against the U.S.S.R.,"[99] and made conducting ideological work a priority in combatting the "reactionary" tactics of the British government. The British communist intelligentsia's activities throughout the post-war decade clearly had a particular interest: culture. This, perhaps better than anything else, accounts for the "unsectarianism" maintained by the fronters, though so uncharacteristic of the CPGB's orthodox members.

It may thus be asserted that the noted change in conception of "the enemy" is linked to a general change in Marxist theoretical emphasis among the majority of intellectuals that transcended the divides of independent fields. We are speaking, of course, of a rejection of the concept of economic determinism. Rather, as Lindsay simply put it in his 1945 uncirculated (i.e. Party-only) essay, "Marxist Theory of Culture," the fronters wished to see "culture as a transformation of the economic levels."[100] As the name "National Cultural Committee" suggests, communist intellectuals worked furiously both to understand and to effect British culture—especially, in theory, that of the working class. The aim, however, went beyond just the working class; it was to reconceive of every aspect of culture in British society.

Historians understood that demonstrating the ways in which working-class culture, a) aligned with Marx's analysis, and b) was being stifled and distorted by the bourgeois principles

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[99] "Report on Extended Meeting of National Cultural Committee" (Friday, November 14, 1947), CP/CENT/CULT/1/1, LHASC

[100] Jack Lindsay, "Marxist Theory of Culture" (1945), p. 18, CP/CENT/CULT/04/11, LHASC; This rejection of economic determinism, as we discussed, is quite outraging for many members of the orthodox group, instigating controversy between intellectuals, such as Lindsay, and the EC. The ways in which such ideas were put forth when presented to the Party therefore had to be equally as well thought out as they did when being presented to the non-Marxist world.

of figures such as William Beveridge, could not be accomplished by simply drawing on contemporary circumstances, considering the dialectical nature of Marx's theory. In order to present a respectable depiction of the accuracy of Marx's critique, communist intellectuals needed both to show and to understand how the working class had always figured into the dialectical equation and they had to do so in Marxist terms. Consequently, members of the Historians' Group—Christopher Hill, Victor Kiernan, Thompson, Saville, and Hobsbawm, just to name a few—are well known for their efforts to undermine the deterministic perception of Marxism in favor of a more autonomous, humanistic conception through their own studies of "history from below," looking as far back as the seventeenth century to investigate the peasants' revolutionary tendencies.[101]

Although incontrovertibly the most successful CP intellectual group collectively, the Historians' Group was certainly not alone in this venture to provide Britain with a cultural Marxism. We will revisit the post-war decade in Chapter 4 in order to examine the actual intellectual work produced by the politically-minded objectives requested by the Party and subsequently endeavor to address the question of whether we can conceive of a coherent Marxism peculiar to Britain.

Conclusion

Far from generating a "ghetto of intellectual sterility," as Birchall suggests, the British Communist Party became the catalyst for innovative interpretations of Marxism in Britain during decade succeeding the Second World War. Despite the Party orthodoxy imposed by the "iron fist" of Stalinism, the EC's willingness to entertain the cultural interpretation of Marx expressed

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[101] Christopher Hill dominated the work done on this period, as demonstrated by essays such as "The Norman Yoke," which appeared in a volume of essays edited by John Saville in honor of Dona Torr called *Democracy and the Labour Movement*. See John Saville (ed.), *Democracy and the Labour Movement; Essays in Honor of Dona Torr* (1954).

in Jack Lindsay's "Marxist Theory of Culture" nevertheless gave to Party intellectuals both the opportunity and the encouragement necessary to fuel the development of a novel conception of traditional theory with an eye to providing a nuanced, humanistic understanding of Marx. Indeed, Hobsbawm recalls: "the official leadership of the Party concerned with 'culture'…were genuinely interested in our work and gave it their active support."[102] In this sense, intellectual production during the post-war decade flourished not in spite of the Party, but *because of it*.

The ideological division between the orthodox members and the popular fronters, however, remains essential to understanding the limitations of this situation, for although theoretically working towards the same goal—i.e. socialism in Britain—these two groups were not laboring for the same boss. Whereas the orthodox comrades sought through their work to promote the Soviet Union and the CPGB as the highest achievable triumph, the fronters' affiliation to the Party was contingent upon a more abstract aspiration: realizing a society free of the injustices they perceived as products of capitalism. Here, the Soviet Union was seen as a potential mode of accomplishing this vision, but it did not embody the fronters' ambition itself. As we saw in the second section of this chapter, much of this differentiation grew out of the conditions created by the CPGB's popular front line after the 1930s, which laid the foundation for a more humanistic imagining of communist society than the one espoused by the sectarian policies of the 1920s and early '30s.

Certainly this is true of John Saville, whose interactions with humanitarian-minded communist students motivated him to join the Party in 1934. His early infatuation with communism hardened into militant dedication in the post-war years as an extension of the egalitarianism with which he associated the Party during his time as a student at LSE. Saville,

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[102] Hobsbawm, "The Historians' Group of the Communist Party," p. 34

born Orestes Stamatopoulos in 1916 to an upper-class Greek father (who, like so many others, fell victim to the atrocities of the Great War just a year after his son was born) and a working-class mother of English origin, developed a particular fondness for India during the war. While stationed as a Gunnery Instructor at Karachi, Saville participated, along with other communists, in organizing protests against colonial rule in 1945 before returning to England, where he continued to engage in similar work. Saville's experiences in India (and also in China) deepened his desire to fight against British society's "iniquities," and his experience combatting them with comrades like Bert Ramelson and David Duncan only led him to associate his involvement in the CPGB more closely with that struggle for social justice.

All of this contributed to the development of Saville's fronter perspective and led him to maintain his conception of the Party as the most effective means by which to aid the class struggle. During the war, Saville had taken issue with much of the Conservative government's foreign policies and was no more impressed by those of the Labour Party, which he accused of "steadily but without publicity [moving] various social structures and policies back into the range of the market" after it took office.[103] Though he disagreed with the Party's line of support for Labour during 1945-7, he accepted them because he generally believed—even in 1956—that the CPGB's record "is an example to the whole Labour Movement."[104]

After the controversial Twentieth Party Congress of the CPSU at which Khrushchev denounced Stalin, however, Saville did not acquiesce to the Party's demand for silence. Teaming up with E.P. Thompson to publish *The Reasoner*, which we will discuss in Chapter 2, Saville became one of the most vocal critics of the Party's orthodoxy and especially its sectarian

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[103] Saville, *Memoirs from the Left*, p. 76
[104] John Saville, "On Party History: An Open Letter to Comrade R. Page Arnot" in John Saville and E.P. Thompson (eds.), *The Reasoner* (1956), p. 27, CP/CENT/ORG/18/03, LHASC

tendencies, which he denounced as "the strongest conditioned attitude within our movement."[105] Thompson's and Saville's actions in 1956 display a degree of defiance of the Party line of which orthodox members in the CPGB would never—and did not—dare to dream.

Of course, as we have seen, none of these conceptual divergences made a significant difference in intellectuals' expectations of the Party or its general functioning in the period leading up to 1956. It was not until Khrushchev gave his infamous "secret speech" that the CPGB was forced to engage with the harsh reality of Stalin's brutality and its lasting effects. In the next chapter, we will explore the ways in which individual notions of the value and implications of Party membership accentuate these divergences in the face of a political and ideological crisis. As we will see, the events of 1956 not only made quite obvious the differences between the popular fronters and those who belong to the orthodox grouping, but the popular fronters' perspective itself lost cohesion as each intellectual struggled to rework what communism held for him or her individually, as well as the nature of one's commitment to the Labour Movement in general.

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[105] Ibid.

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The Great 1956 Earthquake

To put it in the simplest terms, the October Revolution created a world communist movement, the Twentieth Congress destroyed it.[106] – Eric Hobsbawm

Writing to his old friend and comrade, Bert Ramelson, Edward Palmer Thompson confirmed his resignation from the CPGB's Yorkshire District Committee on May 26, 1956. After months of attending meetings and "committees of every kind," Thompson had determined that he could no longer hope to effect productive political work as a member of the DC because its functioning too closely mirrored that of the Party Executive. In his letter he deplored the Executive Committee: its "'priesthood' attitude towards Marxism"; the methods of "monolithic authority" and "benevolent despotism" it feigned; its failure to "understand the ordinary thoughts and feelings" of the individual people of whom the British working class actually consisted; the "crack-pot religious dogmatism" latent within its midst; and its effective destruction of "every liberty of thought, conscience and expression, which it has taken the British people 300 odd years to win." Thus, in so far as it required tacit (and frequently explicit) support for the EC's values, participating in the District Committee, in Thompson's opinion, could not accomplish the type of "creative analysis" necessary to resolving the issues that the Party faced. He thus relinquished his post on the DC to free up time for developing "theoretical work" in accordance with "our" Party's "real problems."[107] Compared to the general (public) acceptance of Party orthodoxy throughout the post-war decade, the concerns raised in Thompson's letter give the sense not only of a heightened critical bent as regards Party leadership, but also a disturbed self-

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[106] Hobsbawm, *Interesting Times*, p. 201

[107] CPGB Archive, NCC Papers, Letter from E.P. Thompson to Bert Ramelson (May 26, 1956), CP/CENT/ORG/18/04, LHASC

awareness; he recognized himself as part of the "undemocratic" structure that he was inveighing. What had changed?

In a closed meeting on February 25, 1956, Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev delivered a speech that shook Communist Parties around the world to their very cores. Calling attention to the elephant in world communism's room, at the Twentieth Party Congress of the CPSU Khrushchev denounced Joseph Stalin's "terroristic methods," along with the "cult of personality" that had so paradoxically accompanied them, throwing communist parties everywhere into a state of crisis. The Communist Party of Great Britain was no exception. For all active members of the CPGB—intellectual or otherwise—Khrushchev's "secret speech" was a watershed moment that completely eradicated all possibility of illusion or denial as to the nature of Stalin's Soviet Union. To add brutal insult to injury, almost exactly eight months later, on October 23, Hungary attempted to reclaim its status as an autonomous nation, revolting against Soviet power. On November 4, the Soviet Union reacted (to the shock and dismay of its British faithfuls) with the military force of air strikes, artillery, and tank-infantry, crushing the Hungarian Revolution with a decimating bang.

In less than one year, the British communist world was turned on its head. Yet, the genuine cause of the crisis lay much closer to home than did Khrushchev's secret meeting room at the Twentieth Congress. It was the British Party leadership's undemocratic handling of the situation that alerted intellectual and non-intellectual comrades alike to the deeper issues that these events brought to the surface: forbidding open discussion (i.e. discourse facilitated by the Party Press), holding unpublicized closed committee sessions, and defaming those who did try to speak out against Soviet actions. Although the events in Russia and Hungary were indubitably the catalysts of the crisis that ensued, they simply fanned the flames of the two largely

incompatible ideological conceptions we noted in chapter one. Thus, hundreds, possibly

thousands, of letters flowed through the mailbox of the Party's newspaper, the *Daily Worker*,

demanding the abolition of democratic centralism in favor of a renewed acceptance of open

discussion, as well as drastic changes in the makeup of Party leadership. Though Thompson

delivered his appeal to Ramelson in his own style of polemical liveliness, it is clear that by the

end of May he was hardly alone in his sentiments. In a letter to John Gollan, who succeeded

Harry Pollitt as the CPGB's General Secretary in April of 1956, Brian Pearce, Secretary of the

CP Historians' Group, cautioned that "it should be understood that there are a number of Party

members whose confidence wavered to a greater or lesser extent since February," while John

Saville wrote to General Secretary Pollitt directly, attributing Pollitt's rise within the Party ranks

to a form of leadership contrary and superior to the one Pollitt himself was upholding: "After all,

it wasn't a debating point…when I said that you and RPD [Rajani Palme Dutt] would not have

moved into the leadership in 1929 had a clamp on discussion within the Party been operated."[108]

Yet, in expressing their opposition to the Party line, Thompson, Pearce, and Saville did

not enjoy the unanimous support of their intellectual comrades after Khrushchev's revelations.

While few intellectuals endorsed the Party Executive's decision to suppress open discussion of

the speech within the Party, many did not consider it worthy of radically defying Party doctrine

or of questioning the integrity of EC members. On October 23, 1956, however, the tragic events

in Hungary propelled nearly every fronter intellectual onto the same oppositional page, igniting

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[108] John Saville Papers, Letter from Brian Pearce to John Gollan (August 8, 1956), DJS 110: *Reasoner/New Reasoner* 1956 and Brian Pearce, HHC; CPGB Archive, Correspondence with Edward Thompson and John Saville re *The Reasoner, The New Reasoner,* inner-party democracy, and their subsequent disciplining, Letter from John Saville to Harry Pollitt (May 4, 1956), CP/CENT/ORG/18/04, LHASC; For more on Pollitt's ascension in 1929, see Kevin Morgan, *Harry Pollitt* (1993). As we saw in the first chapter, negotiating the line as not only a possibility, but an activity in which member frequently engaged, but after the Second World War, this type of debate was rarely taken on. There is very little (if any) literature exploring this topic, perhaps because of the predominant (though shifting) belief that there was never any debate within the Party. This does, however, raise an interesting question for further exploration.

the outcries for which Saville and Thompson had spent the preceding eight months begging. At this point, the leadership's continued refusal to engage a discourse on the Soviets' actions made it abundantly clear to most intellectuals that drastic changes to Party functioning would need to occur if their enduring support for it were to make sense. Thus, Victor Kiernan, who recollected that he had spent the majority of 1956 "trying to hold the Party line" in a letter to Saville nearly twenty years later, feared after the Soviet Union's shameless display of violence in Hungary that the Party would be "condemned to permanent isolation and uselessness" within the general British Labour Movement "so long as the present leaders are…retained."[109]

Though by no means alone, the communist historians stand out in their dedicated attempts to "beg" the EC to recognize the level of "critical comment" circulating amongst its rank-and-file. Writing critical articles for Party newspapers (which were frequently rejected) and exchanging worried and purposive letters among each other, eminent historians such as Kiernan, Thompson, and Saville, but also including Christopher Hill, Eric Hobsbawm, and Rodney Hilton worked tirelessly to effect the change they considered necessary "if we are to have any future."[110]

Who exactly fell victim to this crisis? Perhaps it is easier to start with those who did not. By January 1957, the CPGB had lost 7000 members—a quarter of its entire membership—yet throughout the entire year, only one member of the EC resigned from the Party. Just as it had played a role in the way work was produced during the post-war decade, concern for professional reputation influenced how individuals reacted to the events of 1956. Those who sat on the EC, such as Ramelson (he was elected to the Executive just before Thompson wrote his letter),

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[109] John Saville Papers, Letter from Victor Kiernan to John Saville (May 10, 1975), DJS 111: Victor Kiernan Correspondence, HHC; Letter from Victor Kiernan to Bertha M. (1956), DJS 111: Victor Kiernan Correspondence, HHC

[110] Letter from Victor Kiernan to Christopher Hill (November 12, 1956), DJS 111: Victor Kiernan Correspondence, HHC

Klugmann, and Dutt, were full-time employees of the CPGB and thus bound to the Party in a way that externally employed Party intellectuals were not. These members were more inclined to play down Khrushchev's speech when it became public in an attempt to deny that it had any greater implication at all. As one may expect, then, the dissenters consisted primarily of Party members whose lives Stalin's denunciation affected not only within the Party, but also outside of it. There is no statistical record as to the demographics (i.e. profession, length of time within the Party, etc.) of who left or expressed opposition to the Party during this time and it is beyond the scope of this thesis to conduct such a project. Two things, however, are abundantly clear: Non-Party employed intellectuals, particularly the historians, made up the most vocal and visible opposition within the Party during 1956, and despite this antagonism, virtually none of them wanted to leave the Party when they began persistently expressing their dissatisfaction with the EC.

But what did all this criticism of Party leadership have to do with the problem of Stalinism that had instigated the oppositional frenzy in the first place? The British Party's Executive had not been invited to Khrushchev's closed session at the Twentieth Congress and there were no accusations against the Party leadership for withholding information about Stalin's crimes prior to the revelations. Stalin was not the dominant issue. What, then, motivated conventionally loyal Party members like the historians to criticize Party leadership? How did one ultimately determine whether to retain membership or breakaway from the Party, and why?

These questions are not easily answered, but the remarkable exchanges penned throughout 1956 give us a window through which to observe the complexities of the crisis, as well as to understand the layers of internal conflict that plagued communist intellectuals throughout this difficult year. We can understand the crisis in part as an extension of the post-

war orthodox-fronter divide that we discussed in the last chapter, but that certainly does not elucidate the entire story. Although there was certainly a coherent crisis felt by everyone within the CPGB (whether one reacted to it or not), it spread unevenly and individuals experienced the crisis in different ways. Thompson was primarily motivated by a sense of obligation to the British workers whose hard-earned rights he felt were being disrespected by the Party's continued loyalty to the Soviet Union and unwillingness to engage in open discussion. John Saville and Victor Kiernan too were appalled by the Party's suppression of "critical comment," but their concerns lay more in the way the CPGB was being discredited within British politics as a whole than in its assault on workers' dignity. In order to gain deeper insight into the nature of this crisis, we must look closely at the words and actions of its most adamant spokespersons: the distinguished members of the Communist Party Historians' Group. Throughout this discussion, though, we need to keep in mind that no matter how critical or frustrated the primary dissenters' tones, each article was written in the interests of "our" Party, and each letter signed with that amiable communist closing phrase: *Yours fraternally*.

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Peeling the Onion

I do not understand; there is no crisis in the Party.[111]

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From early to mid-March, business within the CPGB carried on as usual. John Saville, then leader of the "Modern Section" of the Historians' Group ("my most important job in life"), was particularly focused on planning a book of compiled essays on "internationalism in the British working class movement," to be published in 1957—a project he hoped would lead to a series of books, with a new one published every two years.[112] Ever the good communist, he put

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[111] John Saville Papers, Letter from Brian Pearce to John Saville (November 18, 1956), DJS 110: *Reasoner/New Reasoner* 1956 and Brian Pearce, HHC; Pearce is quoting Emile Burns' statement at a West London Area Meeting.
[112] Letter from John Saville to Maurice Cornforth (March 2, 1956), DJS 10: CP Historians' Group Correspondence, HHC

most of his energy into coordinating writers' intellectual desires with the most pressing

necessities of the Labour Movement (in accordance with the EC's opinions as to what those

were), which meant constant correspondence with other historians, like Klugmann and

Hobsbawm, concerning the book's substantive organization, as well as negotiating the more

meticulous technical details with Maurice Cornforth of Lawrence & Wishart (a Party

publisher).[113] It is not until late March 1956 in a letter to Hobsbawm, where he notes the

"dishonesty" of a recent article in the *Daily Worker*, that Saville gives any indication of concern

regarding the Twentieth Congress.[114]

Though Saville hardly knew it then, the nerves of his future partner in dissidence, E.P.

Thompson, were already fraying. As was the case for Saville, Party work consumed virtually all

of Thompson's spare time and remained his chief priority throughout March. The bulk of

Thompson's Party activism was, however, of a different nature than Saville's. A member of the

CPHG, Thompson actually associated more closely with the Writers' Group throughout the post-

war decade in terms of intellectual work, but neither held as dear a place to him as the grassroots

movements that allowed him to engage closely with the actual British laborers. From 1945-56,

Thompson poured his heart and soul into local peace movements. Though often criticized for

portraying the British working class far too idyllically in his written work, Thompson can hardly

be accused of intellectual elitism considering his extreme efforts to involve himself in working-

class-driven efforts. In 1956, Thompson served as: chairman of the Halifax Peace Committee,

secretary of the Yorkshire Federation of Peace Organization (the broader regional version of that

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[113] Ibid. See also letters from: Maurice Cornforth to John Saville (March 22, 1956); John Saville to Eric Hobsbawm (March 23, 1956); Hobsbawm to Saville (March 24, 1956), DJS 10: CP Historians' Group Correspondence, HHC.

[114] John Saville Papers, Letter from John Saville to Eric Hobsbawm (March 19, 1956), DJS 10: CP Historians' Group Correspondence, Hull History Centre (HHC); Of the 159 letters from 1956 that I have on file for Saville, this letter to Hobsbawm is the first that makes any allusion to the Congress or problems within the Party. In his *Memoirs*, however, Saville claims to have sent a letter to Harry Pollitt as early as March 19.

of his local Halifax branch), editor of a regional peace journal, and was the only member of the

CPHG with enough political influence to be elected to a District Committee, all whilst working

as a teacher in adult education at the University of Leeds.[115]

In March, he was primarily concerned with an upcoming school (ironically) on the role of

the proletariat in "the fight for democratic rights of press, meeting, [and] trade unions," to be

held on July 8 of that year. Thompson seems to have recognized the significance of the Congress

comparatively sooner than Saville, however, and did not hesitate to voice his scruples rather

immediately. Though fulfilling his Party duties without reservations, Thompson wasted no time

pointing out what he considered to be the larger problems illuminated by the Twentieth Congress

to James Klugmann in a work-related letter of March 15. He delivered this initial challenge to

the Party leadership in a rather jovial fashion:

> Your session, "Lessons of Labour History", is of course very worthy and *what one would expect from King Street*: you are quite clear on what the lessons of our history are, the need for a Communist Party, etc. I think this is a rather dusty answer out of all these years. Should we not also ask, why the British people have not seen this need as clearly as we do? … Why the British Communist Party, struggling heroically on the main questions of principle, has also marched triumphantly from mistake to mistake in its tactics and propaganda? … I ask these questions not in entire seriousness, and smarting under the lessons of the 20th Congress. But there *are* questions to which our study of history should help in providing answers…[116]

The light-hearted prodding of the issue here is clearly of a different kind compared to that of

Thompson's sentiments in his letter to Ramelson two months later. Nevertheless, it reveals two

important pieces of information: by mid-March, his concerns were mounting; the revelations, in

Thompson's views, had implications about the nature of his own Party involvement that ran

counter to his imagined function. Yet, Saville did not express any unease regarding the matter

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[115] Bryan D. Palmer, *E.P. Thompson: Objections and Oppositions* (1994), p. 56

[116] CPGB Archive, Letter from E.P. Thompson to James Klugmann (March 15, 1956), CP/CENT/ORG/18/04, LHASC

until two weeks later and even then the gravity of the speech was generally unbeknownst to most intellectuals and other rank-and-file members. How could it have happened that anxieties over the matter arose so unevenly?

Despite the numerous extended meetings, passionate appeals for leadership reform, and the immeasurable amount of correspondences that paint the memories of those who were communists in 1956, the road to crisis was not a steep, but a gradual one. This can in part be attributed to the way in which the speech itself was introduced to the British public. As briefly mentioned above, the CPGB was not represented at Khrushchev's closed session. Thus, the exact contents of the speech were not initially known by anyone in the British Party (although it is possible that some of the leadership had an idea of what was conveyed). Looking at the minutes of an EC meeting held in early March, however, it is clear that the CPGB leadership had at least been informed of the speech's core message, declaring that "collective leadership" had been "fully restored," thus marking the "end of the cult of [the individual] – [great] positive achievement."[117] Yet, it neglected to release any report or statement concerning the Twentieth Congress and Khrushchev's speech until April 21, when an article written by Harry Pollitt appeared in the Party's weekly paper, *World News and Views*.

But this is hardly a satisfactory explanation on its own. Unfortunately for the EC, the speech's effects could be seen through international media long before the release of Pollitt's article. On March 4, Walter Ulbricht, East German Vice-Premier, publically acknowledged that Stalin had harmed the Soviet Union, and asserted two weeks later that Stalin's status as a "military leader of genius" had been invented by the late cult leader himself. Furthermore, throughout the months of March and April, executed "enemies of the state" from the Soviet

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[117] CPGB Archive, "James Klugmanns' notes on the "CPSU 20th Congress EC Discussion" (March 9-10, 1956), CP/CENT/EC/03/23, LHASC; I have given the full spelling of words that Klugmann abbreviated in his notes.

Union were "rehabilitated," making clear that Stalin's posthumous demotion.[118] Thus, by the time Thompson sent his letter of March 15, the fact that something dramatic had happened could not have been completely undetected.

As we saw in the last chapter, however, intellectuals obediently kept silent about any doubts as to the Party line in accordance with democratic centralism. Raphael Samuel describes the experience of being a Party member during the post-war decade as an all-encompassing endeavor: "To be a Communist was to have a complete social identity, one which transcended the limits of class, gender and nationality."[119] In 1956, committed communists were in the habit of suppressing their Party criticisms in favor of maintaining that identity, as well as the unity within the CPGB, so when they neglected to challenge the Party with questions about the Twentieth Congress immediately, intellectuals were merely following procedure. Despite a meeting held by the Historians' Group on April 8th at which Thompson designated the Congress the most critical moment in their Party's history, it was not until May that opposition in the Party really began to heat up.[120]

At first glance, the cause of this pandemonium may seem quite obvious. Given the ultimately inhumane nature of the Soviet Union, most scholars who have touched on the events of 1956 have taken for granted the fact that crisis erupted, considering it an inevitable reaction to the surfacing of Stalin's crimes. Yet, this analysis leaves much to be desired. It was not as though the British communists had never heard anything to suggest that their late leader was not the man of "courage, tenacity, endurance, self-sacrifice, incredible industrial efficiency, and unsurpassed strategic skill" that they "knew" him to be—on the contrary, the national (i.e. non-Party

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[118] Ibid.

[119] Raphael Samuel, *The Lost World of British Communism* (2006), p. 13

[120] Hobsbawm, "The Historians' Group of the Communist Party," p. 26

affiliated) press was anything but shy about exposing Stalin's misdeeds.[121] After Stalin's death in

1953, the Soviet Union slowly but noticeably began "destalinizing" by lifting some of Stalin's

more rigid policies—notably, those pertaining to Yugoslavia. Stalin had accused the Yugoslav

CP leader, Josip Broz Tito, of chauvinistic tendencies in early 1948 and on June 28 of that year,

the Cominform voted in favor of Yugoslavia's expulsion. Though the broken relations with

Yugoslavia were certainly immediately disturbing to some of Tito's more ardent supporters in

the CPGB, it was James Klugmann's wholly inaccurate and intellectually discrediting 1951

book, *From Trotsky to Tito*, that particularly alerted intellectuals to the questionable motives

behind the Stalin-Tito split.[122]

Klugmann, who spent time in Yugoslavia during the war and maintained close

associations with the Yugoslav Communist Party thereafter, had been an avid Tito supporter, as

well as the CPGB's chief dignitary in conducting relations with Yugoslavia. After the split, he

became the EC's favorite choice to fulfill the role of anti-Tito propagandist.[123] Although it has

yet to be confirmed, the infamous book seems to have been a test of Klugmann's loyalty to the

Party. He almost certainly would not have so blatantly distorted Tito's image without being

coerced; a fact that most intellectuals recognized and that some found "greatly [worrying]."[124]

By 1954, however, Khrushchev had begun shifting the Soviet line on Yugoslavia, resuming fact-

based media reports regarding Tito's speeches and signing a trade agreement with Yugoslavia in

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[121] D. N. Pritt, "Tributes to Stalin," R. Palme Dutt (ed.), *Labour Monthly*, Vol. 35, no. 4 (April 1953), p. 159

[122] It is particularly telling of the book's fallaciousness that neither *Labour Monthly*, nor *Modern Quarterly*—both of which typically published at least three reviews per publication—issued a review of it. This is especially true of *Labour Monthly*, which was of course edited by R. Palme Dutt whose fervent support for the Party, as we have seen, rarely revealed any problems with skewing the truth in favor of the Party line.

[123] There are several cases in which Klugmann was given the responsibility of anti-Tito work. At one meeting, for example, George Matthews presented a report on "the development of Titoist activities in Britain," ultimately proposing "the preparation of a booklet by Comrade Klugmann." See CPGB Archive, Papers of the Executive Committee, "Minutes of the Executive Committee Meeting" (June 10, 1950), CP/CENT/EC/02/01, LHASC

[124] Saville, *Memoirs from the Left*, p. 91

October, all of which eventually culminated in 1955 with the adoption of a line of "peaceful coexistence."[125]

It would be impossible to understand the crisis that erupted in 1956 outside the context of the Party's post-war decade's dynamic. There is regrettably little scholarship focusing on this calamity in the British communist world and what is available tends to treat it as a crisis of *ideology*. Yet, this is perhaps a mistake. It would seem, instead, that what arose was a crisis of *political identity*. Through all the pre-1956 difficulties, though doubtless developing misgivings, loyal intellectuals kept their reservations private in favor of the CPGB's most valued principle: "uphold Party unity." It is essential to understand that in spite of these misgivings, throughout the post-war decade intellectuals genuinely believed that their goals for and conceptions of Marxism aligned with those of the Party, and that those of the Party ran parallel to the universal ambitions of the Soviet Union, syncing the relationship between the three. The events of 1956, however, illuminated the cracks in this strategic triangle, and with each blow shattered intellectuals' hopeful illusions of the Party, leaving them (potentially) politically destitute. That impoverishment profoundly shook intellectuals' sense of political identity because these were individuals who had dedicated their lives to the cause; among the broken pieces of the "triangle" lay the efforts in which most of them had spent the entirety of their adult lives engaging.

This is not to say that ideology had no role in this crisis. Indeed, political identity was naturally interwoven, to some degree, with ideological conception, for the decision to join the Communist Party was based first and foremost in the Party's fundamental doctrine. As Marxists, British intellectuals understood quite well the potential incompatibility of their professional identities with that of their commitment to Marx's doctrine. Marx of course famously condemns

[125] For more on the Yugoslav-Stalin split, see John T. Callaghan, *Cold War, Crisis and Conflict: The History of the Communist Party of Great Britain 1951-68* (2003), pp. 50-89; Eaden and Renton, *The Communist Party of Great Britain since 1920*, pp. 105-6.

"philosophers" (a term that can be extended to encompass all professional intellectuals) in his *Theses on Feuerbach* because in his view, they "have only *interpreted* the world…the point, however, is to *change* it."[126] Simply put, Marxism is a theory that demands action. Through their membership in the CPGB and involvement in various grassroots movements in addition to the "ideological work" ascribed to them by the NCC, British intellectuals felt confident throughout the post-war decade that they were indeed fulfilling Marx's prescription. Insofar as "Marxism implied membership of the Party," there was no question in intellectuals' minds as to the validity of their somewhat oxymoronic positions as "philosophers" and devoted Marxists.[127]

But Khrushchev's revelations ruined the validity of that aspect of communist doctrine that called for unfaltering Party unity, and consequently destroyed the hegemony of "democratic centralism" as well, because that unity proved itself a sham in the eyes of many fronters. Although the historians had recognized Klugmann's account of Tito's rise to power as "utterly implausible and insincere" from its initial publication, it was not until 1956 that Thompson actually expressed to Klugmann his sentiments in regards to it: "I…am alarmed (both personally and politically) as to how you can correct certain statements in this book without loss of intellectual integrity."[128] Trained as an historian himself, Klugmann would have fully understood the damage such a book would have on his scholarly reputation, yet he chose to carry out his duties as a member of the Communist Party undeterred by the inherent professional suicide that would result. For Klugmann, supporting the Party line surpassed "intellectual integrity" in importance because, as an orthodox communist, he considered the Soviet Union's, and thus the Party's, survival to be the primary goal.

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[126] Karl Marx, "Theses on Feuerbach" in *The Marx-Engels Reader* (1978), p. 145

[127] Hobsbawm, "The Historians' Group of the Communist Party," p. 26

[128] Hobsbawm, *Interesting Times*; CPGB Archive, Letter from E.P. Thompson to James Klugmann (March 22, 1956), CP/CENT/ORG/18/04, LHASC

Insofar as the Soviet Union remained "the bright star of Socialism," fronters too accepted the call for unwavering unity both internally and with the Russian nation, as we saw in the last chapter. Once Stalin's crimes were revealed, however, the CPSU lost its place as the paramount vision of the future, and respect for unity within the CPGB was replaced by a belief in the necessity of "presenting a challenge to our leadership, of a sharp and polemical nature" in order to achieve "real socialism *without* purges, false confessions and trials, concentration camps, etc." and to redirect the British Party back towards the "correct" ideological path.[129] For some, like Kiernan and Hobsbawm, the breaking point did not come until the Hungarian invasion, but nearly all fronters eventually drew the same conclusion: the CPGB had lost sight of its greater purpose by operating in accordance with the Soviet Union's false premises. Thus, Kiernan lamented Maurice Dobb's refusal to vote against the EC at a local branch meeting following the Soviet invasion of Hungary as the result of Dobb's being "concerned chiefly about Unity"—an issue that Kiernan firmly believed "should *not* now be the be all and end all."[130] Still, none of those who opposed the Party line in 1956 expressed any doubt as to the cogency of their own ideological conceptions.

In spite of its inflexible position regarding conventional Party principles, it is important to understand that the Party leadership was not left unfazed by Khrushchev's speech. At its March meeting, EC members did not only praise the eradication of Stalin's personality cult—they also spent considerable time trying to reason through the disturbing implications of Stalin's denunciation. Utterly distraught, they wondered: "How could it happen for twenty years in Communist leadership?" "Why don't they [the Soviet leadership] criticize themselves?" "Will it

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[129] Letter from E.P. Thompson to James Klugmann (May 2, 1956), CP/CENT/ORG/18/04, LHASC; Letter from Thompson to Joan Maynard (June 3, 1956), CP/CENT/ORG/18/04, LHASC

[130] Letter from Victor Kiernan to Christopher Hill (November 19, 1956), DJS 111: Victor Kiernan Correspondence, HHC; italicized portion underlined in original.

happen again?" In response to each of these questions, the leadership struggled through unconvincing resolutions, ultimately deciding upon the line that it offered the rest of the Party membership over a month later: "mistakes minor [compared] to what [has been] achieved."[131]

Remarkably, the questions raised at this EC meeting closely parallel those advanced by Thompson in his letter to Klugmann, written just five days later, and Thompson would even agree (albeit to a lesser extent) with the EC's conclusion that the Party had made many great strides as well as mistakes and that continued support for the Russian people was crucial, explaining that criticizing the Soviet Union's past

> does not mean that we apologise for having put in a foremost place in our work and propaganda the question of the defence of the Soviet Union, of the right of the Soviet people to build socialism in their own way, without outside interference. Despite all the very serious criticisms which must now be made, there is no fact in world history of the past 20 years to compare in importance with the consolidation of working-class power in the Soviet Union.[132]

On one level, the difference between these two perspectives is therefore a matter of answers, on another, a lack thereof, so to speak. The EC, along with all other orthodox members, considered it absolutely essential to reconcile the doubts born out of the Twentieth Congress in a way that would enable them to justify continued devotion to Moscow. Communist intellectuals like Thompson and Saville, however, approached these questions in an entirely different light, asserting that the revelations of Stalin's crimes merely demonstrate the British communists' need to break away from Russia and begin to reassess its own situation, both within the bounds of the CPGB, as well as the broader British Labour Movement. In their perception, Stalin's Soviet Union was effectively a "dictatorship via the party, the political police and the army" and thus it was essential to "tell King St. why the workers don't trust us and *how we look from the outside*"

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[131] James Klugmanns' notes on the "CPSU 20th Congress EC Discussion" (March 9-10, 1956), CP/CENT/EC/03/23, LHASC; It would seem that those who sat on the EC were far more likely to have undergone a crisis of ideology—a topic that would be worth exploring further in the context of a different project.
[132] E.P. Thompson, "Suggestions for Statement of the E.C." (1956), CP/CENT/ORG/18/04, LHASC

in order to maintain any degree of respect both within British politics and amongst the British workers themselves.[133]

We can see the differences between the fronter and the orthodox approaches to answering the questions raised by the Twentieth Congress quite clearly. The "lack thereof" in reference to these answers stems from the fact that no one outside of the EC had any idea what questions those who made up the leadership were asking themselves, or if they were even asking questions at all. In the interest of "maintaining Unity within the Party," members were silenced, the Party press was closed to critical comment, and the EC refused to publicly acknowledge any degree of its members' distress (although one person in the Executive did make the point that the leadership "misjudged" the level of dissent brewing within the Party at a meeting in May).[134] Consequently, out of what could have been a "simple" crisis of the world communist movement and the Soviet Union there grew up an unmistakable illustration of the incompatibility of the fronter and orthodox Marxist conceptions and the theory's "proper" role in their Party's movement. Marxism's unequivocated validity held fast in the minds of the fronters, but for many of this group, the Soviet Union's integrity had been called into question. Of course, Marxism is a theory of action, not just contemplation; outside of the CPGB, intellectuals doubted whether they would be able sincerely to effect "change" in British society and to promote the British Labour Movement. Few intellectuals therefore had any desire to abandon the Party. Nevertheless, the CPGB leadership's refusal to engage in open discussion pushed conventionally loyal intellectuals over the edge in an attempt to rescue what they considered to be the fundamental

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[133] Letter from Thompson to Joan Maynard (June 3, 1956), CP/CENT/ORG/18/04, LHASC

[134] "Resolution on 20th Congress" (May 1956), CP/CENT/EC/03/24, LHASC

"democratic rights and liberties" that were earned "by the workers themselves at Peterloo and Trafalgar Square."[135]

<p align="center">*Refuting Error*</p>

<p align="center">*To leave error unrefuted is to encourage intellectual immorality.*[136]</p>

After weeks of careful coordination and sleepless nights, John Saville and Edward Thompson had in their possession 350 copies of the first number of *The Reasoner*, an independently published (i.e. not published through the Party press) journal discussing the issues that CPGB leadership refused to confront, ready for distribution. The months of evasive letters from members of the EC and an "intolerable" number of articles rejected from the *Daily Worker* and *World News and Views*, led the two historians to conclude in the second half of May that the only possibility of sparking discussion within the Party lay outside of it. Yet, both fully appreciated that the endeavor would need to be carried out punctiliously so as to avoid giving the impression that they were in any way opposed to the CPGB itself—the idea of retiring their Party cards was nowhere in sight. So, the plans for *The Reasoner* were not kept secret. In response to yet another rejected article, Saville wrote to Bert Baker, editor of *World News and Views*, thanking him for "rejecting my letter," as well as informing him of *The Reasoner*'s forthcoming publication, which "doesn't seek to peddle any particular line or policy."[137] Shortly after, Saville sent another letter, this time to General Secretary Gollan, along with a copy of the journal, underlining the point that "we have no aim except to provide an additional forum for discussion,

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[135] Letter from Thompson to Joan Maynard (June 3, 1956), CP/CENT/ORG/18/04, LHASC; Here, Thompson is mostly likely referring to battles fought over parliamentary representation at Peterloo in Manchester and Trafalgar Square in London during the 1820s—long before the creation of the CPGB.

[136] This quote appears at the start of all three publications of *The Reasoner*, as well as E.P. Thompson's later collection of essays *The Poverty of Theory* (1978). They do not ever mention, however, the writing of Marx's from which this quote is borrowed.

[137] Letter from John Saville to Bert Baker (July 8, 1956), CP/CENT/ORG/18/04, LHASC

and we would again like to disclaim…any suggestion of factionalism."[138] With that, Thompson and Saville executed perhaps the profoundest breach of democratic centralism hitherto in CPGB history.

Yet, these challenges to Party doctrine in no way implied a desire to leave the Party— quite the opposite, in fact. In their mammoth study of British communism, Kevin Morgan and his two co-authors assert that 1956 provided, for many increasingly inactive and doubting communists, a convenient excuse to leave the Party.[139] This is indeed true. Those who had been growing weary of the generally strict Party doctrine and of fighting for what one comrade referred to as the "vast unheeding and largely uncaring working class," who thus had begun to subtly remove themselves from active Party life even before the scandal at the Twentieth Congress, did employ Khrushchev's speech as the pretext for an exodus from the Party.[140] But these are not the people for whom disaster struck and certainly not the people who dedicated the better part of 1956 to debating Party principles with the leadership. Those still actively involved in the CPGB by 1956 had weathered every storm blown their way throughout the post-war decade—they were not looking for "the occasion to leave."[141] Indeed, from Thompson's initial criticisms of "Party dogma" in his March 15 letter to Klugmann, he is sure to stress that "the important thing is that we do not fall into factions – or worse hopeless resignations – but that we should solve these problems together," though he does not neglect to emphasize with equal conviction that reaching a successful resolution "will I think mean putting the mechanism of

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[138] Letter from John Saville to John Gollan (July 13, 1956), CP/CENT/ORG/18/04, LHASC

[139] Morgan et al., *Communists and British Society: 1920 – 1991*, p. 19

[140] John Saville Papers, "The Workers" (no author, no date) sent to Thompson and Saville in response to (I believe) *The Reasoner*, but potentially *The New Reasoner*, DJS 107: *Reasoner/New Reasoner* Correspondence, HHC

[141] Morgan et al., *Communists and British Society: 1920 – 1991*, p. 19

opposition within the forms of democratic centralism to the severest test in Britain yet."[142] When the Party neglected to engage such probing, Saville and Thompson undertook the task themselves.

Hundreds of concerned communists sent the designated 2/- (two shillings) to Saville's residence at 152 Westbourne Avenue in Hull, as the two dissidents prepared themselves for the inevitable wrath of "King Street's"[†] mighty fist. Whether one supported the venture or not, everyone read it. The first 350 copies were gone within a matter of weeks, necessitating a second printing of 300, which was sold with equal rapidity.[143] The general reception of *The Reasoner* was mixed. One reader praised the endeavor for embodying "just the sort of robust, self-reliant activity which is at the heart of any truly progressive movement," while another expressed that the "tight control of the Party machine by a self-perpetuating, un-Marxist leadership" made *The Reasoner* "an absolute necessity."[144] Other responses were less encouraging:

> My experience in recent weeks has been that the mere mention of the "Reasoner" to rank-and-file members has aroused intense interest; whereas a study of its contents has nearly always resulted in disappointment. … These comrades have acted contrary to all normal procedure, and their manner of establishing an unauthorised journal would be condemned, I believe, by a large majority of the party.[145]

As we saw in the last chapter, anti-intellectual sentiment amongst non-intellectuals (i.e. both on the part of the Party Executive and among working-class members) was quite low. Intellectuals' work was generally valued by the EC as an important contribution to questions of theory and

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[142] CPGB Archive, Letter from E.P. Thompson to James Klugmann (March 22, 1956), CP/CENT/ORG/18/04, LHASC

[†] "King Street" was a preferred term amongst the leadership's critics when referring to the EC, since CPGB headquarters were situated at 16 *King Street* in London.

[143] Saville, *Memoirs from the Left*, p. 107

[144] John Saville Papers, Letter from John Edward Miller to *The Reasoner* editors (November 23, 1956), DJS 107: *Reasoner/New Reasoner* Correspondence, HHC; Letter from Margot Parish to *The Reasoner* editors (November 10, 1956), DJS 107: *Reasoner/New Reasoner* Correspondence, HHC

[145] CPGB Archive, Letter from Betty Grant to John Gollan (September 3, 1956), CP/CENT/ORG/18/05, LHASC

culture, while working-class members engaged in "intellectual" activities, such as the development of local history. Explicit challenges to Party doctrine put forth by many intellectuals in 1956, such as *The Reasoner*, however, caused the budding of a stigma against intellectuals among some groups in the CPGB. This anti-intellectualism remained even after 1956, when many of the most vocal oppositional intellectuals had resigned from the Party. Yet, for the most part, reactions to *The Reasoner* seem to have expressed both encouragement and gratitude for its attempt to open within the Party a discussion on previously unchallenged traditional values.

In publishing *The Reasoner*, Thompson and Saville spearheaded the corrosion of faith in democratic centralism that the revelation of Stalin's crimes had initiated. It is difficult to illustrate the gravity with which the EC regarded the reasoners'[†] breach of communist principle, but it is worth briefly considering in order to understand how orthodox members of the CPGB received their attack on democratic centralism, which is essential to gaining insight into how British communist intellectuals experienced the crisis in 1956 and the extreme measures they took in hopes of "rescuing" the Party.

As Thompson and Saville anticipated, the EC responded rapidly to their assault on Party orthodoxy. Just weeks after the journal's first publication, in late July, the reasoners were asked to attend a Yorkshire District Committee to discuss the issue, at which time they were instructed to cease publication immediately on account of its being "a breach of rule, practice and accepted discipline of the Party."[146] The second publication was already underway, however, so Thompson and Saville elected to ignore the EC's wishes and went ahead with publication. The

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[†] For the rest of this chapter, I will use this designation to talk about Thompson and Saville as a pair in conjunction with any actions they took in accordance with *The Reasoner*.

[146] CPGB Archive, Notes for Discussion with Edward Thompson re: *Reasoner*" (note taker unidentified, undated), CP/CENT/ORG/18/05, LHASC

Party Executive, outraged by the reasoners' contemptuous behavior, formed a special Political Committee and arranged for a Hearing to be held on August 31, co-chaired by Harry Pollitt and John Gollan themselves.

The EC proved itself unyielding. In spite of their efforts to avoid the accusation, the reasoners were indeed labeled as factional ("You say in your editorial you oppose factionalism; it is not a factional journal. You can't be serious or words have lost all meaning.") because "Rule II"—i.e. democratic centralism—"speaks for itself"; in printing the second issue in August, Thompson and Saville had defied its command. Additionally, they were reminded of the "opportunities" for "polemics and discussion" that exist within the Party boundaries (*World News* – 6 pages, *Daily Worker, Marxist Quarterly"*), and further accused of acting "undemocratically" by ignoring "the will of the majority" (though, of course, it was the will of the EC's majority, not that of the entire membership, that was being challenged). In light of the reasoners' delinquency, one comrade of the Executive went so far as to assert, "the question of expulsion even comes on the agenda," though he added, "not on [the] agenda now."

The fact that expulsion was not an automatic reaction presents an interesting point, considering the gravity with which the reasoners' actions were regarded. The most likely explanation is that the EC, for all its concern with Thompson's and Saville's "undemocratic" behavior, feared how Party members would react to their expulsion. As one *Reasoner* reader reveals in a letter to the editors, upon reading the journal, she had written directly to Harry Pollitt expressing the opinion that if Saville and Thompson were to be expelled from the CPGB, "it would be a blow to the Labour Movement."[147] Even one woman who disagreed with the endeavor warned Gollan that "if their journal is now merely to be suppressed, without any

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[147] John Saville Papers, Letter from Joy Vowles to *The Reasoner* editors (October 10, 1956), DJS 107: *Reasoner/New Reasoner* Correspondence, HHC

alternative being offered to the party, the reaction will be most unfortunate. I am referring not to possible resignations from the party…but to the feeling of failure that many of us will have."[148] Considering the reasoners' insistence that they neither wanted to leave the Party, nor create a faction within it, why would they commit such a blatant breach of Party principle?

In part, the answer to this question lies in a contingency of fronter loyalty: that the CPGB promote a movement towards the abolition of the world's injustices. We already know that making efforts to change the world were understood as a vital element of being both a Marxist and a communist for the British intellectuals, but it is imperative that we understand the *rightful* nature of that change as they conceived of it, as well. It is no small coincidence that Thompson spent the better part of the post-war decade heading communist-sponsored local peace movements, or that Saville recalls his participation in the Indian anti-imperial movement as an experience that brought him closer to the Party. But Kiernan and Hobsbawm, both of whom had their own experiences fighting against the world's "iniquities" tying them to the CPGB, were no less concerned with accomplishing a more egalitarian world, and still they thought the reasoners' endeavor too extreme. In order to better understand the reasoners' motivations, then, it will be helpful to explore Thompson and Saville's repudiation of democratic centralism in relation to that of other intellectuals, like Hobsbawm and Kiernan.

Although the copious amount of encouraging readers' responses (i.e. letters to the editors) makes clear that the reasoners received a great deal of support in their efforts to facilitate open discussion within the Party, many of their historian comrades, including Kiernan and Hobsbawm, considered their actions too radical a breach of Party principle and shared the EC's fear that *The Reasoner* would ultimately harm the Party. For many intellectuals, of whom

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[148] CPGB Archive, Letter from Betty Grant to John Gollan (September 3, 1956), CP/CENT/ORG/18/05, LHASC

Thompson and Saville were two, the question of democratic centralism's "democratic-ness," and

thus concern with whether the Party's ideological conceptions aligned with that of their own,

arose with the surfacing of Khrushchev's speech. In their view, Stalin's crimes were made

possible by the CPSU's unwillingness to challenge this principle, but what concerned them more

was the CPGB's role in facilitating and defending Stalin's line *in Britain* both before and after

the Twentieth Congress:

> We must admit that we have fallen into the error in the past of adopting an
> insufficiently critical, over-simplified, and un-historical attitude to the Soviet
> Union and to the People's Democracies.
> Because it was our duty to defend the Soviet Union in the face of hostile attacks,
> we allowed ourselves to minimise or to ignore unhealthy aspects of Soviet life in
> the past. Instead of helping honest critics in our labour movement to understand
> the historical circumstances which gave rise to these problems, we have alienated
> them by refusing to give serious attention to their criticisms, and by lumping them
> together with anti-Soviet capitalist propagandists.[149]

This is not to say that Hobsbawm and Kiernan did not share the reasoners' sentiments, or

that they did not theoretically support the calls for open discussion within the Party—quite the

contrary. Still, they were part of a larger group of intellectuals in the Party who feared that such

open opposition to the Party line would make the CPGB vulnerable to attack from its already

persistent critics. Jack Lindsay, who had challenged the Party's long-standing commitment to

economic determinism in 1945, was one of the more vocal members of this group:

> Do you seriously suppose that by asserting you are not a faction, you can prevent
> the people around you from forming one, whether you yourself want to or not?
> Surely you know of the existence of people, in and near the party, who have been
> connected with the movement so long that they think in 'marxist' and even 'party'
> terms, but who have no real loyalty to the working class or hatred of capitalism?
> … Who are in fact the type of person of whom the Observer wrote…when it
> editorially urged MI5 to recruit anti-Communist spies from people still in the
> party, who were losing their conviction and contemplating leaving. This is not a

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[149] E.P. Thompson, "Suggestions for Statement of the E.C." (undated), CP/CENT/ORG/18/04, LHASC

> Stalinist fantasy but a political fact. How long before they flock to your paper, to work off their accumulated frustration and bitterness?[150]

Due to the fragility of the CPGB's position in British politics Kiernan and Hobsbawm shared the sentiments expressed here and maintained the view that the Soviet Union, as the world's preeminent communist party, needed to be supported in order for the CPGB to retain an image of greater validity in Britain. Put simply, they believed the CPGB could not be successful in its quest to bring socialism to Britain without Party unity or outside the context of a strong, *worldwide* movement. Neither Thompson nor Saville doubted the necessity of a strong organization if Socialism were to be realized in Britain, but they held that such an organization would need to function in accordance with certain humanistic principles that catered to the peculiar needs of the British Labour Movement; principles that the CPGB, in their view, did not seem to promote.

As we saw in the last section, Thompson also emphasized the importance of remaining supportive of the Soviet *people*, but believed a highly critical reassessment of Soviet leadership on the part of British communists would be vital to ensuring the integrity of their own Party. Saville too held this belief, expressing to Pollitt that testing the limits of democratic centralism is the "first pre-requisite" to the "recreation of the confidence of the Party in its own integrity and honesty."[151] Both Thompson and Saville agreed that in order to achieve its communist aims in Britain, the CPGB would need to part with its traditional emphasis on Party unity in order to develop a model wholly independent from that of the Soviets', based instead upon what they believed to be British values.

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[150] Letter from Jack Lindsay, Jack Beeching, and Maurice Cornforth to E.P. Thompson (July 1956), CP/CENT/ORG/18/04, LHASC
[151] Letter from John Saville to Harry Pollitt (September 5, 1956), CP/CENT/ORG/18/04, LHASC

Communist intellectuals like Hobsbawm and Kiernan thus found themselves caught somewhere in the middle of the orthodox and fronter extremes. Though both doubtless had qualms with the Party leadership's denial of the fact that there was a crisis within the CPGB, the necessity of speaking out against democratic centralism did not hit a peak in the eyes of either until the Soviets invaded Hungary in November, at which point the EC continued to refuse to allow open discussion or to criticize the Russian leadership. Why would these two figures, in most ways so similar in thought to Thompson and Saville, regard the British Party's relationship to Moscow differently? This can in part be explained in the context of their personal backgrounds. We have already discussed Hobsbawm's personal road to communism, but the following account of his sense of the world in the early 1930s will help us understand what exactly the Soviet Union symbolized in his eyes. Moving to Britain only once Hitler was appointed Chancellor, Hobsbawm had originally joined the Communist Party as a teenager in Berlin with the belief that capitalism was doomed to failure as Hitler was still on his rise to power:

> You can't understand anything about the first half of the twentieth century…without grasping that most people believed the old world was coming to an end, inevitably. The old world was crashing; we were living in the crashing of an old world. And you had to look for an alternative: either a fascist alternative, or a socialist alternative, which in Germany in 1931-2, would have meant communist.[152]

This fascinating reflection reveals an important aspect of Hobsbawm's communism. As both an historian and as a Marxist, Hobsbawm believed fully that a transition to socialism is written in the history books, so to speak—a fact that, in his mind, the Soviet Union's existence confirmed. Experiencing Hitler's ascension firsthand made its mark on Hobsbawm, who considered the Soviet Union tangible proof that when the old world crashed, Fascism would not be the only

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[152] BBC interview with Eric Hobsbawm (October 24, 1994); Find the full interview online at
< https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nnd2Pu9NNPw >.

potential replacement. Though he recognized and admitted the Soviet government's flaws,

challenging the Soviet Union would mean questioning the entire possibility of realizing

socialism anywhere in human society, not just in Great Britain. After the events in Hungary,

however, Hobsbawm seems to have reckoned such a challenge unavoidable, responding in the

affirmative a week later to Saville's call for an organized resistance to the EC's line: "I agree

completely with you. We must organise an opposition."[153]

    As with Hobsbawm, Kiernan held on to a credulous optimism throughout the eight

months between Khrushchev's speech and the Hungarian Revolution. With its demolition of the

Hungarian uprising, the Soviet Union broke the spirits of British communists like Hobsbawm

and Kiernan, but it was the CPGB's refusal to "tell its leaders they have gone wrong, and the

Russians that they have made a tragic mistake" that decimated the hope for the Party's future to

which Kiernan had been desperately clinging.[154] His closing statement in a letter to Christopher

Hill encapsulates the force of this second blow upon Kiernan's faith in the Party: "I wish I hadn't

quit smoking. I fall back on gin, rather heavily."[155] As a superb translator and advocate of

decolonization, as well as an historian concerned primarily with imperial history (in favor of the

colonized, as opposed to the imperialists), Kiernan too believed strongly in the Soviet Union's

position as a symbol to the world.[156] Though the CPGB's promotion was not his primary goal,

the strength it provided the general Labour Movement in Britain, as Kiernan perceived it, made

the Party's survival a necessity. It is for this reason that, although he was disturbed by

Khrushchev's revelations and the Party's subsequent refusal to permit discussion concerning

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[153] John Saville Papers, Letter from Eric Hobsbawm to John Saville (November 12, 1956), DJS 111: Victor Kiernan Correspondence, HHC

[154] Letter from Victor Kiernan to World News and Views (November 19, 1956), DJS 111, HHC

[155] Letter from Victor Kiernan to Christopher Hill (November 12, 1956), DJS 111, HHC

[156] Hobsbawm, "Victor Kiernan: Historian with a global vision of empires, Marxism, politics and poetry" in *The Guardian* (February 17, 2009)

them, he disagreed with the reasoners' calls for an entirely new Party leadership until the Soviet Union's actions in November: "I am inclined to agree *now* with those who think that we must not only change the Party's line, but get rid of all those in the E.C. who supported the present line, if we are to have any future… Anything to get out of this blind alley."[157]

Though Hobsbawm and Kiernan were clearly more committed to some of the orthodox Party principles than the reasoners, it is equally obvious that their commitment to Party doctrine was not as unwavering as were those of Dutt and Klugmann. The difference between Hobsbawm's and Kiernan's stances in 1956 and that of the orthodox can perhaps best be understood by way of Hobsbawm's postscript in that same letter concerning the necessity of an organized opposition that he sent to Saville after the invasion of Hungary: "Alas, James [Klugmann] is not sensible."[158] For someone like Klugmann, any form of open opposition to the Party was simply unthinkable and he was unwilling to entertain it regardless of the political situation.

Hobsbawm and Kiernan, however, had a breaking point. In response to the EC's perpetual refusal to permit open discussion after the Hungarian Revolution, historians Christopher Hill and Rodney Hilton drafted a letter of protest to be sent to *World News*, which Kiernan and Hobsbawm both signed enthusiastically. When this letter was rejected (as was expected: "I am strongly in favour of sending [the statement] to the *Statesman* or *Tribune*, or anyone else, if the Worker doesn't print it."), the signatories broke ranks by sending the letter to two national newspapers, *The New Statesman* and *The Tribune*, which published the letter happily; the situation had surpassed Party loyalty. A new principle overtook the old one of "uphold Party unity": defend the movement's integrity.

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[157] Letter from Victor Kiernan to John Saville (November 12, 1956), DJS 111, HHC; emphasis added.

[158] Letter from Eric Hobsbawm to John Saville (November 12, 1956), DJS 107: *Reasoner/New Reasoner Correspondence*, HHC

Hobsbawm's and Kiernan's initial hesitation to engage in, or at least to openly support challenges to Party leadership offers us a clue as to how unacceptable a breach of Party conduct publishing *The Reasoner* was in the eyes of the EC, which returns us to our original question: why did Thompson and Saville take such a drastic step if they wanted to remain in the Party? The answer is of a dual nature. On the one hand, it is a matter of ideological conception, on the other, a matter of identity. It was not the actual CPGB itself that the reasoners were concerned with upholding, but rather, what the Party was meant to represent: the British working class. Though each deeply valued the identity he had developed by participating in "my" Party, both Thompson and Saville feared their identities had been a sham in that the Party did not champion the views and values that they believed would in fact advance the working class. Of course, eradicating the "iniquities of British labourism" and elsewhere had always been the fronters' main motivation for Party affiliation and active involvement, hence their unconventionally unsectarian behavior (compared to that of the Party Executive, for example) throughout the post-war period. While members like Kiernan and Hobsbawm were concerned with safeguarding the Party's technical principles as the pillars with which to sustain the communist movement, the focus for Thompson and Saville rested upon the movement itself, which they believed would prove its strength regardless of the existence of a communist party. The difference may not be immediately clear, but a cartoon from *The Reasoner*'s second issue provides a helpful tool with which to understand the distinction visually.
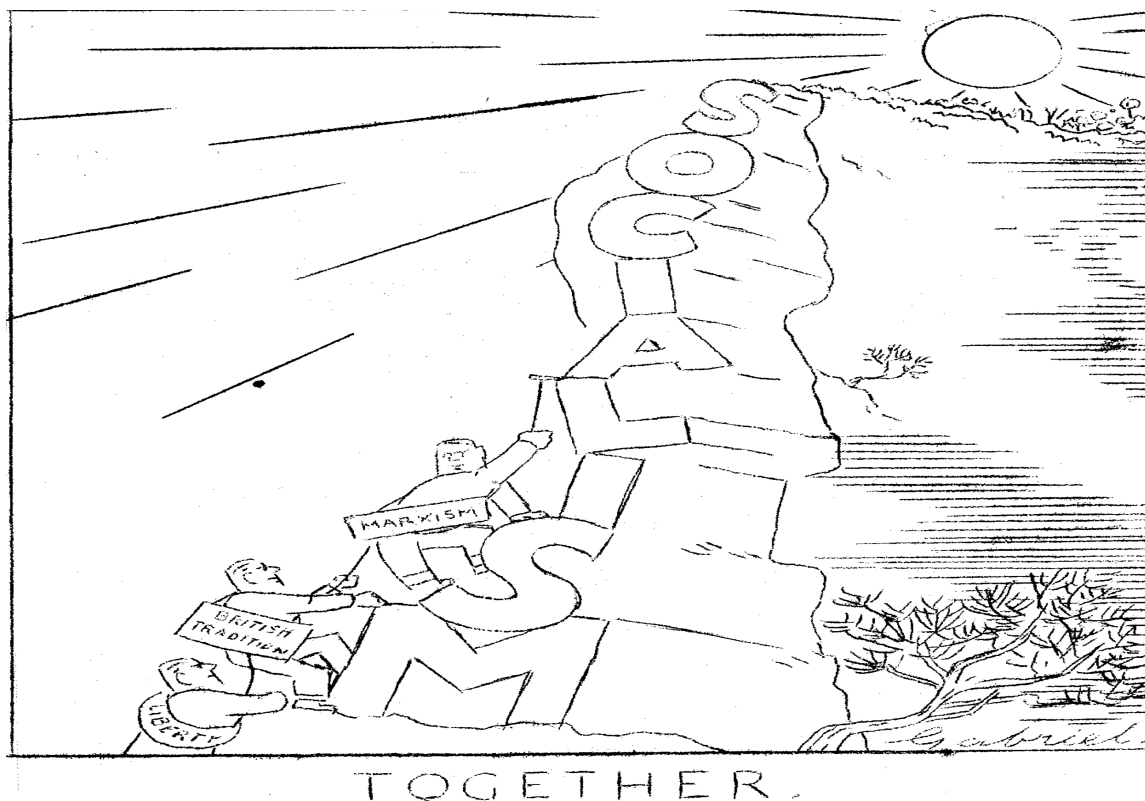
Figure 1: Marxism, British Tradition, and Liberty climbing the mountain of Socialism in a cooperative effort. From *The Reasoner*, September 1956.[159]

Drawn by one of the *Daily Worker*'s most famed cartoonists, Jimmy Friell, perhaps better known by his pseudonym, Gabriel, the image above depicts "Marxism" leading "British Tradition" and "Liberty" up the steep mountain of "Socialism," with the unifying word, "together," written underneath.[160] The first notable feature of this cartoon is not what is included, but what is absent: there is no mention of the Soviet Union or the CPGB. These omissions are illuminating, for they suggest that the reasoners conceived of neither the Party nor its Russian "paragon" as necessary to accomplishing Socialism in Britain.

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[159] CPGB Archive, *The Reasoner* No. 2 (September 1956), CP/CENT/ORG/18/03, LHASC; I have cropped the cartoon from the original page in order to save space.

[160] It is worth noting that Gabriel's drawing for *The Reasoner* demonstrated the brooding discontent spreading through the Party quite clearly to the EC. John Saville even mentions the cartoon in his *Memoirs*: "…a cartoon from Gabriel of the *Daily Worker* (which naturally we regarded as highly significant)…" See Saville, *Memoirs from the Left*, p. 110

That which is included in the cartoon is of no lesser value. In the reasoners' imagining, the British tradition was synonymous with the Labour Movement, which communists perceived as the embodiment of class struggle. Much of Thompson's anxiety stemmed from the fact that the CPGB's efforts to undermine the "democratic liberties" (e.g. "right to publish, right to organise, rights at law, etc.") for which "British people – and mainly working people – have struggled for centuries" through its censorship of Party media also spoke to a more fundamental disregard for "the mature…outlook of the British people."[161] The reasoners considered the "agitation, sacrifice, and organisation" present in earlier movements, such as the nineteenth-century drive for parliamentary reform, to be demonstrative of the British people's long-standing engagement in the class struggle.[162] The significance of this is the idea that the "British tradition"—i.e. the British Labour Movement—predates both Marx's theory and Communist endeavors. As Thompson would later explain quite clearly: "[class] is something which in fact happens."[163]

This notion of class struggle was not unique to the reasoners. In fact, it formed the basis for much of the work developed by members of the Historians' Group throughout the post-war decade.[164] The way in which Thompson and Saville imagined its significance, however, differed from that of some of their comrades, including Kiernan and Hobsbawm. Crucially, the fact that workers had achieved these liberties without the Soviet Union or Marx (pro-parliamentary reform rallies began, for example, in 1819) supported the dialectical element in Marx's theory,

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[161] Letter from E.P. Thompson to Joan Maynard (June 3, 1956), CP/CENT/ORG/18/04, LHASC

[162] Ibid.

[163] E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963), p. 9

[164] A good example of this is the broad range of periods studied by members of the CP Historians' Group. The compilation of essays produced by the CP Historians' Group in honor of Dona Torr who mentored many of those individuals who would become the Group's most prominent members including Thompson, Saville, Hill, and Hobsbawm demonstrates this long-range evaluation of the British Labour Movement. See John Saville (ed.), *Democracy and the Labour Movement* (1953).

but also convinced the reasoners that the British tradition—the Labour Movement—was inherently one of action. Thus, for Thompson and Saville, a "party of action" in the Soviet sense was not necessary to achieving socialism; the movement would prevail regardless.[165]

The "British Tradition" mountaineer in the cartoon above therefore represents that element of action so important to Marx's theory from which many communist intellectuals feared they would be disconnected if they were to break with the Marxist-Leninist concept of professional revolutionaries. The inclusion of "Liberty" takes this vision a step further. After all, most fronters joined the Party with the idea that they were joining a movement that would liberate all peoples from their oppressors. What the reasoners considered unique about the British working class was that it had made significant strides towards its liberation on its own, such that certain liberties were an irrefutable part of British society:

> I *quite* agree with what you say about the Tories fundamental hatred of liberties. The important thing is that the Tories can't get away with it, can't behave as they like. If our democracy was *only* a façade, they could. Their 'belief in democracy' may be a 'myth,' but that is *not the same thing* as saying that our liberties are a myth.[166]

The trouble, Thompson and Saville would argue, was that both democracy and liberties had indeed become a myth in the Soviet Union, causing the highly Stalin-influenced leadership of the CPGB to mistake the British people's *real* liberties for "bourgeois democracy" (i.e. "capitalist press, fake parliament, state machine") and, consequently, the British Party's leaders "do not know the British people, do not value their traditions, and consequently cannot win their trust."[167] With "Liberty" closely following "British tradition," the cartoon suggests that this

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[165] "A Call for a Communist Party: To the Communists and Socialists of Great Britain," (July 7, 1920)
[166] Letter from E.P. Thompson to Joan Maynard (June 3, 1956), CP/CENT/ORG/18/04, LHASC; Italicized words underlined in original.
[167] Ibid.

"cherished" prize of the British people's struggle was essential to successfully accomplishing socialism in Britain.

Given the weight that the reasoners perceived the British tradition and liberties capable of moving, Marxism's role in this may now seem a curious point. It is no accident, however, that Gabriel portrays Marxism as guiding the way. Indisputably, Marx's theory is one of action, but it is also one of consciousness. Though action may be latent in British tradition, the reasoners had no doubts that Marxism was crucial to bringing the working class to consciousness and assisting it in channeling its natural drive to action in the direction of its ultimate goal: Socialism. The cartoon optimistically portrays the British Labour Movement not only as though it were moving towards Mt. Socialism, but also as if it were already on the way up—the conditions for socialism (liberty and action) were already present in British society; the British working class simply needed to become conscious of its struggle and the necessity of achieving this superior stage of the historical process.

Here, we can also perhaps understand how intellectuals imagined their role in the Party. The emphasis on "changing the world" and on the working class in Marx's theory has made intellectuals' position (not to mention the role of Marx himself!) in this movement a contentious one. But what *is* action? This question seems to be at the heart of the matter. As this cartoon suggests, some British communist intellectuals, like Thompson and Saville, believed that Marxism was the missing piece to the class-struggle's dialectical puzzle. But how would it be communicated to the people such that they were brought to consciousness? Such that they would see that they were engaged in a fight that transcended their lives on as profound a scale as history itself? This is perhaps the intellectuals' role as Thompson and Saville conceived of it; the reason they were the vanguard within the vanguard. We can, then, understand Hobsbawm's claim that

the participants in the Historians' Group during the post-war decade viewed themselves "ideally as leaders of a broad progressive movement."[168] This is not to say that they believed themselves the occupants of Kandinsky's apex; that is, that they in any way perceived this role to place them above the workers within the Labour Movement who toiled within the factories. Rather, this was simply their own job in the movement, just as factory work was the ever-important role of the workers because in communism, every individual has his or her role to play in leading the movement forward.

Yet, it is perhaps that simple phrase "together" underlying the entire picture ("picture" in both the literal and the figurative sense) that most betrays the reasoners' sense of the Party and what they sought in their calls for change in the CPGB. Despite the willful disobedience expressed by its publication, *The Reasoner* was a cautious endeavor. In each issue, there arose questions of "self-criticism and our party history," of the validity of democratic centralism, of the British Party's morality in light of the "soiled wall-paper" of Stalinism lining its foundational pillars—in short, the Party's fundamental principles were prodded from every angle. But these problems that convinced the reasoners that the Party must engage in the "painful business of analysis" to "find once again principled Socialist policies" were attributed to Stalinism all but once.[169] In Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin, he was equally as careful to keep Lenin's name separate from the messiness of Stalinism—Lenin's hand were clean, Stalin was to blame. The reasoners also took this approach in their challenges to the Party (Thompson explicitly states in a letter to Jack Lindsay, "[*The Reasoner*] is not a breach with Marxist or Leninist practice, - to Lenin polemic of this sort was honest air."), but it seems the word "together" in this cartoon may indeed reveal a break with Marxist-Leninism as it was practiced by the CPGB and the Soviet

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[168] Hobsbawm, "The Historians' Group of the Communist Party," p. 32

[169] John Saville, "World Socialism Restated" in Thompson, Saville (eds.), *The Reasoner* (November 1956), p. 20

Union. The simple fact of this word's inclusion, but also its physical location in the cartoon (it underlies the entire movement towards socialism and so serves as its supporting foundation) suggests a rejection of the Soviet idea of the dictatorship of the proletariat because "dictatorship" is inherently opposed to "togetherness."

Here, we can see where Hobsbawm and Kiernan seem to differ with the reasoners. Although they qualify under our definition of "fronters" in that they did not conceive of the Party's (or the Soviet Union's) vitality as the main goal, Kiernan and Hobsbawm retained throughout 1956 one aspect of the "Marxist-Leninist" view, which says that a strong Party of professional revolutionaries is necessary to achieving socialism. It is impossible to truly know why this remained so important to them, but it would seem that the answer lies somewhere within their political identities, rather than their strategic conceptions. A closer consideration of the morale-crushing violence in Hungary will help us better understand these differences. There should be no doubt, however, that in the eight months between Khrushchev's secret speech and the Hungarian Revolution, both pairs were reacting to the challenges to their political identities that manifested in 1956—Thompson and Saville in challenging Party doctrine, and Kiernan and Hobsbawm, in upholding it.

By following the dictate of the Soviet Union's incredibly flawed leadership, the reasoners and many other communists strongly felt that their own Party Executive had led them off the golden path. Accepting the idea that they did not think the Party was necessary to achieving Socialism in Britain, how are we to reconcile the fact that the reasoners clenched their party cards so tightly? There are two solutions we may propose to reconcile this paradox. The first is of a practical nature: the Party's strong organization was helpful to mobilizing the people within a society that had never been particularly inclined towards Marxism. Despite Britain's long-

standing Labour tradition, it was never as radical as Marx and his revolutionary doctrine. Thus, although they did not conceive of the Party as necessary *in theory*, they could not deny its usefulness to the British case. This becomes a considerable problem after 1956, as we will see in the next chapter. The second response, which is more personal and sentimental, pertains to the sense of identity that Thompson and Saville derived from their participation in the Party. Both Thompson and Saville had belonged to the Party for at least fifteen years and had served as loyal and dedicated members throughout each one of them. Hobsbawm has jocularly described the CPGB as a "family" organization because of its relatively small size, but there is perhaps a fair bit of truth to this. Active members generally knew each other and because of these intellectuals' prominent positions as "ideological workers" in the Party, they were on a friendly basis with many of the Party's higher-up's. Leaving the CPGB would mean losing not only connections with people of similar mind, but also a generally comfortable community. The CPGB leadership's support for the Soviets' actions in Hungary, however, forced every British communist to reassess his or her position in relation to the Party and to face the heart-wrenching question: Should I stay?

Reimagining Faith

There __is__ one 'wrong theory' of Stalin's which we are licensed to criticize: the theory of the intensification of the class struggle. ... The theory of the all-powerful, centralized state is wrong… The attitude towards the role of the Party, and towards party comrades, is wrong.[170]

Spilling from a communist's pen, these are the words of a blasphemer. Indubitably, it was Thompson's exasperation with the British communist leadership that drove him to openly renounce these pillars of communist (i.e. Soviet) faith in *The Reasoner*'s third number, but it would seem that his sentiments had been latent in the hearts of many communist intellectuals at

[170] E.P. Thompson, "Through the Smoke of Budapest" in *The Reasoner* (November 1956), p. Supplement 5, CP/CENT/ORG/18/03, LHASC

least since the close of the Second World War, and probably even during the "popular front."

"Comrades did not join the Communist Party," Saville and Thompson passionately asserted in

their editors' note, "in order to abandon their minds and consciences into the hands of the

Executive Committee, but in order to devote them more effectively to the work of winning

Socialism through the democratic collective decision of the Party."[171] Were they speaking for

everyone? Certainly not. It is probably true that nobody desired to "abandon their minds and

consciences" in joining the Party, but for as many people that shared the reasoners' sentiments,

just as many, and probably more, wished to uphold all aspects of Party doctrine and resented

Thompson's and Saville's blasphemous insolence towards the Party line. But, after the invasion

of Hungary virtually every non-administrative intellectual in the Party agreed with Thompson

and Saville: the Party had lost sight of its Marxist principles.

Still, Thompson's words in "Through the Smoke of Budapest" were stronger than those

of most; with the invasion of Hungary and the British Party's sustained commitment to

suppressing the facts, in the reasoners' view the game was already lost.[172] Ignoring the official

resolution issued by the EC commanding that they cease publication, Thompson and Saville

went ahead with the third and final issue of *The Reasoner*, the closing pages of which Saville

was in the process of duplicating when the Soviet tanks first rolled through the streets of

Budapest on November 4, asserting their authority with a horrifying ferocity. This display of

violence was more than Thompson and Saville could stomach. So, with virtually nothing left to

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[171] Saville and Thompson, "Statement by the Editors" in *The Reasoner* (November 1956), p. 42-3 CP/CENT/ORG/18/03, LHASC

[172] It is important to keep in mind that although the Soviet military violence in Hungary did not begin until November 4, the revolution had begun on October 23. The Party had been repressing *Daily Worker* reporter Peter Fryer's dispatches of the events since the revolt commenced, which was not difficult to figure out considering the more honest reporting being printed in the national papers.

lose, they made a few adjustments concerning the actions that "the E.C. of the British Party must [take] at once" to this number's manuscript and laid their cards out on the table:

(1) Dissociate itself publicly from the action of the Soviet Union in Hungary.
(2) Demand the immediate withdrawal of Soviet troops.
(3) Proclaim full and unequivocal solidarity with the Polish workers Party.
(4) Call District Congresses of our Party immediately and a National Congress in the New Year.[173]

They continued their statement by encouraging those members who "will dissociate themselves completely from the leadership of the British Communist Party," if a single demand listed above was left unsatisfied, "not to lose faith in socialism and to find ways of keeping together."[174] Unsurprisingly, only one aspect of the ultimatum was met—that of the National Congress (to be held in April 1957). Upon their insubordinate publication of *The Reasoner*'s third number (they had already been officially instructed to cease publication twice), Thompson and Saville were suspended from the Party for three months on the grounds that they were "operating [under] a profoundly undemocratic process" because "you have *appointed yourselves*—representing no-one [and it is] a dangerous [situation] when undemocratic things of a flagrant nature are allowed to continue."[175] By the end of November, they had admitted defeat and, after "much discussion," resigned from the Party.

In the reasoners' conception, the Soviets' brutality in Hungary "struck a blow at the moral authority of the international working class movement," which had already been severely tested back in February with the information revealed in Khrushchev's speech.[176] Yet, despite their profound effect in the communist milieu, on no count can these two episodes alone define

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[173] John Saville and E.P. Thompson, "Editorial," in *The Reasoner* (November 1956), p. 2

[174] Ibid.

[175] Notes from the Political Committee Hearing on *The Reasoner* (August 31, 1956), CP/CENT/ORG/18/05, LHASC; I have give the full word where it was abbreviated in the Notes. These were the grounds upon which the decision of the reasoners' alleged insubordination were based in August when they were first threatened with punishment.

[176] Saville and Thompson, "Editorial," p. 2

1956; it was a tremendously active year in terms of world events generally. In June, anti-communist riots had also broken out in Poland, with another wave erupting there in October at the same time as those in Hungary were taking place. These, however, did not impact intellectuals' views of their Party with the same force as did the events Hungary because the Soviet Union did not retaliate with its military might. The most notable non-Soviet-instigated incident is the Suez Canal Crisis, which, to further complicate matters for British communists, arose in large part due to the unsavory politics of the British government. On July 26, 1956, Egypt's president, Gamal Abdel Nasser, nationalized the Suez Canal Company, outraging both the British and French governments, which were at the time the company's main shareholders. Seeking to regain control of the canal for the West, the two governments (though primarily the French, initially) conspired with Israeli Prime Minister David Ben Gurion, encouraging Israel to invade Egypt; on October 29, it did. A few days later, France and Britain issued an ultimatum to both Egypt and Israel to end the conflict, which Nasser refused, and proceeded to deploy troops to the Canal Zone. Not long after, news of the conspiracy began to surface, making clear from most communists' perspective that the British government was not to be trusted or, at any rate, that it was not going to pave the way to the integrity or openness for which they yearned from their own party.[177]

The Suez Crisis perhaps would have drawn in some much needed support for the CPGB and helped strengthen its waning membership, at least temporarily, had the Hungarian Revolution and its subsequent suppression not blackened the Party's already murky waters. Indeed, the Soviet Union, along with the United States, played a key role in efforts to end the Suez conflict, which, as one communist observed, forced the French and British to "sober up…

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[177] For a more detailed account of the Suez crisis, see Tom Pocock, *East and West of Suez: The Retreat from Empire* (1986).

and therefore actually *helped* peace."[178] After the Soviets initiated their first attack on Hungarian

protesters, however, their role in Suez only further muddied the lines of an already impossibly

confused situation in the eyes of the British communist intellectuals.

As we have discussed throughout this chapter, in spite of their many problems with the

CPGB's functioning, intellectuals did not want to resign from the Party to which they had

dedicated themselves for nearly two decades. But, with the events in Hungary it became clear to

most that a reassessment of the Party's values and loyalty (whether that be to the Soviet Union or

to the working class) could no longer be avoided. For Thompson and Saville, the decision

seemed rather clear once the Soviets invaded Hungary; they had already been grappling with

"King Street's" bureaucracy for months and saw no likelihood of change. Others, like

Christopher Hill, Hobsbawm, and Kiernan, remained more hopeful (or at least more reluctant to

give up), though no less disturbed by the EC's behavior, hence the oppositional letter signed by

Hobsbawm, Kiernan, and the reasoners, among others, briefly mentioned above. The letter was

short, but communicated its point masterfully:

> All of us have for many years advocated Marxist ideas both in our own special
> fields and in political discussion in the Labour movement. We feel therefore that
> we have a responsibility to express our views as Marxists in the present crisis of
> international socialism. … The exposure of grave crimes and abuses in the
> U.S.S.R., and the recent revolt of workers and intellectuals against pseudo-
> Communist bureaucracies and police systems of Poland and Hungary have shown
> that for the past twelve years we have based our political analyses on a false
> presentation of the facts—not on an out-of-date theory, for we still consider the
> Marxist method to be correct.[179]

Chiefly organized by historians Christopher Hill and Rodney Hilton, the group of intellectuals

supporting the opinions conveyed here aimed to "scrap" "the idea of not washing dirty linen in

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[178] John Saville Papers, Letter from Osmond Robb to Victor Kiernan (November 18, 1956), DJS 111, HHC; Italicized portion underlined in original.

[179] Open Letter to the Daily Worker (unpublished copy), (1956), DJS 111, HHC

public" because "everyone knows how dirty it is—the washing is what counts."[180] Yet, this

remarkable letter reveals more than the signatories may have intended or realized. The fronters

had been promoting "Marxist ideas," which they now recognized as wholly distinct from those

of the Party. There was a "present crisis of international socialism" as an *institution*, which had

been provoked by the Soviet Union's "grave crimes." *But*, the "Marxist method"—the fronters'

method—was still "correct" and socialism, the enduring goal.

This was not a crisis of ideology, but one of political—not to mention, social—identity.

Of course, the British communist intellectuals' ideological conceptions were not entirely

divorced from those of the CPGB. After all, it was the Party that had facilitated and encouraged

their theoretical exploration through the NCC over the past decade. Membership in the CPGB

and participation in cultural groups, especially that of the Historians, had given these otherwise

politically outcast intellectuals a sense of belonging and community, as well as an environment

in which their intellectual work could flourish in accordance with their politico-ideological

beliefs. Moreover, in spite of the "benevolent despotism" that Thompson had attributed to the

Party Executive, the historians had maintained a congenial relationship with it and enjoyed the

enthusiastic support of EC members like Klugmann and even Dutt.[181] To abandon the Party

would mean leaving behind all of these positive aspects of Party membership, which everyone

involved valued highly.

There was another problem, however, that plagued the minds of Party intellectuals at this

time. Although their preoccupation with the necessity of a strong organization was primarily

linked to intellectuals' concerns regarding political belonging, it also very much tied in with their

understanding that the point, as Marx would have it, was to *change* the world. It is telling of the

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[180] Letter from Victor Kiernan to Bertha M. (1956), DJS 111, HHC

[181] There are numerous letters that were exchanged between members of the CPHG and Dutt and Klugmann available for observation at the Labour History Archive in Manchester.

this principle's import that Hobsbawm brings it up in his autobiography (albeit, more as an aside than as part of the central narrative) nearly fifty years later.[182] Despite the fact that a substantial portion of their Party work throughout the post-war decade did in fact manifest as intellectual production, the fronters believed that their efforts extended beyond traditional intellectual engagements—they were expanding on theory in order to demonstrate Marxism's relevance and potential to British society. There was doubtless a fear that in abandoning the Party, the political value of their work would no longer hold because, as we discussed in the first chapter, it was Party membership that made one political.

Thus, although Kiernan, who had spent the previous eight months "trying to hold the Party line," confessed to Hill that he felt "shattered…by the crisis," he nevertheless upheld his belief that "one should stay in [the Party] as long as there is any hope of saving it," maintaining the view that "those who are resigning now…are throwing up the game too quickly."[183] The upcoming National Congress, along with a specially organized committee to investigate "inner-Party democracy," also made a difference to many intellectuals who were hesitant to make such a life-altering decision. Both Hill and Hobsbawm, agreeing with Kiernan's thoughts on the matter, chose to maintain their positions in the Party, at least tentatively. For Rodney Hilton, who had co-written and organized the oppositional open letter with Hill, the *Daily Worker*'s rejection of the letter was the final straw. He resigned from the CPGB in mid-December and took up shelter in the Labour Party. Still, the decision was not an easy one to make and even after choosing his path, Hilton found himself torn. Writing to Raphael Samuel, another ex-communist who belonged to the younger generation, he revealed his concerns: "I am very anxious that the

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[182] Hobsbawm, *Interesting Times*, p. 202

[183] Letter from Victor Kiernan to John Saville (May 10, 1975), DJS 111, HHC; Letter from Victor Kiernan to Henry (December 1956), DJS 111, HHC

Marxists of both parties and of none should not lose touch with each other."[184] Though "out of sympathy" with the CPGB, he nevertheless feared, on both a political and a personal level, the consequences that the loss of a coherent Marxist community would bring.

If keeping in touch with other Marxists was a priority, why would one resign from the only semi-influential Marxist Party available? Or, taking the opposite perspective, what was the logic behind remaining loyal to the CPGB if one was so "shattered" by all of its actions? In the reasoners' view, the Party had strayed too far from Marxist principle and thus was no longer capable of aiding the working class. The seed of Stalinism was simply too deeply planted in the Party's leadership and thus, instead of a "conscious fight for moral principle," the Party was reduced, in the reasoners' minds, to "a constellation of partisan attitudes and false, or partially false, ideas."[185] For Thompson and Saville, the Party occupied a nostalgic place in their hearts, and they were truly saddened by the wrong turns it had taken. At the same time, however, they did believe that a Party was necessary to accomplishing socialism. This is not to say that they did not see use in a strong Marxist organization—this was something about which they were deeply concerned—but the role of such an association, in their minds, was to promote Marxist principle so as to aid the class struggle. In their conception, the CPGB had lost sight of this, thereby making their continued identification with it simply unjustifiable, as well as counterproductive to the movement as a whole.

Other Party intellectuals found it much harder to break with their Party identities. Kiernan's sense of belonging doubtless contributed to the internal struggle that drove him to "fall

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[184] Raphael Samuel Archive, Letter from Rodney Hilton to Raphael Samuel (December 20, 1956), ULR/1956, Bishopsgate Institute [BI]

[185] John Saville Papers, E.P. Thompson, "Socialist Humanism" in John Saville, E.P. Thompson (eds.), *The New Reasoner* Vol. 1 No. 1 (Summer 1957), p. 108, HHC

back on gin."[186] The fact that he considered those who resigned after Hungary to be "throwing

up the game" suggests that his was not a view of the Party only as a vehicle intended to drive the

Labour Movement, as was the reasoners'. Yet, his anxiety did rest solely with questions

pertaining to support for the Soviet Union or the Party and he definitely did not think either to be

deserving of uncritical support. Kiernan was, however, distressed over what would become of

Marxism without a well-organized Marxist Party.

There was a deeper question of identity burning in communist intellectuals' minds – one

that underlay those related directly to the Party – what was it to be a Marxist? In Hobsbawm's

recollection, throughout the post-war decade if one was a Marxist, membership in the Party was

simply the expectation.[187] The "great 1956 earthquake" shook this image of the Party as the

vanguard of Marx's theory, however, making room for other potential Marxist interpretations

and endeavors, but it also forced intellectuals to face a question that the hitherto precedent of

Party participation had conveniently helped them avoid: Could one be an intellectual and also

claim to be a genuine Marxist? Members of the working-class could leave the Party and remain

confident that they were still upholding Marx's doctrine by continuing to toil in the factories and

mines. Intellectuals, however, were in a wholly different position. Marx deplored those who

spent their lives philosophizing without doing so with a sense of tangible purpose.[188] It was, after

all, their intellectual work's connection to the Party that made it politically useful—they were

developing and expanding upon theoretical questions in order to assist the Party in rousing the

working-class masses and in elucidating the class-struggle's presence in every facet of British

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[186] Letter from Victor Kiernan to Christopher Hill (November 12, 1956), DJS 111, HHC

[187] Hobsbawm, "The Historians' Group of the Communist Party," p. 26

[188] This is a common point of contention among both Marx's critics and his objective analysts alike because he was clearly an intellectual himself. It would seem, however, that one could argue the point that Marx nevertheless made efforts to provoke action and stir up change through his writings and the many talks he delivered throughout his life time.

life. How would they be able to maintain their positions as Marxists without identifying

themselves with the British Communist Party—the "Party of action"?[189]

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[189] "A Call for a Communist Party: To the Communists and Socialists of Great Britain," (July 7, 1920)

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Picking Up the Pieces:
The Many Directions of British Communist Intellectuals, 1957-62

We have now reached a position where three comrades, of equal experience in the movement, who may be workers or intellectuals, can all agree to those basic tenets support of which used to mean that one called oneself a Marxist, and can yet disagree violently not only about policy and the interpretation of the past history of the party, but are totally different in approach, ways of thinking, ways of speech. These three hypothetical comrades, all calling themselves Marxists, can agree – and this is the point – on a whole set of propositions expressed in certain words and mean totally different things by them.[190]

The bricks of British communist "loyalists" and ex-communist dissenters' post-crisis paths were already being laid when the famous novelist Doris Lessing wrote her candid, but heartfelt letter of resignation to General Secretary John Gollan in mid-December of 1956. For the British communist intellectuals of the post-war decade, the six years succeeding 1956 were at once a period of hopeful exploration and of disheartening disintegration. Lessing's eloquent uncertainty as to "what is meant by the word Marxist" perfectly articulates this paradox by bluntly acknowledging the irreversible loss of a strong Marxist organization—the Communist Party of Great Britain could no longer maintain its hegemony over Marx-driven politics—while simultaneously affirming her enduring faith in Marx's theory, for it is hardly Marxism itself that she calls into question: "what distinguishes the C.P. from the other working class parties is that it has a theory which enables it to lead."[191] Despite the CPGB's apparent inability to take full advantage of its philosophy's unique quality, as we saw in the last chapter, communist intellectuals' faith in Marxism's capacity "to lead" emerged from the hell of 1956 more or less unscathed.

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[190] John Saville Papers, Doris Lessing's Letter of Resignation from the CPGB to General Secretary John Gollan (December 11, 1956), DJS 108, HHC; emphasis original.
[191] Ibid.

Nevertheless, the British communist intellectuals' own senses of political identity and faith in the CPGB had been thrown into disarray. The trouble lay in contentious opinions as to the ends towards which Marxist theory should be working and how a Communist Party should function *in Britain*. Some of these disagreements, such as the extent to which the Soviet Union's politics should affect those of the Labour Movement in Britain (and, of course, those of the CPGB), had been present since the Second World War's conclusion.[192] As we saw in the first chapter, concern for the Party as an end in itself was limited only to a portion of "orthodox" intellectuals, most of whom assumed dual roles in the Party as thinkers and as members of the EC such as James Klugmann (historian) and R. Palme Dutt (theorist). The "fronter" intellectuals (e.g. Thompson, Saville, Lessing, etc.) who perceived the Soviet Union to serve more as a practical symbol to the British movement than as the model of what a socialist Britain would have likely outnumbered their orthodox counterparts, but far fewer people from this group held official positions within the Party, thereby enabling the orthodox opinion to dominate the implementation of official Party policy in cases of controversy. Determined to take control in hopes of "rescuing" Marxist theory after 1956, dissenters committed themselves to fighting opposite the orthodox conception between 1957 and 1962, regardless of whether they had elected to stay in the Party.

Certainly they expected to encounter obstacles—the CPGB's ironically conservative leadership, the political strength of the Labour Party, the country's general anti-Marxist

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[192] In January 1951, the Party Executive had adopted a new program called the *British Road to Socialism*, which had received the approval of Stalin himself (a fact that remained unconfirmed until after the Party was dissolved in 1991). "Britain will reach Socialism by her own road," the new agenda proclaimed. "Just as the Russian people realised political power by the Soviet road which was dictated by their historical conditions and background of Tsarist rule… so the British Communists declare that the people of Britain can transform capitalist democracy into a real People's Democracy." (See "The British Road to Socialism: Programme adopted by the Executive Committee of the Communist Party" (January 1951); For an in-depth look at the motives for and implications of the *British Road*, see Callaghan, *Cold War, Crisis and Conflict*, pp. 177-94.) The Party had at least recognized the differences between the British and Russian cases long before the turbulence of 1956.

sentiment—as they worked to save Marxism's name and application in Britain. Complicating

their efforts, however, was a more general shift in the country's political mood that neither

dissenters nor loyalists could reasonably deny, which was beginning to take clear shape by the

latter half of the 1950s. One factor contributing to this phenomenon was a simple improvement

in quality of life that transcended class boundaries in Britain. Following the Second World War,

British society enjoyed a steadily increasing and hitherto unprecedented economic prosperity that

was becoming irrefutably apparent by the late 1950s, further weakening the weight of the British

Marxists' arguments against capitalism in the eyes of the already largely skeptical British

citizenry.[193] Faith in the idea that Britain was "tottering on the brink of a catastrophic capitalist

crisis which got deeper with every year that it was delayed" was itself beginning to totter in

many communists' minds.[194] Moreover, the intellectuals who had been attempting to cultivate

their budding careers in the years following the war began to realize after 1956 that they were no

longer the youthful innovators of the left that they had been when they initially commenced their

work during the 1940s in the NCC. By 1957, the children of the Second World War were coming

of age and entering the political realm accompanied by a set of values and view points that

differed in important ways from those of the communist fronters. This younger generation, of

which Raphael Samuel and Stuart Hall are notable members, frequently outright rejected its

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[193] For more on this economic shift, see Callaghan, *Cold War, Crisis and Conflict*, especially ch. 5; Lawrence Black, *The Political Culture of the Left in Affluent Britain: 1951-64 : Old Labour, New Britain?* (2002). It is worth noting that although Marxist intellectuals acknowledged this prosperity, it did not convince them of capitalism's worth or lead them to fundamentally doubt Marxist theory, for although some believed that "Marxism may be out-dated in many respects" they also most commonly maintained that "capitalism stands condemned" and thus "[Marxism's] fundamental value still stands." See Letter from Sheila Lewenhak to E.P. Thompson (October 16, 1957)

[194] CPGB Archive, Dick Goss, "Where Should Ex-Communists Go? – Labour Party Our General Staff?" in Peter Fryer (ed.), *The Newsletter* (June 7, 1957), p. 35, CP/CENT/ORG/18/06, LHASC

elders' Marxist conceptions, condemning most collaborative efforts to stillbirth before they were even truly underway.[195]

Yet, the contemporary political atmosphere was not entirely bleak for British Marxists. On a more global scale, the fight for decolonization—a cause for which communists had always advocated in accordance with the idea that colonialism necessarily exists only to exploit "dependent peoples and cheap labour"—had been intensifying since the allies won the war.[196] As Algerian nationalists attempted to fight against French imperial rule, in 1954 a war of independence broke out in Algeria that was widely viewed as a turning point in the anti-colonial effort.[197] Most Marxist intellectuals—especially communist historians interested in non-Western history, like Kiernan and Saville—rightly understood this challenge to French imperialism as a tangible indication of the diminishing hegemony of the traditional imperial system of rule and interpreted it as an opportunity for Marxism to assume a more prominent role in Western politics. Moreover, the quest for peace ("the real issue") that had been regarded so highly during the post-war decade still occupied the minds of British intellectuals both within and outside of the CPGB.[198] Out of this impassioned preoccupation burgeoned the famous Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) in 1958, with Thompson serving as one of its figureheads and many of his comrades—both loyalists and dissenters—offering their enthusiastic support because

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[195] For more on the strains posed by this generational conflict, see John Charlton, *Don't You Hear the H-Bomb's Thunder?: Youth & Politics on Tyneside in the Late 'fifties and Early 'sixties* (2009)

[196] "The British Road to Socialism: Programme adopted by the Executive Committee of the Communist Party" (January 1951); The full text of the *British Road to Socialism* is available at [http://www.marxists.org/history/international/comintern/sections/britain/brs/1951/51.htm#4].

[197] For more on decolonization and its effects in both Britain and elsewhere, see Stephen Howe, *Anticolonialism in British Politics: The Left and the End of Empire, 1918-1964* (1993). A unique study of the effects of Algeria's fight for independence on France and French legislation is Todd Shepard, *The Invention of Decolonization: The Algerian War and the Remaking of France* (2006).

[198] John Saville Papers, Letter from Sheila Lewenhak to E.P. Thompson (October 16, 1957), DJS 107, HHC

"the only thing that counts seriously is peace."[199] If merely "interpreting" the world could not be enough for ex-communist intellectuals to maintain their Marxist identities, these two movements certainly offered potential avenues by which to "change it."

The events of 1956 awoke communist intellectuals to the fact that the principles they believed in so deeply were not the same ones being promoted by the Party to which they had so fully dedicated themselves in hopes of making them a British reality. Some, like Thompson and Saville, became aware of this unbalanced ideological scale more quickly than others. By the end of 1956, however, virtually every fronter was in agreement that the time had come to fight for the humanistic interpretation of Marxism that they had been striving to develop in their work since 1945.

The post-'56 efforts to replace "the state orthodoxy of 'Marxism-Leninism-Stalinism'" with a humanistic interpretation of Marx in Britain took many forms.[200] While some intellectuals, like Hobsbawm, Kiernan, and Hill had elected to "stay and fight from within," most had left the Party by January of 1957. Those who had chosen to leave the CPGB were forced to navigate the terrain of the changing political atmosphere in addition to coping with the loss of their political identities. The humanitarian activism of the CND and anticolonial movements certainly aided with this, but it did not fill the gaping hole of political vagrancy. Although joining the Labour Party was a road often travelled by ex-communists, appending oneself to a non-Marxist party was, understandably, not an ideal replacement. With no immediately appealing avenues in sight, a number of intellectual dissidents, led by Saville and Thompson, endeavored to develop a new Marxist-driven political movement outside the Party; a venture that existing historiography has considered a "third way" that rejected both the capitalist model, as well as

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[199] Letter from Victor Kiernan to Henry (December 1956), DJS 111, HHC; Though heavily involved in its early years, Thompson was not to become the face of CND in Birtain until the early 1980s.
[200] John Saville and E.P. Thompson, "Editorial" in *The New Reasoner* Vol. 1 (Summer 1957), p. 2

that of Soviet totalitarianism in favor of the humanistic view of Marxism they believed was certain to deliver the desired results. But Thompson, Saville, and *The Reasoner* supporters were not alone in this movement. Also exploring the extra-Party grounds of the British political left was a group of younger scholars, some of whom were ex-communists along with others who were not even Marxists, ignited by the joint catastrophes of Suez and Hungary to develop socialist theory and rouse their contemporaries out of apathy. In the midst of all these new movements, communist intellectuals had high hopes that a new moment was on the horizon for the British left and that its sun would shine on their efforts.

<p style="text-align:center">*"Cautious Optimism" and Fighting From Within*</p>

"This Party must be seen publically in its true colours," Bob Armstrong confidently proclaimed in his lucid vindication of continued allegiance to the CPGB.[201] He meant it as a response to the reasoners' call for "those who, like ourselves, will dissociate themselves completely from the leadership of the British Communist Party, not to lose faith in Socialism, and to find ways of keeping together."[202] For Armstrong and "others in the Uxbridge Party like me," the most effective way to meet the reasoners' demand would be continued support of the Party coupled with a fight against its "anti-democratic methods" and for its public image. Yet, after 1956 and the loss of a quarter of the membership, the Party's "colours" no longer boasted their traditional hue – a fact that made itself increasingly apparent to those intellectuals who had elected to "fight within" as they slowly came to grips with the reality of a wholly disrupted Party composition. For intellectuals, an especially debilitating consequence of 1956 on their positions within the Party was a heightened mood of anti-intellectualism, largely promoted by the EC. Those who had elected to stay in the Party after the events in Hungary therefore shared in

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[201] Letter from Bob Armstrong to E.P. Thompson and John Saville (November 27, 1956), DJS 108, HHC
[202] John Saville and E.P. Thompson, "Editorial," *The Reasoner,* Vol. 3 (November 1956), p. 2

Armstrong's sentiments, but did so apprehensively, perching themselves on the fence set between sustained loyalty to the CPGB and its abandonment in anticipation of a "Special" Congress to be held from April 19-22, 1957.

Thus, during the six months following Hungary, British communists were caught in a waiting game. For many of those dismayed dissenters who (at least initially) chose to remain in the Party, the Special 25th National Party Congress would serve as the "make it or break it" of sustained loyalty to the CPGB. Like Armstrong, however, they would not go down without a fight. As early as July 1956, a Commission on Inner-Party Democracy had been appointed to address questions regarding the function of democratic centralism that had arisen after Khrushchev's revelations at the Twentieth Congress. Members troubled by the implications underlying Khrushchev's revelations and the EC's subsequent reluctance to acknowledge these problems had high hopes for the potential changes that the investigation into Party democracy would bring. The commission was made up of nine members appointed by the EC, of which Christopher Hill was one, and six elected by the Party regional branches.[203] Emile Burns, James Klugmann, and Malcolm MacEwen (who had resigned from his position as a prominent journalist for the *Daily Worker* in protest of the Executive's authoritarian suppression of the Party press) were also notable EC-appointed participants. As MacEwen points out in a captivating article published twenty years later, the Commission was composed such that the EC's "grip on the Party" would not be disturbed—ten of the fifteen Commissioners were full-time Executive officials.[204] Hill and MacEwen's objections to the ironically undemocratic make-

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[203] Malcolm MacEwen offers an engaging personal account of the Commission, as well as the Special Congress in an article published in *Socialist Register*. See MacEwen, "The Day the Party Had to Stop" in *Socialist Register* (1976).

[204] Ibid., p. 29

up of the Commission were ultimately ignored; it was clear early on that they would end up forming the minority opinion.

Still, the fight carried on. The purported purpose of the Special Congress was to offer members who wished to voice their opinions the opportunity to do so under the condition that they be elected as Congress delegates by their local branches. This was also to be the time that the Commission would present its findings on the condition of inner-Party democracy. So despite their peripheral situation Hill and MacEwen did their best to piece together a thorough analysis of democratic centralism and its shortcomings. The EC's display of totalitarian control over Party media and internal discussion during the episode in Hungary amplified the weight with which this Commission was regarded by dissenters of the Party line, hence their hopeful anticipation of the event. The polarization of individuals' opinions within it, however, proved stifling. The following passages from a paper on "Party discussion" co-drafted by Klugmann and Hill provide an impeccable illustration:

> Normally, discussion should be terminated by Party decisions and the adoption of Party policy which is binding on all members, but in some cases as on problems of art and literature, there is a basis for continued discussion and debate without decision. (Klugmann)

> There is no reason why on questions of principle (i.e. in the formation of policy itself) the higher organs should allocate to themselves the function of defining these principles, or why free discussion of policy by the membership should have any other limits than those needed to prevent such discussion…from disrupting the unity of the Party. (Hill)[205]

The debate had not changed since its initiation nearly a year earlier. In order "for the working class to defeat this highly centralised class enemy [capitalism]," the orthodox asserted, "the Party must be a unified political force, a united militant organisation." Holding fast to Party doctrine, they extended this logic to the question of democratic centralism, arguing that such a principle

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[205] Quoted in MacEwen, "The Day the Party Had to Stop," pp. 32-3

would be essential if British communists hoped "to develop a Party life and activity which will develop such members, cadres and leaders and unite them all into a single and unbreakable political force." It was the same appeal to tradition and precedence that the Executive and other orthodox Party members had been espousing for months. Fronters like Hill and MacEwen were growing increasingly disheartened by the Party leadership's utter inability (or perhaps conscious refusal) to recognize the illogicality of ostensibly arguing for increased democracy and equality in Britain and abroad while simultaneously imposing totalitarian measures upon its own supporters. Even more disturbing was the "High Brahmin's" deliberate evasiveness at the first sign of questions regarding the mass resignations it suffered due to the "secret speech" and Hungary.[206] In presenting these concerns at the Congress, Hill and MacEwen hoped to begin a more balanced dialogue within the Party and to help initiate what they considered a much needed reconstruction of trust between rank-and-file members and their leaders.

On April 19, the long-awaited event began as communists arrived in London from across England, Scotland, and even (in a few cases) Northern Ireland. "The atmosphere is one of gloom and despondency," Kiernan wrote just days before the Special Congress, lamenting the harsh reality that "at the Congress, the active or vocal opposition will be very small indeed."[207] Much to Kiernan's and his comrades' disconsolation, his prognosis proved correct. Of the 93 delegates that spoke, the dissenting voices were few and dominated by intellectuals, which did not do much to disprove orthodox (i.e. the EC and comrades that supported it) claims that intellectuals were "subjected to different influences from those which face the comrades in the factories" and were thus motivated by a "subjective honesty" instead of the "objective truth" that best served

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[206] CPGB Archive, Letter from Lawrence Daly to John MacDonald (September 22, 1956), CP/CENT/ORG/18/01, LHASC

[207] John Saville Papers, Letter from Victor Kiernan to Bob Hunter (April 15, 1957), DJS 111, HHC

the needs of Labour Movement as a whole.[208] The entire Congress was littered with such sentiments.[209]

The anti-intellectual tenor boasted by the Party did more than simply alienate its intelligentsia as a peculiar group within its ranks; it challenged the fundamental validity of intellectuals' positions as Marxists. This certainly struck a nerve for those intellectuals who had elected to stay loyal to the Party against their moral compasses' better judgment, as well as the health of their professional lives, in order to retain their active roles in the working-class movement. So, although certainly a minority among the speakers, those intellectuals who had been elected as delegates did not waste their opportunity to publicly refute the attacks thrown their way. Two noteworthy challengers were philosopher and mathematician Hyman Levy, and Hill, who presented the Commission for Inner-Party Democracy's minority report. On the last day of the Congress, the 600 delegates present reportedly erupted into applause when Levy eloquently defended Party intellectuals, declaring, "I am a worker…and I have never left the working class into which I was born. I may be an intellectual, but I earn my living with the sweat of my brain…and refuse to make any distinction between a worker and an intellectual."[210] When he shifted their attention to the topic of resignations, the reception was more uneven: "We have lost 7,000 members this year. But have we had an analysis of how we have lost them? Where is

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[208] George Matthews, "Lessons of a Letter" in *World News* (January 12, 1957), quoted in Committee of the Cambridge University Senior Branch, "Statement on the Current Campaign Against Intellectuals in the Party" (February 1957); John Daniels and Robert Shaw, "Hyman Levy's Speech: Full Report" in "Congress Special" No. 4 (April 22, 1957). Levy was responding in part to EC Member Arnold Kettle, who had accused intellectuals of excessive subjectivity in "explaining" why such a significant portion of the Party's intelligentsia had moved into a position of opposition.

[209] For more examples of anti-intellectualism at the CPGB's Twenty-fifth National Congress, see Callaghan, *Cold War, Crisis and Conflict*, pp. 74-8

[210] CPGB Archive, Daniels and Shaw, "Hyman Levy's Speech: Full Report," CP/CENT/ORG/18/06, LHASC

that analysis? I want to hear something about the 7,000 members. If we could say we had gained 7,000 members what an enthusiastic gathering this would have been!"[211]

Hill subsequently credited Levy's speech with being "the most important of the congress" in his own presentation of the Commission's minority report, which had been signed only by himself, MacEwen, and one other Commissioner, Peter Cadogan, who resigned from the CPGB almost immediately following the Special Congress.[212] Ultimately, the dissenting intellectuals who remained in the Party attended the Congress hoping to leave with a sense that trust could be restored between themselves and their more orthodox leadership:

> If the leadership of the Party is honest and true to principle, if it tells the members the whole truth, or all that it knows, about the situation, if by its record it earns the respect, affection, and loyalty of the Party membership, if it refrains from using its control of the Party machine and Press to smack down those who are seeking for information or expressing honest criticism, then in critical situations, where it has to take quick decisions and appeal for a quick response will be given instantly, unanimously and enthusiastically… But insistence of the duty automatically to accept and fight for policies in which there is no confidence can only have bad results.[213]

Hill and his dissenting comrades were willing to concede democratic centralism's potential benefits to the Party, but only in so far as they felt the leadership would truly be operating democratically and with its members' best interests in mind and at heart. This was too much for those holding the orthodox line, who dismissed the points raised by Levy and the Minority Report as "revisionist" and demonstrative of "backboneless" intellectuals' failure to comprehend what is meant by class struggle.[214] The Special Congress set the tone for Party intellectual life in

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[211] Ibid.

[212] Quoted in Callaghan, *Cold War, Crisis and Conflict*, p. 75; MacEwen, "The Day the Party Had to Stop," p. 41

[213] "Commission for Inner-Party Democracy: Minority Report" (1957), quoted in MacEwen, "The Day the Party Had to Stop," p. 40

[214] The majority opinion in the Commission for Inner-Party Democracy had already been referring to the ideas put forth by the Commission's minority as "revisionist" weeks before the Congress had even taken place. See "Draft Notes for Reports on Inner Party Democracy" (April 6, 1957) at the Labour History Archive in Manchester (CP/CENT/EC/04/07).

the years to come. After the Congress, the CPGB suffered the loss of another 2,000 members, many of whom were intellectuals, including Hill, for whom the Congress destroyed what little hope they had left for the Party's redirection.

Intellectuals who endured the disappointment of the Congress found themselves up against serious challenges as they tried to reconstruct the vibrant intellectual environments they had enjoyed during the post-war decade in order to carry on politico-ideological work. It was not solely the CP Historians' Group's "loss of many – perhaps most – of its most devoted and publicly known members" that led Hobsbawm to regretfully assert in 1979 that the Group's "later history cannot really be compared to that of the years 1946-56."[215] More than the CPGB's significantly diminished intelligentsia, the Party's newfound fearfulness of its intellectual membership made it particularly difficult for those who "decided to hang on and keep going," such as Kiernan and Hobsbawm, to organize effective endeavors with any significant degree of success.[216]

After the Special Congress, a group of Party intellectuals who had not attended gathered to hear a "cautiously optimistic" report of what had taken place from Maurice Dobb.[217] A letter from the biochemist Reggie Trim summarizing the details of the meeting for Kiernan, who was unable to attend, suggests that most intellectuals who remained in the Party even after the congress were of the "general opinion" that "the Party is still capable (if any Party is) of leading us to Socialism."[218] Yet, Dobb's understanding of what took place at the Congress (as Trim relayed it to Kiernan in his letter) seems to have been at best blinded by his Party and Soviet devotion and at worst laden with intentional fabrications. Giving Dobb the benefit of the doubt,

[215] Hobsbawm, "The Historians' Group of the Communist Party," p. 40

[216] John Saville Papers, Letter from Victor Kiernan to Hugh Gordon (October 23, 1957), DJS 111, HHC

[217] "…Maurice had duly given what he described as a cautiously optimistic report"; Letter from Reggie Trim to Victor Kiernan (May 7, 1957), DJS 111, HHC

[218] Letter from Reggie Trim to Victor Kiernan (May 7, 1957), DJS 111, HHC

the former possibility is perhaps more likely. In spite of the evident anti-intellectual overtone of the Congress and the alienating actions that followed, Dobb claimed, "the Congress proceedings were conducted fairly with compromise and yield," and further asserted that "some small changes have been effected." He was confident that "further and greater changes are possible albeit on a much longer time scale than we had expected – Hence the cautious optimism."[219]

Perhaps more frequently motivated by a belief that "it will be impossible to put another Marxist [Party] together," than faith in the Party's capabilities, fronter intellectuals who remained in the Party did so despairingly and half-heartedly.[220] Kiernan, who had been "shattered" by all that 1956 had wrought, nevertheless felt that in retaining Party membership, "one has to start behaving as if the transformation of the [Party] had already got under weigh."[221] This meant, he believed, being openly critical of Party—and especially Soviet—shortcomings: "e.g. I am giving a talk next week to the socialist students about Syria, and I shall criticise the Russians, as well as the Americans, while saying (as I think one safely can) that the Americans are *more* to blame."[222] Like Kiernan, most oppositional loyalists thought it both worthwhile and necessary to continue to challenge what they considered the Party's highly flawed leadership in order to rebuild the tattered intellectual communities to which they had dedicated so much of their time throughout the post-war decade with a mind to pushing for "the transformation of this Party into the revolutionary Marxist vanguard of the British working class, exercising the right to interpret and apply Marxism for itself" so that "it would take its rightful place at the head of a mass movement, would flourish and go forward."[223] The result was a sort of hopeful effort to

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[219] Ibid.

[220] Letter from Victor Kiernan to Henry (1957), DJS 111, HHC

[221] Letter from Victor Kiernan to Hugh Gordon (October 23, 1957), DJS 111, HHC; "weigh" is the spelling in original document.

[222] Ibid.

[223] CPGB Archive, Peter Fryer, "An Undelivered Speech" (April 1957), CP/CENT/ORG/18/06, LHASC

will change into existence by, as Kiernan championed, openly diverging from the Party line in hopes of fueling honest and critical discussion.

But whereas the NCC had facilitated discussion and creativity before 1956, King Street was taking its best efforts to prevent such organization from resuming. The NCC was not dissolved, but the heavy emphasis on ideological work that had been characteristic of the ten years succeeding the war seems to have ceased entirely.[224] The British leadership was convinced that the existence of cultural groups such as those of the Historians and the Writers had facilitated in 1956 the mobilization of intellectuals from distant regional branches that otherwise would not have maintained close relations and thus produced the threats of factionalism within the Party that had so concerned the EC when *The Reasoner* appeared.

There is perhaps no better example of this alarmist behavior after 1956 than the Executive's paranoid preoccupation with "swiftly" launching a new Party theoretical journal prompted by the mass number of dissident socialist journals concurrently popping up across Great Britain. The Executive argued that the journal would need an editorial board that was "very strong politically." In other words, those in charge of its organization did "not think we should follow a policy of giving places on the board to people whose attitude is at present vacillating in order to win them over," so the candidates were limited to full-time EC members only: Gollan, Dutt, Klugmann, Burns, and Ramelson were all included on this nine-person list.[225] Prominent intellectuals who remained in the Party such as Hobsbawm, Jack Lindsay, and Maurice Dobb who kept in contact with the dissidents were considered too risky. This made it nearly impossible for the attempts to spark a discourse on fundamental issues "from within" to

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[224] Callaghan discusses this at length in his book on the CPGB during the Cold War. See Callaghan, *Cold War, Crisis and Conflict*, pp. 85-122.

[225] "Proposals for New Theoretical Journal" (1957), CP/CENT/EC/04/07, LHASC

gain legitimacy in the views of the better part of the membership, which now consisted primarily of those who shared the orthodox view.

Perhaps the most profound affect of "the great 1956 earthquake" on loyal communist intellectuals who had been so passionately involved in Party activism throughout the post-war decade is that it actually led them to retreat into the shadows of Party-based political work.[226] This was certainly true of Hobsbawm, who explains in his autobiography that just as some people who left the Party during the crisis "quietly dropped out of political activism," some who chose to stay loyal, "like myself," did so as well.[227] The demoralizing increase in anti-intellectualism certainly had a hand in this. A good deal of intellectuals' political work during the post-war decade had been connected to their intellectual production, but after 1956 they were kept away from this type of Party activity, as the outlined plans for the CPGB's new "theoretical journal" makes clear. Although the work developed throughout the post-war decade was unquestionably political in nature, it typically had not assumed the shape of orthodox propaganda that the Party had envisioned. In some cases, the less-dogmatic critical analysis produced by writers conflicted so much with the leadership's expectations that it brought them into conflict with the EC.[228]

The historians, on the other hand, never had any such conflict and had operated almost as an autonomous body within the Party. Though not necessarily in opposition to the Party line, this historical scholarship nonetheless had not championed an unequivocal narrative of the Party's and the Soviet Union's import in the Labour Movement—British or international—nor had it explicitly promoted the Party's official line. Still, the Executive had praised its attacks on the

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[226] Hobsbawm, *Interesting Times*, p. 210

[227] Ibid. p. 211

[228] This was particularly true in the late 1940s and early 1950s due to Zhdanov's imposition on literary criticism. For more on this see Paananen, *British Marxist Criticism*.

long-standing "bourgeois" interpretations of history—"the propaganda of the victors"—thereby

enabling the Group to continue to develop its somewhat unpartisan (but by no means apolitical)

intellectual work under the shelter of the CPGB.[229] The fact that the historians became the most

vocal opposition to the Party line in 1956 alerted the Party leadership to the "mistakes" it had

made in allowing the Historians' Group so much autonomy throughout the previous ten years.

The other side of intellectuals' withdrawal from Party activism was their enduring

distrust of the Party, as well as a sense that "since the Party had not reformed itself, it had no

long-term political future in the country."[230] Arguably, this sense was the most debilitating effect

of 1956 on intellectual life in the CPGB with "cautious optimism" regressing into a sort of Party-

apathy as time revealed the unlikelihood of any large-scale changes in the Party's loyalties,

doctrine, or leadership composition. Levy paid dearly for his aberration from the Party line

during the Congress, but nevertheless remained loyal to the Party and continued to speak

passionately against Soviet leadership at Party branch meetings until his expulsion from the

Party in 1958.[231] Though Kiernan had taken hold of the faint hope that the Party might still

reform that had been expressed in Dobb's report, he nevertheless recalled in a letter to Saville

nearly two decades later, "I think I had a feeling by then that I had done all I could do to save the

Party from itself and its past," and thus had withdrawn himself from Party-related activities,

though he remained quite active in leftist politico-ideological efforts unaffiliated with the

CPGB.[232] Fed up with the Party's refusal to reform or compromise, Kiernan in 1959 made what

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[229] Henry Abelove, "Interview with E.P. Thompson" in *Visions of History* (1983), p. 8

[230] Hobsbawm, *Interesting Times*, p. 211

[231] Levy was finally expelled from the Party when he published a book titled *Jews and the National Question* in which he denounces the "cult of the individual" explanation of Stalinism, which was the official line on the matter, by analyzing the Soviets' treatment of Russian Jews; Hyman Levy, *Jews and the National Question* (1958).

[232] John Saville Papers, Letter from Victor Kiernan to John Saville (May 10, 1975), DJS 111, HHC

was perhaps an inevitable final break with the Party that he had loved so dearly for a quarter of a century.

<div align="center">*"Reaffirmation" and Fighting From Without*</div>

As dissenting loyalists were fighting a losing battle from within, intellectuals who opted to leave the Party during the crisis were busy trying to revive their own political lives. Ex-communists found themselves presented with three potential courses of action of which two were more frequently ventured: denounce Marxism and leftist politics entirely, become a far-left member of the Labour Party, or remain "party-less," devoting political efforts to fighting for Communist reform from without, so to speak. This last option has been transcribed as a search for a "third way" that rejected both the capitalist model, as well as that of Soviet totalitarianism. For the most part, the first road remained untrodden; among ex-communist British intellectuals, there was no "God that failed." This presents quite a dramatic contrast to the experience of Party dissidents in other countries like France, Italy, and Germany, where the renunciation of Marx generally manifested concurrently with the disenchantment of a communist utopia gone sour.[233] Far more often, ex-communist intellectuals in Britain elected one of the latter two options, each of which required its own flavor of disciplined compromise.

Though the Labour Party was a somewhat obvious political haven for ex-Communists, it was not an option that most intellectuals considered particularly intriguing. The fact of Britain's increased economic prosperity indubitably played a role in Labour's appeal to some ex-communists who had begun to feel as though "the Labour Party's analysis of the situation…has been more scientifically correct, even in the Marxist sense, than that of the Communist Party."[234]

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[233] For more on disillusioned non-British intellectuals' experiences with losing faith in the Soviet regime and, consequently, in Marxism (prior to 1956), see R. H. S. Crossman and Arthur Koestler, *The God That Failed* (1950).

[234] CPGB Archive, Goss, "Where Should Ex-Communists Go? – Labour Party Our General Staff?" in Peter Fryer (ed.), *The Newsletter* (June 7, 1957), p. 35, CP/CENT/ORG/18/06, LHASC; It also perhaps should not be forgotten

But most intellectuals' qualms with the Party were matters of trust and the EC's refusal to allow

for open discussion within its ranks. Thus, many had trouble "[seeing] in what way the Labour

Party is more honest."[235] Nonetheless, there were some, like Rodney Hilton, who were simply

unwilling to remain party-less and therefore joined Labour with the hope of organizing a more

radical group of Marxists within its ranks. This was not, however, a particularly seductive option

in the eyes of most ex-communists, many of whom shared in Lessing's sentiment that "I am

quite sure I am not, and could not be, a social democrat," hence the endeavor to seek out a third

option.[236] Many intellectuals who fall into this category feared that joining Labour would

threaten "a certain politico-theoretical identity" born out of the CPGB schism, while

simultaneously fretting that Marxist political views would be relegated to obscurity in British

politics if those who advocated in their favor did not belong to a strong, organized party.[237]

Intellectuals imagined the development of what existing historiography has referred to as a "third

way as the compromise that would reconcile these concerns, freeing up space for the

advancement of progressive, humanistic Marxist ideals.

Although the motivations for and experience of joining the Labour Party doubtless

deserve a closer consideration than has been provided, this section will focus primarily on the

formative years of this search for a "third way"—now famously known as the *"first"* New

Left—which grew up in the context of three journals: *Universities and Left Review* (*ULR*),

founded by Raphael Samuel who shared his editorial responsibilities with a remarkably talented

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that those who had joined as young university-aged students during the 1930s—which made up the bulk of CPGB membership in the mid-1950s—were now middle-aged and most commonly enjoying stable economic conditions and settled family lives. Another attraction to Labour could simply have been a de-radicalizing that accompanied age, though this was, presumably, not the case for intellectuals who had been more committed communists, such as Hilton, throughout the preceding ten years.

[235] Mary Vernon, "Where Should Ex-Communists Go? – You Haven't Convinced Me Yet!" in Peter Fryer (ed.), *The Newsletter* (June 7, 1957), p. 35, CP/CENT/ORG/18/06, LHASC

[236] John Saville Papers, Doris Lessing's Letter of Resignation from the CPGB to General Secretary John Gollan (December 11, 1956), DJS 108, HHC

[237] Letter from E.P. Thompson to Ken Alexander (January 21, 1957), DJS 107, HHC

group of Oxford students consisting of Stuart Hall, Gabriel Pearson, and Charles Taylor;

Thompson's and Saville's *The New Reasoner: A Quarterly Journal of Socialist Humanism* (*NR*);

and *New Left Review* (*NLR*), born out of a merger between the two previously stated endeavors.

Looking at this movement provides a unique lens through which to broadly evaluate the effects

of 1956 on ex-communists' (and, to a lesser extent, loyalists') intellectual work because,

regardless of their post-Party political engagements, virtually all intellectuals who had been

actively involved in the Party during the post-war decade and oppositional in 1956 contributed to

one (and often both) of these journals.

It is especially important to understand two things about this movement: (1) it was by no

means limited to the undertakings of those involved in these two journals (though they do tend to

occupy the focus of most existing histories of the first New Left in Britain) and (2) it was not

intended as a new political Party. It was rather meant, in the cases of *ULR* and *NR*, as a platform

upon which to develop humanistic conceptions of Marxist theory. The journals' approaches to

confronting this task were, however, quite dissimilar. The *ULR*'s editors were a group of

"energetic," politically-interested children of the "post-war generation" (as they branded

themselves in the first issue's editorial) who shared a rueful sense of frustration towards their

peers' "apathetic" sense that "politics was not 'about them'."[238] This criticism was certainly not

unique to the pioneers of *ULR*. Hilton, for example, though doubtless disturbed by the dual

events of Hungary and Suez, enthusiastically welcomed the "repoliticization" they appeared to

have sparked among students. In response to a letter from Samuel inquiring about addresses of

potentially-interested readers for the new journal, Hilton excitedly remarked, "It has been

remarkable that in Birmingham University, the joint impact of Suez and Hungary has made

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[238] Raphael Samuel Archive, Stuart Hall, Gabriel Pearson, Ralph Samuel, Charles Taylor, "Editorial" in *Universities and Left Review* Vol. 1, No. 1 (Spring 1957), p. 2, ULR/1957, BI

students interested in politics again." He optimistically added, "I think this a real chance of a revival of Left-wing activity provided it is tied up ideologically neither to the Labour Right nor to the CPGB."[239]

We now know the story of the reasoners' dramatic break with the British Communist Party well. Saville and Thompson, both of whom had joined the CPGB as university students (though within five years of one another—Saville was eight years Thompson's senior), were religiously devoted members of the Party for the entirety of their adult lives, having chosen Marxism for themselves. Like Hilton, they deplored the apparent political ennui that defined the younger generation throughout the 1950s and shared in Hilton's optimism for an activism revival. They had high hopes that the "vagabond figure" of Raphael Samuel would be able to lead this revival in the right direction.[240] Warmly regarded as "Ralph" by those who knew him personally, Samuel was a red diaper baby and had participated in the CPHG while a student at Oxford in the early 1950s. The reasoners therefore considered him an excellent candidate to spearhead the newfound left-leaning youth movement—he could relate to the younger generation on a level that they could not hope to accomplish and he was, theoretically, trained in the communist tradition and concerned for the working class. Yet, Samuel had a wholly different experience in the "world of British communism," and thus a quite different relationship with Marxism, than did the reasoners. Samuel grew up in a Jewish-communist household in a north-London immigrant neighborhood and was raised in the British communist milieu.[241] Thus, while resigning from the CPGB marked a rupture in the reasoners' lives and autonomously formed political identities, for Samuel it was, in many ways, more a means by which to break away from

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[239] Letter from Rodney Hilton to Raphael Samuel (December 2, 1956), ULR/1956, BI
[240] Hobsbawm, *Interesting Times*, p. 212
[241] For more on Samuel's personal experience as a child living amidst British communism, see Samuel, *The Lost World of British Communism*. Thompson was ten years Samuel's senior.

sought "to provide a forum where the different fruitful traditions of socialist discussion are free to meet in open controversy."[243]

For two journals that are considered to have jointly kicked-off an entire movement, the contrast of *ULR*'s mission with that of *New Reasoner*'s is certainly striking. *NR* made its debut one quarter after its more youth-based counterpart. Ostensibly, *NR*'s political stance was similar to *ULR*'s, in that it was not officially affiliated with a Party and thus its editors did not consider themselves pushing a *political* line—theirs was a theory-based rhetoric. Although no longer operating within the organs of "the Party machine," it seems that in the summer of 1957, Thompson and Saville, like their ex-comrades, took the stance of "cautious optimism." On the second page of their 143-page first issue, Saville and Thompson stated their motivations with a lucidity that terminates any possibility of uncertainty as to their motives for launching the venture: "We have no desire to break impetuously with the Marxist and Communist Tradition in Britain. On the contrary, we believe that this tradition…is in need of rediscovery and reaffirmation."[244] *NR* was not pushing a political line *per se*, but unlike *ULR's*, its mission was of a concrete political nature, aspiring to rouse *action* amongst its general readership and especially within the CPGB. Thompson's less formally stated hopes for the journal in his personal correspondence with Saville about the matter might better express these motives:

> the chief thing I want in this journal is *attack*: and I want specialists who write in such a way that serious non-specialists can not only understand what they mean, but…can be stimulated, roused, or moved by what they say. This is NOT the learned or academic tradition: it IS the tradition of a certain sort of politico-cultural journalism…in Britain.[245]

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[243] Ibid. Two interesting discussions of the origins of ULR, as well as a more in depth discussion of its aims can be in Lin Chun, *The British New Left* (1993); and Dennis Dworkin, *Cultural Marxism in Postwar Britain: History, the New Left, and the Origins of Cultural Studies* (1997), especially pp. 54-67.

[244] John Saville Papers, John Saville and E.P. Thompson, "Editorial" in *New Reasoner* Vol. 1, No. 1 (Summer 1957), p. 2, HHC

[245] Letter from E.P. Thompson to John Saville (January 9, 1957), DJS 107, HHC; emphasis original.

It would be wrong to assert, however, that *ULR* was not political. The *ULR* editors

offered a type of political effort that was fundamentally different in both its methods and its

purpose from that of *NR*. This distinction stems largely from the way in which the elder ex-

communists had come to conceive of their intellectual work *as Marxists*. As we have seen

throughout this thesis, communist intellectuals viewed the production of politically driven

scholarship as their contribution to the Labour Movement—"The sweat of my brain," as Levy

confidently announced in his prideful defense of intellectuals as workers in front of the 600

communist delegates at the Special Congress. Almost poetically, while Levy delivered his "most

important" speech, the *NR* factory was concurrently hard at work organizing the production of its

first issue. For the British fronters, intellectual production was always a drive to action because

its intention and (perceived) ability to promote change is precisely what made the work itself

Marxist. The "lively" young editors at *ULR* did not have the same sense of purpose because they

were not operating in accordance with the same set of values, nor with an identical ideological

toolkit. Their political aspirations lay in the abstract, rather than in the concrete realm of society.

Another interesting contrast between *NR*'s preoccupations in relation to those of *ULR* is

its organizational concerns. *ULR* made it abundantly clear in its first editorial that the editors had

no desire whatsoever to affiliate with a Party or a political organization—they wanted their

journal to serve as a general socialist forum. Contrary to *ULR*'s firm position on the matter of

affiliation, *NR* had a difficult time determining their stance. Although the reasoners did not

necessarily want to append *themselves* to any of the preexisting Parties, they held many

reservations regarding challenges to *NR*'s political effectiveness posed by the journal's lack of

affiliation with a strong organization and the question of how to proceed in this regard sparked a

heated debate among the entire editorial board, which also consisted of Doris Lessing, Peter Sedgwick, and Ken Alexander.[246]

Thompson felt sharply conflicted over this matter. In his New Left capacity, Thompson is perhaps best known for his self-proclaimed "revolt against the ideology, the false consciousness of the elite-into-bureaucracy" and "against inhumanity" in developing what he called "socialist humanism." In his acclaimed essay delineating this view of socialism, which appeared in *NR*'s first number, Thompson puts himself in a position of staunch opposition to the CPGB: "It is humanist because it places once again real men and women at the centre of socialist theory and aspiration, instead of the resounding abstractions—the Party, Marxism-Leninism-Stalinism, the Two Camps…" Still, in another essay for *ULR*'s first number, he deplores the Labour Party as well because "I do not think that the problem is necessarily brought nearer to solution by joining the Labour Party," since he believed doing so usually led "too many intellectuals…to get swallowed up in seas of expediency." Yet, he also expressed genuine nostalgia for the life he had in the CPGB, reflecting, "I have gained enormously from the friendships I have made in the Communist Party, and the experiences of active political life."[247] Could one so strongly despise a Party for its "monstrous slander" and yet feel so desperately inclined to revive its principles and restore is humanistic purpose? Could one resign from the Communist Party, but declare, "I remain a Communist"?[248]

These were the tough questions Thompson and his *NR* associates were up against as they endeavored to navigate the all but familiar political landscape of the post-1956 left. The loss of

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[246] Much of the correspondence related to this debate can be found in John Saville's Papers at the Hull History Centre in Hull, UK.

[247] E.P. Thompson, "Socialist Humanism" in John Saville, E.P. Thompson (eds.), *The New Reasoner* Vol. 1 No. 1 (Summer 1957), p. 109; Thompson, "Socialism and the Intellectuals" in Hall et al. (eds.), *Universities and Left Review* Vol. 1 No. 1 (Spring 1957), p. 34

[248] Thompson, "Socialism and the Intellectuals," p. 31

political belonging weighed heavily on these individuals. Thompson seems to have strongly

favored associating with another Party enough to go as far as to flirt with the idea of founding a

new Party. When that was shut down, he suggested another avenue of affiliation: "If we are

seriously agreed that at this stage (whatever upheavals and breaches the future must inevitably

hold) it is folly to think of a separate party or even political-propaganda society, then we must

weigh up in a less amateur manner the possibility of bringing an association or federation as we

envisage into relations with the Labour Party."[249] There was, of course, a practicality to these

matters, for if the *NR* group were to be successful in its endeavors, it would need to be close to

the people to whom they wished to reach out. Being primarily concerned with the Labour

Movement as a whole, for the reasoners this meant going further than simply seeking out other

dismayed ex-Party intellectuals – they needed to reach the workers. But a stronger (though no

less practical) motivation for this was to gain support within the left-edges of Labour, in hopes of

influencing the CPGB away from its Soviet-laden tendencies and "towards a true ("honest") self-

consciousness."[250]

      This enlightens us to perhaps the most important difference (in regards to communism)

between the ambitions of *NR* and *ULR*. It was not only the elder group's concern with producing

work that could aid in the traditional Labour Movement, but its objectives to effect change on

such a scale so as to influence the Communist Party to revise its doctrine and take steps towards

the type of reform policies that the reasoners thought were essential to rescuing the organization

best suited "to lead" that separated the reasoners so decidedly from their younger colleagues in

thought and in approach. It is no surprise that this was such an important objective for *NR* given

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[249] Letter from E.P. Thompson to Ken Alexander (January 23, 1957), DJS 107, HHC
[250] Thompson, "Socialist Humanism," p. 109

the emotional strain imposed on intellectuals upon choosing to leave the Party. Even in resigning

from the Party, Lessing could not help but feel remorse at her capitulation:

> I do not hold the view that Britain does not need a communist party – on the contrary, it is a tragedy that, in the very difficult time we are moving into, there will not be a strong communist party… With my views, which are strongly critical of you, the leadership, and your policy, I should be spending my time from now until the Congress in April fighting against you. But…things can't go on like this.[251]

Yet, the two journals were not without their similarities either. A point that most

scholarship of the New Left accentuates is the movement's emphasis on the cultural dimension

of British society, as well as socialist humanism—a concept that, as we have already briefly

discussed, owes much to the rigorous thought of E.P. Thompson. Of course, as we have seen,

interest in culture was hardly absent from communist intellectual life throughout the post-war

decade. What was different about *ULR*'s cultural focus is that it did not place emphasis upon the

working class, but instead considered questions of popular culture—put simply, it was more

geared toward a youthful middle-class intelligentsia than a politically-interested working class.

Still, the journal was lively and popular. At the tail end of 1958, *ULR* accepted an offer

from a "reputable commercial publisher" and subsequently proposed the idea of a merger with

NR. There were certain aspects of this suggestion that made good sense for both parties involved.

For all its success, along with the additional year and a half's worth of experience publishing its

journal, the editorship of *ULR* was still inexperienced in comparison to the *NR* staff and certainly

no where near as developed in terms of intellectual work. In *NR*'s case, motives for the merger

lay at the doorstep of mechanical convenience, rather than that of politico-ideoogical rationale—

Saville and Thompson had been producing their journal "on an amateur basis" (i.e. using their

own resources and man power) and the fact was that they were tired. "All of us have been

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[251] Doris Lessing's Letter of Resignation from the CPGB to General Secretary John Gollan (December 11, 1956), DJS 107, HHC

burning candles at five or six different ends," Edward reasoned, though he also warned, "editorial board members ought to realize that these are subjective factors at work."[252]

Not everyone sitting on *NR*'s editorial board received news of the merger fondly and, unlike the motives for following through with the merger, which were based almost solely on practicality, their objections were based in political and ideological reservations. Although Saville asserted in his and Thompson's announcement of the merger that it was "undoubted" that the two journals had been growing closer in "personal and intellectual terms," the board remained unconvinced and with good reason.[253] *NR* was intended at its outset as a *political* endeavor, not just an intellectual exercise and its board was composed of ex-communists whose interests remained in that territory. After all, what merit did they carry as Marxists if there scholarly work was not offering a political purpose? One board member, Clancy, objected because she simply had "yet to hear a really cogent *political* argument" in its favor.[254] What is particularly striking is her assertion that "NR and ULR perform distinctive tasks." The role of *NR*, she argued, was "to carry on the main tradition of Marxist thought," but *ULR*'s mission was of a different nature due to a "real delicacy" of its generation's problem, which she saw primarily as an "unwillingness to commit oneself."[255]

Whether Clancy's assessment of the problem was correct or not, she was not mistaken about the incompatibility of the two journals' "tasks." In 1959, *ULR* and *NR* did indeed merge to form the still-thriving *New Left Review.* It is beyond the scope of this thesis to outline the complexities that wove the web of malcontent and demoralization that came to burden the lives of everyone involved—particularly Edward Thompson, though he was as much the carrier of

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[252] Letter from Saville and Thompson to *New Reasoner* Editorial Board: "Background to the Merger Question" (1958), DJS 107, HHC

[253] Ibid.

[254] Letter from Clancy (no last name) to John Saville (undated), DJS 107, HHC; emphasis original.

[255] Ibid.

NLR dramatics from 1961-2 as he was the brunt-barer.[256] But in 1958, Edward was confident—indeed, insistent—that the merger was the best move for everyone involved: "If our contributors are not to find an audience among young people who read ULR, who the hell are we to write for? And if the young people who read ULR are not going to become more experienced and responsible, who among their generation is going to?"[257] Though it was the dissenting communist loyalists who had "officially" assumed a perspective of "cautious optimism," it seems this was the mental state of all communist intellectuals—loyalist and dissident—who had suffered in 1956. Reggie Trim may have been writing to Kiernan a year earlier, but nonetheless, "there you are – cautious optimism! I suppose so."[258]

Shaking off the Albatross

"Over the past 12 months I have increasingly come to symbolise the albatross of old notions and ex-communism which is blighting the trim young ship."[259] After almost exactly six years, E.P. Thompson was once again offering a dramatic resignation from a prestigious position. The *NLR* experiment had not produced the results he had hypothesized and it is no exaggeration to say he was devastated at its perceived "failure." It was not that the journal was failing in any technical way – in fact, it was impressively successful. The problem for Thompson lay in the board members' diminished "right to constitute ourselves as a political leadership" in favor of the younger generation's "political direction," which was "largely removed from practical political involvement." It followed from this, he claimed, that the journal's leadership

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[256] There are a number of detailed discussions of *NLR*'s history available. Some recommendable books are Lin Chun, *The British New Left* (1993); Duncan Thompson, *Pessimism of the Intellect?: A History of the New Left Review* (2007). Another book that deals less exclusively with *NLR*, but is nevertheless valuable is Dworkin, *Cultural Marxism in Postwar Britain: History, the New Left, and the Origins of Cultural Studies*.

[257] Letter from Saville and Thompson to *New Reasoner* Editorial Board: "Background to the Merger Question" (1958), DJS 107

[258] Letter from Reggie Trim to Victor Kiernan (May 7, 1957), DJS 111, HHC

[259] Letter from E.P. Thompson to John Saville (May 1962), DJS 112, HHC; This was part of Thompson's letter of resignation from his position as Chairman of *NLR*'s Editorial Board.

espoused a set of political and ideological conceptions such that he believed it to have "failed in most of its responsibilities to the active movement in the country"—a fact "which this albatross cannot swallow."[260]

For communist intellectuals, the six years after 1956 were ultimately politically demoralizing regardless of what choice one took during the crisis or its immediate aftermath. It was not because politics had in some way lessened in their intensity—quite the opposite, actually. Hilton's hopeful prediction was fairly on point and the hitherto "apathetic" younger generation began to engage in politics, largely due to the efforts of the New Left. The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, though not politically left or right *per se*, also helped rouse both the youth and the fronter generation.[261] Yet, just as *ULR*'s approach to political scholarship had been far more abstract than the work that ex-communists like Saville, Thompson, and Hobsbawm would ever find appropriate in the context of such efforts, the entire New Left took a far less purposive approach to politics than both communists and ex-communists advocated. Despite his dramatics, Thompson was quite right when he expressed his "inevitable disappointment" at the fact that "my tradition has for the time being lost out."[262]

Their problem was two-fold. In the realm of theory, ex-communists like Saville and Thompson had been trained in the orthodox mode of Marxism. This is not to say that they subscribed to it – as we have seen, they were hardly proponents for such a rigid view. What they did, rather, was to reshape it so that it could accord with their popular front perceptions of the Party and the larger Labour Movement; hence their far less doctrinaire approaches to political work within the Party. Their difficulty was that British society had experienced a post-war

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[260] Ibid.

[261] E.P. Thompson was heavily engaged in this movement, as were many members of *ULR*. See Kate Hudson, *CND - Now More than Ever: The Story of a Peace Movement* (2005).

[262] Letter from E.P. Thompson to John Saville (May 1962), DJS 112, HHC

economic prosperity that made working-class arguments less "relevant." Thus, the *NR* endeavor

did well among its own milieu, but "conversely, a whole range of ULR readers, while not hostile

to NR," Clancy pointed out in her anti-merger letter, "are not engaged by it. They aren't hostile,

just not touched."[263] Ignoring her assessment, Thompson and Saville went ahead with the

merger, but *New Left Review* ultimately marked the end of the communist fronters' "fight"—

both within and outside of Party ranks—for the Marxist tradition with which they had developed

their intellectual thought and political principles.

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[263] Letter from Clancy (no last name) to John Saville (undated), DJS 107, HHC

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Whither British Marxism?

Most studies of the post-1956 far left in Britain have tended to focus on the emergence of the "New Left" movement of which ex-communists like Thompson and Saville are considered key figures for reasons that we explored in the last chapter. A strange consensus that treats the undertakings of these dissidents during the first six years after 1956 (the "first" New Left) as "the first time a discourse of culture became central in political discussions" seems to have appended itself to the subject's existing literature.[264] Thus, students of this topic have tended to treat the crisis and its aftermath as a turning point in British Marxist thought.[265] Of course, as we saw in the second chapter, although a crisis doubtless broke out within the CPGB in 1956, for the majority of intellectuals in the Party, it was not an ideological one. Here we are burdened with a paradox. Given that their ideological confidence remained intact, why would intellectuals such as Thompson and Saville suddenly shift their political emphases after 1956? Fortunately, the answer is less burdensome. For communist intellectuals, the turbulence of 1956 did not catapult culture into the fore—it had been a priority for intellectuals in the CPGB since the war's close.

The historians' concern with the role of culture in their pursuit of "history from below" has by no means been neglected. In fact, Lin Chun credits Thompson's emphasis on "moral

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[264] Chun, *The British New Left* (1993), p. 27

[265] For example, Michael Kenny, *The First New Left: British Intellectuals after Stalin* (1995); and Chun, *The British New Left* (1993). There is a substantial body of literature on the emergence of "cultural studies," which rightly gives attention to the New Left in varying levels of detail and typically focuses on a few individuals in particular. One such case is Dworkin, *Cultural Marxism in Postwar Britain: History, the New Left, and the Origins of Cultural Studies* (1997). Chun and Kenny's books are particularly relevant, however, because both deal explicitly with the history of the New Left. Moreover, each received significant attention from some of those who were involved in the "first" New Left, including E.P. Thompson's wife, Dorothy, upon publication. To learn more about the discussion sparked by these books, see Lin Chun, "Reply to Dorothy Thompson and Fred Inglis" in *New Left Review* (September-October 1996); Fred Inglis, "Figures of Dissent" in *New Left Review* (January-February 1996); Michael Kenny, "Interpreting the New Left: Pitfalls and Opportunities" in *New Left Review* (Sept.-Oct. 1996); Dorothy Thompson, "On the Trail of the New Left" in *New Left Review* (Jan.-Feb. 1996).

consciousness" in her 1955 biography, *William Morris*, as "the very 'first' internal revolt against Stalinism" and asserts that the 1956 crisis sparked a rejection of economic determinism's longstanding dominance in Marxist intellectual thought.[266] Yet, it was no accident that Thompson found Morris to be a viable subject in the 1950s. The Historians' and (to a lesser extent) Writers' Groups were engaged in a Marx-tinted rethinking of their fields based in a Party-approved drive to rediscover the cultural elements of Marx's theory. CPGB leadership doubtless imagined the nature of this work differently from the intellectuals, but that intellectuals drew different conclusions to those of the EC does not alter the Party's role in facilitating such theoretical development nor does it change the fact that such work was indeed taking place.

This misunderstanding is rooted in two differences between past studies and this one. The first one is strictly technical, as it is a simple matter of access to materials, on the one hand, and methodology on the other. I am privileged to be writing long enough after the fall of the Soviet Union and the CPGB's subsequent dissolution to enjoy unrestricted access to Party papers, as well as to have the opportunity to sift through the thousands of correspondences that individuals who have (much less happily) passed away recently generously donated to various archives across the United Kingdom. Most of the scholars who have written on the subjects of the British Communist Party and the New Left did so in the 1990s and early 2000s and thus benefited from interviews with individuals such as Hobsbawm, Thompson, and Saville, but did not have the same free access to the contemporary documents from which this project has so benefited.

This difference in source material has heavily influenced the methodological approach taken here in relation to previous studies as well. This thesis has looked closely at the development – both intellectual and political – of the British communist thinkers that dominated

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[266] Chun, *The British New Left* (1993), p. 29

the Party's cultural and ideological work during the post-war decade based upon contemporary correspondences, Party documents, contemporary journals, publicly available interviews, and individuals' memoirs in an attempt to understand a crisis that took place and a movement, the first New Left, that effectively grew out of that crisis. Starting with Party intellectual life has led me to deviate from the prevailing evaluation of the New Left as a disjointed, but identically purposed effort on the part of two generations to seek out a "third way." Rather, it seems as though this only explains the ambitions of the younger generation of *ULR*, which was not concerned with the traditional Marxist emphasis upon class struggle. The founders, contributors, and supporters of *NR*, on the other hand, were in pursuit of establishing a movement based upon the more humanistic interpretation of Marx that they had always held, but that was rooted in the traditional Marxist notion of class struggle and political activism – a fact made quite clear by Thompson's contributions to both *NR* and *ULR*:

> The future of British Socialism may be very much affected by the understanding of and feeling towards the new society of British socialists, since it has always been their faith that socialism was not only economically practicable but was also intensely desirable; that is, that socialist society would revolutionise human relationships, replacing respect for property by respect for man, and replacing the acquisitive society by the common weal.[267]

The reasoners did not want to reject communism (i.e. their party), but to save it so that it could perform its job in aiding the Labour Movement, and to "reaffirm" their faith in its ability to better humanity. The ex-communists saw this as their *political* responsibility and therefore understood their involvement in the New Left as a purposive political endeavor. Of course, as we have seen, this resulted in antagonisms stemming from highly dissimilar conceptions of the three-way relationship between Marxism, politics, and intellectual production held by the

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[267] Thompson, "Socialist Humanism," p. 106

journals' respective participants. What has yet to be adequately answered by this thesis or its predecessors is *why* these two generations conceived of these things so dissimilarly.

According to one of the most recent historians of this subject, the reasoners' drive to affect politics concretely was based on "mistaken assumptions."[268] One plausible reason that has been offered to explain this difference in perception is the fact that *ULR* consisted of a far more heterogeneous group of individuals than did *NR*.[269] Samuel was an ex-communist of north London, but Stuart Hall was born and raised in Jamaica and had no official ties to the Communist Party in Britain or elsewhere. Charles Taylor, a French-Canadian, was also of foreign descent. Significantly, not everyone involved in *ULR* was a Marxist. But for those who were Marxists, like Samuel and Hall, it seems this difference in participant composition would more readily affect interpretation of theory than it would the participants' aspirations of accomplishing concrete political change based in it.

There is also, of course, an obvious generational argument to be made here that no historian who has written on this subject has neglected to acknowledge and chapter three certainly borrowed from this mode of analysis. Even in the context of a generational framework, however, the composition explanation only takes us so far, for it remains unclear why heterogeneity would necessarily mean disinterest with change. It is true that Marxism is a theory particularly tied up with action, so the idea that non-Marxists are less concerned with pushing for immediate societal alterations is, theoretically speaking, an understandable one. Yet this still does not explain the post-war generation *Marxist* intellectuals' apparent lack of concern with instigating substantial action. Moreover, the very act of initiating a journal that states as its *raisons d'êtres* "the problem of how to change contemporary society so as to make it more

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[268] Dworkin, *Cultural Marxism in Postwar Britain*, p. 65
[269] Hobsbawm, "The Historians' Group of the Communist Party," p. 26

democratic and more egalitarian, and yet how to prevent it degenerating into totalitarianism," implies some degree of concern with immediacy, even for non-Marxists.[270] The fronters probably would agree with every aspect of this statement—indeed, the similarity of language employed by *ULR* likely contributed to Saville's confidence that the two journals could grow closer together in purpose and outlook. Yet, Samuel and his colleagues understood this problem strictly in an intellectual sense—something to philosophize about. This is by no means to discount their views and endeavors, but it does reveal an important contrast between *ULR*'s and *NR*'s conceptions as to what constitutes labeling oneself a Marxist.

Undeniably, there is much to be gained from the generational approach to this topic and this ground has already been largely and rather thoroughly covered. Yet, despite its utility, we can find many holes in the generational argument that may be less clear without a careful consideration of the longstanding communist tradition that existing historiography gives very little attention to, but that nevertheless wholly defined the perspectives, motivations, and ambitions of half the figures to whom this scholarship attributes the birth of the first New Left. The first problem with the generational perspective is the idea that the two generations were separated by dissimilar experiences with world events (i.e. World War II) and societal changes (e.g. unprecedented affluence in British society after the war). This is all true, but such divides were also present between the fronters (as a generation, as opposed to an intellectual group) and the generation of the First World War, represented by figures like Maurice Dobb and Dona Torr – both of whom exercised considerable influence over the fronters' intellectual development.[271] Yet, the generational divide in the CPHG did not produce nearly as wide a conceptual divide as

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[270] Stuart Hall, Gabriel Pearson, Ralph Samuel, Charles Taylor, "Editorial" in *Universities and Left Review* Vol. 1, No. 1 (Spring 1957), p. 2

[271] Hobsbawm speaks to the relations between these two generations in the Historians' Group, asserting that "a modest, but for practical purposes unnoticed, generation gap separated this group" [i.e. Dobb, Torr, etc.]. See Hobsbawm, "The Historians' Group of the Communist Party," p. 24

manifested between those involved with *ULR* and *NR*. Furthermore, fear provoked by the immanent nuclear threat during the Cold War should not be played down. As we know from Hobsbawm, the experience of the turbulent 1930s was painted with a belief that "the old world was crashing."[272] Could not the Cold War be said to have had at least the potential of being equally as menacing? After all, the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki certainly left their marks on Britons' memories as the shear force of CND during the late fifties and early sixties clearly indicates. There must be a more satisfying explanation as to the stark disparities in conception and points of emphasis than that of a generational divide.

It is beyond the scope of this thesis to test another mode of analysis, but we may propose a new perspective that could be adopted in the context of another project in the future. We just saw a number of problems with the generational view, but the principal problem with this explanation is the fact that the *ULR* generation's attitude towards politics does not seem to have gone away. It is an extremely rare occasion that one meets someone whole-heartedly dedicated to any cause, political or otherwise. Individuals often engage in writing, much of it political in nature and respectable in its quality, merit, and logic, but only rarely does the author intend or expect his or her work to instigate any type of action or wide-felt response. In this way, then, perhaps scholars should not regard the differences between *ULR* and *NR* as a generational conflict, but rather as an indication of a broader phenomenon as regards how people feel connected with society and whether they can in any real sense change its evident shortcomings. Though Thompson is frequently criticized for his inability "to make realistic political calculations," he and his comrades, like Saville, Hobsbawm, Kiernan, and Levy, imagined a

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[272] BBC interview with Eric Hobsbawm

world better than the one that man has hitherto endured and each spent their lives working to accomplish their vision, which, to my mind, is as respectable an existence as can be hoped for.[273]

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[273] Dworkin, *Cultural Marxism in Postwar Britain,* p. 65

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