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University of Strathclyde

‘Against All The Odds’ : Women in the Communist
Party in Scotland 1920-91: An Oral History

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Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.)

1998

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Preface and Acknowledgements

Funding for this thesis came from a John Anderson award from the University of Strathclyde for the first year 1993-4 and from a British Academy award for the three years from 1994-7. Travel costs in my first year were met in part by an award from the Carnegie Trust.

There are many more people who have been of great help and encouragement, principally my supervisors: Arthur McIvor (especially for his stamina and support) and Jim McMillan, both of whose tolerance and understanding were essential. Thanks also to members of the History Department at the University of Strathclyde for their help, contacts and inspiration, Graham Smith from Dundee who gave essential advice on the practicalities of an oral history (though all faults with technique are my own) and to Catriona Burness at St. Andrews University for interview and publication information.

The writing of this thesis has taken four years. In that time I have got to know very well many former members of the Communist Party of Great Britain. I must thank all those who agreed to be interviewed and whose contributions were essential. For personal knowledge of communist politics and regular discussions I must thank foremost, Audrey Canning at the Willie Gallacher Memorial Library/ Democratic Left Archive for continuous help in finding material. Bob Horne a former CP Industrial Organiser, Party official and a founder of the Communist Party of Scotland. Willie Thompson at Caledonian University. Also Douglas Chalmers Scottish Secretary of the Democratic Left, John Foster Scottish Secretary of the Communist Party of Britain.

I must express my deep appreciation to all the women interviewed for access to their lives and personal material: Books, pamphlets, papers, documents and information including a wide range of photographs - specifically in this area Ouaine Bain, Janey Buchan, Katy Campbell, Kathryn Chalmers, Mary

Docherty, Marion Easedale, Ella Egan, Marion Henery, Susan Galloway (the title), Effie O'Hare, Isa Porte, Mary (and Eric) Park, Frieda Park , Jenny Richardson, Marion Robertson, Christine Sloan, and Irene Swan. Also Billy Quinn for material.

Special thanks to my mother , brothers (especially Bruce) , Ruth Lewis , Eddie Cable and all postgraduates at Strathclyde University and elsewhere who I got to know , especially David Forsyth, Tommy Gardiner, Billy Kenefick, Catriona McDonald, Martin Mitchell and Sandy Renfrew who were there from the start (though not at the end). Also Moira Alexander, Ruth Donald and Maggie Erickson for help with the first ten transcripts.

Finally a special mention for Rose, May, and Mabs whose contribution to socialism is now over.

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Abstract

The intention of this thesis is to redress the balance towards women in communist history and to show for the first time the extent to which they were involved in Communist Party activity at local, national and international levels. As an oral history the thesis is based on the testimony of women involved in the Communist Party of Great Britain in Scotland from its inception to its demise.

The role of children's organisations in the first half of the twentieth century, and the part they played in shaping women's consciousness is considered. The many ways that women came into the Party and the part they played in its structures are defined, as is the unique role of the Scottish Women's Advisory Committee.

Women's perceptions of the USSR and their experiences of visiting the socialist countries are examined along with their views on living socialism, the leadership in the Soviet Union and the events of Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968.

The activity of women in the Young Communist League (YCL) is described, especially in the 1960s when it seemed to take on a new lease of life as did the expectations of women in that era. The mid-1970s signal the influence of feminism in the Party and the respondent's views towards this are analysed.

The penultimate chapter examines the divisions that occurred from the new draft of *The British Road to Socialism* in 1977. The new theories that came into the CP are discussed as are the acrimonious splits of the 1980s. The thesis ends with the fall of the Eastern Bloc and the winding up of the Communist Party of Great Britain.

Chapter One

Where are Women in Communist Party History?

It is possible for historians with a bad conscience about mentioning women (and in Scotland the bad conscience is understandable) to fall into the trap of representing women only as oppressed victims - burying them with full honours so to speak. It is surely more accurate (though it means a lot more work), to try to see relations between the sexes as more complex than a simple oppressor/victim model¹.

This thesis will address the neglect of women in the historiography of the Communist Party of Great Britain. It seeks through essential and crucial oral evidence to show to what extent women were involved in the CPGB in Scotland: what their political influences were and their level of involvement in the Party structure. Most of all it will redress the imbalance in Communist Party history by relating the experiences of ordinary Party members, their political activities and their developing political outlook. In this way it seeks to reveal branch and Party life over the seven decades of its existence through the experiences of women in the Party. Specifically it aims to trace the practical and ideological development of women members in Scotland from their earliest experiences in the Party, often in the Young Communist League, up to their departure from the CPGB or indeed up until its demise in 1991. It aims to give a comprehensive account of lives in the Communist Party, how typical they are will be discussed later in the chapter.

It is necessary to look at the Communist Party of Great Britain which , despite having a smaller impact than many on the continent, played a noticeable and arguably a critical role in the British labour movement². We also have to address the nature of the Communist Party and the place it occupied in the political spectrum and the implications this has had for the resulting material.

Challenging capitalism and questioning society's values at all levels the Communist Party by its very nature attracted fierce loyalties from members and supporters, or conversely hatred and scepticism from its opponents. The political line always determined the Party's actions and this was effectively disseminated through the rigours of democratic centralism whereby once an issue had been debated throughout the Party's structures and a decision made, all would abide by and argue for it on a unified basis. Because of its continual exclusion from, and dominance by, the Labour Party this made the Party a very effective political machine though its success in changing to a mass party failed, perhaps inevitably. This is not to dismiss the Communist Party as irrelevant. In labour and industrial activity the Party has had an important influence, often limited to certain areas or nationally within distinct unions but still enough to effect the policies of organisations, especially where communists gained a foothold. This included activity at local level in housing schemes, voluntary organisations and specific issue groups. As Hinton states:

The essence of Communism as it developed in Britain was the focusing of socialist political life outside the 'legitimate' arena of electoral politics, in the politics of the street, the housing estate and, above all, the factory³.

Hence if the CPGB was not a major political force it was an active political pressure group capable of propagating its views within the areas where it operated. This needs to be stressed because if it is true that electorally the Party failed it is wrong to presume that this was reflected socially and its members were isolated and marginalised. On the contrary, this study will show how communist women worked in their communities, were often respected and *still effected* changes, however small, in the political activities they pursued. It is to the credit of the CP's organising skills that it has always been taken seriously and was treated as a threat by the Conservative governments who arrested CP activists during the period leading up to the General Strike⁴ and, under a National coalition, banned the *Daily Worker*⁵ in 1941. The Cold War which started in the late 1940s saw increased discrimination

against communists in trade unions, most notably the Transport and General Workers Union⁶.

Few Communist Party histories are impartial. The authors are often politically aligned. Therefore Communist Party history in Britain is divided not just between right and left but amongst the left as well. Many authors outside of the Party are unsympathetic while Party historians are inevitably biased, firstly because they have sought to redress the balance against the Party as given by the establishment and often the media, and secondly because they have sought to explain, usually in a narrative form, the Party's history in a positive light. Yet it is inconceivable that the Party would ever have issued a critical history of itself when it faced hostility from so many sections politically. This does not excuse the neglect of criticism: 'It is one of life's ironies that an organisation which has produced so many brilliant historians has, until very recently, had the greatest difficulty in coming to terms with its own history'.⁷

This also explains the nature of history by Communists which has concentrated on Marxist theory, popularised by Burns and Cornforth⁸ and interpretations of history, notably by Jackson, Morton and Hutt⁹ and autobiographies and biographies. Klugmann's¹⁰ history was the first major attempt and is 'standard'. It filled a historical gap which the Party felt necessary to fill after forty-six years of its existence. While fascinating it was also narrative and uncritical whereas Branson¹¹, who carried on the task, was more critical towards *certain* areas of past policies. There does seem a danger though, with the most recent volume,¹² that the post-1945 history of the Party will be treated less importantly and this could be a major error. This thesis rests heavily on material from 1945 onwards which reveals, in Scotland at least, the extent to which the Party was still active and in some areas very relevant.

The lack of history dealing with the experience of Party members must be allied to the disciplined nature of the Party. There were always criticisms of the Party's internal methods which came from disillusioned members though these were often too subjective to be reliable¹³. In 1964 Newton¹⁴ attempted a detailed sociological study of the Party and the diversity of membership. This was highly

original and partially successful yet co-operation was withdrawn and the amount of respondents he intended to interview , originally to be one hundred, was severely limited in the end¹⁵. Also the suspicions of Party members and their total anonymity can raise some doubts, not so much as to the authenticity of the participants but of their answers. The study was not only seeking the political views of respondents on a wide issue of subjects but more an introspective analysis of their background, social occupation and views of themselves in society. Yet the study produced some worthwhile testimony. There are some interesting views on Hungary, the attitude of people generally towards Communists and the high level of white collar and professional workers in the Party. Newton felt that there had been complete honesty from the participants he managed to interview but, because they were chosen by Party officials, he could not claim that they were representative in any way. Despite the restrictions the work was original in its use of oral testimony. Newton estimated that 'only about fifteen per cent of British Communists are women'¹⁶ which was a drop from 26% in 1944¹⁷. 'More than half of all British Communists in 1932 lived in the Scottish and South Wales coal fields'¹⁸ and Newton also states that 'Glasgow can be regarded as the most important city in the British Communist Party's history'¹⁹. Yet accepting the centrality of the mass theory developed by Cole, Newton states '...as a rule women are not as politically radical as men' though he accepts that the textile industry 'does not form a clear exception to the mass theory of radicalism'²⁰ and points to the lack of radicalism in mining communities in the north-east of England. The 1950s saw more open criticism in the Party with many leaving over Hungary and the lack of internal democracy. Yet there continued a loyalty and *belief* in the leadership: 'Those in the British Party who are not submissive to the *elite* tend to defect sooner or later, and in the main the rest believe that the Party is democratic...and that even if there were an *elite* they would not submit to it'.²¹

One can see the problems of a study like Newton's as especially before the nineties many members would speak with caution rather than enthusiasm. This is a vital point when attempting to understand the loyalty of ordinary members. Newton's study was original because, as a sociologist, he naturally tried to

understand the motivating factors of ordinary members; he had no interest in policy formulation or the inner workings of the leadership. It is unlikely that a creditably broad representative group would have been willing to speak out about all aspects of their lives while in the Communist Party. The formal change of the Party's name in 1991 and the events in the Eastern Bloc changed the whole nature of access to former Party members. The historical link from 1920²² and the loyalty to the Party that existed was far less important if not redundant and what was living socialism for many was now gone. Although ex-members still often react with caution they are more 'open' and less suspicious. I felt that some were even proud and positive that their participation in events was now being recognised. Sadly, many former activists have passed away never having been recorded. A loss CP historians are all too aware of.

The memoirs of communist activists naturally describe their personal history and their route to political involvement. The classic non-theoretical Party works by Gallacher²³, Hannington²⁴ Stewart²⁵ and Piratin²⁶, are propagandist and deliberately rousing texts. Their purpose was twofold. To describe individual development and also to show the historical perspective of the CPGB over two to three decades. In this these biographies, and numerous others, serve a worthwhile purpose. They relate the experiences of those whom even the labour establishment distrusted and are good descriptive works of the *activists'* experience in the Party since 1920. They are also inspirational socialist classics written both for contemporary activists and for encouraging new members. Yet although the authors were often from the shop floor and their activities involved continuous work at grassroots level, these works are 'leadership' histories and this can present certain problems. The Party and organisations they supported are taken as a cohesive body and one is related the history of such groups to society in general. There is little analysis of the actual organisation itself. So despite the main communist leaders *leading* from below, there is inevitably a structure that leads to a hierarchy which relates Party experience broadly. Therefore one has to go deeper to find the involvement of women in the CP and fellow organisations. The authors were still the more well known male activists who had usually served an apprenticeship or worked in industry. Even if many Party

members had industrial experience, were they all labour 'aristocrats' in industry as their leaders were?. Therefore these works often reflect an activists' history from the view of skilled male workers who came to form the leadership of the CPGB or its satellites.

Croucher²⁷ has revealed the level of women's involvement in the National Unemployed Worker's Movement and the distinct part they played and also the type of women who played a leadership role, mentioning Maud Brown and Lillian Thring (who were not in the CPGB). They were; 'confident, assertive women...able to make their mark in a milieu which women of more proletarian origins seem to have found more difficult'.²⁸ Also Brown: '...since her appointment as National Women's Organiser, made the NUWM the principal focus of Communist women's agitational activity'.²⁹ These details and revelations of women's contribution counter the *perceived limited* view of events through autobiographies and recollections and the *actual* events as uncovered by historians. Croucher, especially in his conclusion, does great justice to the NUWM and sees its role as vital in changing government policy.³⁰ By showing the precise involvement of women and their role in hunger marches,³¹ their organising skills and militant activity, he adds weight to this argument. By revealing the gender role in working class history and specifically communist history we may add to the true level of involvement and influence on working class people ,institutions and communities. It may be an ally in showing a wider political consciousness amongst women rather than an indictment about their isolation and neglect from political movements. In a similar manner this thesis tries to show the developing of political consciousness through practical political activity.

We may define an 'ordinary' member as one who did not hold a full time or paid job in the Party and was not on the district or Executive Committees. One would categorise those on such bodies as the leadership certainly at least within their area. Yet a long-term member may have briefly served or worked in this capacity and then continued being an ordinary member. It is precisely this experience that has been missing from Communist Party history, the ordinary views of those active in their local branches and implementing policies that came from the district and area committees. Women have been neglected in both areas. As early as 1921 Helen

Crawfurd Anderson , who wrote an as yet unpublished autobiography, was 'appointed onto the executive committee and she held this position for many years'³² as well as editing a 'page for women' in the *Communist*.³³ But there is a lack of published material on the experiences of those women Party members active since 1945, this period covering forty five years of the Party compared to the twenty five preceding it. Mary Docherty's *A Miner's Lass*³⁴ relates the formative experiences of a young woman in Fife, the experiences of a young communist up to 1945. Practical experiences are recounted , every day incidences more than the developing ideology of a Party member or her experiences of Party life. More revelatory material might have been brought to the surface had it been a collaborative work with a historian who may have contributed a structured thematic discipline as Smith succeeded in doing with MacShane.³⁵

Helen Crawfurd Anderson's *Memoirs*³⁶ sadly lack detail of her communist activity and more importantly her views on the Party's development from its beginnings. Although written in the late 1940s there is much narrative on her formative years and, importantly, mention of the suffragettes but no real depth to her later political beliefs despite mentioning her visit to the Soviet Union and impressions of Trotskyism.³⁷ Crawfurd was the most renowned Scottish communist woman in the Party achieving national status and a place on the Executive Committee. Yet she did not develop her experiences beyond a broad chronological history. A more intense and deep political work would have revealed the nature of communist politics from a unique point of view, namely a Scottish woman at British level in the Party who had been politically active for women's enfranchisement , active in the anti-war movement and in the period on Clydeside prior to the formation of the Party in 1920. It is also coloured by its moral tone and the discipline of religion, in this instance her Presbyterian upbringing.

Polemical works against the Communist Party came mainly from its opponents on the ultra-left. These works, theoretically and analytically approached from a strong Trotskyist angle , attack the CPGB for its loyalty to the Soviet Union and hence ,in their terminology, a defence of Stalinism and all that this entails. Dewar, Woodhouse and Pearce ³⁸, Bornstein and Richardson³⁹ are typical , coming

from three different Trotskyist sects but blending in their overall criticism of the Communist Party. These histories justify the Trotskyite line and make no acknowledgements of the achievements of the CPGB, most notably why it still managed to attract politically conscious workers in noticeable numbers compared to the comparative (absolute?) failure of other left wing parties which espoused revolutionary politics. Calling such works 'monodimensional', Morgan is rightly critical:

Trotskyist historians give little idea of the 'motivations' of those who joined the Party, of the nature and complexity of their allegiances or of the practical and political pressures to which they were subjected. All we get is a critique of the Party line, and usually a very poor one.⁴⁰

Until Thompson⁴¹ covered the whole of the Party's history from 1920-91, there had been little written about the Party internally from the 1950s onwards. With a lot of inside information and personal experience, he dismantles the monolithic structure and shows the conflicts and personalities behind the Party's demise.⁴² It is more weighted towards the effects of Party policy on members and most importantly we see how the Party organisation operated and the central importance of the power structures when used to circumvent or squash dissent and attacks on the leadership.

Thankfully women in the Communist Party have not been totally neglected. Bruley⁴³ balances a political history with women's history. The level of commitment to women members was limited and the links with the Communist International in its early days are shown. Bruley concentrates on giving a pre-CPGB history of the suffrage movement and its splits and then includes an industrial case study towards the end. This is as much an investigation of the importance of women's issues rather than the political experience and ideological development of women in the Party. Therefore, unlike this study, it does not relate the political experiences and consciousness of women but is more concerned about the Party's approach to women members and is very informative on important policy developments affecting women. This is done from a feminist angle with fundamental criticisms of the Party's

lack of commitment to women and for failing to properly address these faults; 'the revolutionary party needed a subordinate sex to service its male revolutionaries so that they could fight capitalism'.⁴⁴ Bruley shows the level of female members, 16% at its high point(2,500 women members)⁴⁵ , and the limited influence of women's sections. In the period studied women were never more than one fifth of the membership and usually it was one tenth. Gender divisions within society are therefore mirrored in the Party.⁴⁶ There was a limited amount of oral testimony in the text and this could be because the thesis was written at a period of major differences in the Party and so details may have been less forthcoming.

Gabbidon's work on *Party Life*⁴⁷ is another important work for CP scholars. Having interviewed fifty-five people, of whom the testimonies of thirty-three testimonies were used, branch life between the wars in Brighton, North London and Glasgow are covered. Crucially Gabbidon comments on how documentary evidence can conflict with oral evidence⁴⁸ and this is an important point in dispelling the myth of a compliant and permanently obedient membership. There is brief mention of the Socialist Sunday School⁴⁹ and the importance of Irish immigration in the make-up of the Glasgow branches. There are good quotations of Glasgow members' criticisms of the Labour Party and how there was little or no consideration of joining that party in preference to the CP.⁵⁰ National and cultural differences within the CP that gave the Party in Scotland a distinctly strong working class base are discussed: 'Glasgow Party branches appear to have had more contact with each other with the leadership on Glasgow District being more familiar and accessible than those intellectuals on the London District'. This is a remarkable quote when one compares it to the experience of Irene Swan in Chapter Seven of this thesis. Once again there is criticism that women in the Party were not treated as equals and the Party 'failed to institute a departure from established norms in society and the Party itself'.⁵¹ Gabbidon sees sexual division being condoned in the Party and this is epitomised by women running the *Daily Worker* bazaars. Covering many areas of branch life such as education and including oral testimony on Hungary and Czechoslovakia , the work is seminal in addressing branch life and the view from below. The only criticism is that the three

geographical examples show diversity but also make for uneven reading and comparison , no doubt unavoidable as the Party was uneven in its spread.

Certain works have rightly concentrated on activity in communist strongholds and the reasons for their dominance in certain areas. This has resulted in more revealing material: 'And in fact, the most enlightening works on British Communism have been studies, not of the Party 'line', but of specific areas of Communist politics or particular industries and communities in which its members were firmly embedded'.⁵²

Nujam⁵³ concentrates on one industry , mining, and one area , Fife, to explain the dominant political ideology and its birth, development and continuing on the political consciousness of workers. Nujam is critical of aspects of Marxism⁵⁴ and also of Foster's⁵⁵ case study on the ideological evolution of workers to that of a vanguard body. She rightly states that studies on labour movements and trade unions tell us nothing of the participants. There is a chapter on the Communist Party in Fife and its crucial role in the pit communities and the miners' union. Here there is much use of oral testimony from forty 'formal, semi-structured'⁵⁶ interviews. The oral content describes work in the industry and the role of the Communist Party. The dialect of the participants is retained in the quotes which are of a good length and introduce much vitality to this study. It is also very contemporary with much information on the background and events during the Miners' strike of 1984-5. Nujam states that: 'Communists express their beliefs within a more coherent politicised framework which provides them with a structural body of theory within which to place their ideas and arguments.'⁵⁷

Macintyre⁵⁸ shows how the two Scottish 'Little Moscow's', (two of the three were in Scotland) , where the CP gained strong enough influence and even elected members onto the District Council and County Council, were exceptions themselves, unrepresentative of working class communities in British society. In Maerdy in South Wales , women and children were involved and 'in some cases the wife was more committed than the man'⁵⁹. The two mining villages , Maerdy and Lumphinnans in Fife, suffered discrimination from the labour establishment in the Miners' union and this strengthened the Party⁶⁰. It would be apposite to discuss the importance of the

labour process in determining ideology as here we have both ingredients, poor social conditions and factories or pits with production lines that have led Price⁶¹ and Savage⁶² to emphasise different areas of importance of working class life in determining political commitment. Price emphasises the centrality of the work process in determining the *lack of ideology* in the British working class compared to Europe; 'Whereas French workers could be seen to possess a radical, even revolutionary, ideology and orientated their class action towards politics, British workers were more militant at work but supine when it came to politics' ⁶³. Price rightly sees the dominance of economism as retarding the growth of more radical politics than that of 'Labourism'. But the post-war period from 1945 saw an entrenchment of 'traditional structures' in British society. Price shows the increasing strength of the trade unions in organising effectively in the workplace, and increasing the number of shop stewards and local bargaining strength, especially in engineering⁶⁴. This led to less effective interventions from full time union officials and the centrality of debate about the strength of unions in society and possibilities of industrial democracy.⁶⁵ Also, controversially, limiting unofficial strikes which had become regular items in the national press and at the main party conferences. Strong unions and local bargaining power that led to standard agreements gave a greater economic pull at shop-floor level: 'What was peculiar about the 1950s and 1960s was the way it shifted beyond the local workshop level to become associated with national militancy'.⁶⁶

Industrial militancy benefited the Communist Party as it could organise effectively at the workplaces in industries where unions were strong. The Party could influence the national policy of unions through CP members who were often branch officials, shop stewards and convenors. There can also be an exaggeration of the intentions of purely industrial struggles which Price, who is not guilty of this, points out:

The encroachment of the informal system of industrial relations were localised, transient, and received no institutional representation in politics

or wider culture- presented no generalised challenge to conventional power and authority relationships.⁶⁷

This obviously shows the *limitations* of industrial militancy in radicalising people unless it is tied to an overall understanding of the role of labour in society. Savage goes further and seems intent on proving that in Preston at least, which is the focus of his study, political activity for the Labour Party increased because of causes *outside* of industrial activity. The tapping of female and neighbourhood 'bases of support' 'also generated unprecedented levels of electoral support'.⁶⁸ This is not the place to discuss the intricacies of Labour politics but Savage emphasises the growth of women's organisations which he attributes to neighbourhood activity. The industrial worker is *de-emphasised* in importance and social environment is promoted in being a primary cause of electoral growth. The reluctance of the Labour Party to develop policies for women is used to explain electoral support for the Conservatives by one feminist group (the Women's Citizens Association). Greater support came to the Labour Party when it emphasised statist policies. Savage, coming from the opposite direction to Price states:

We must recognise the disconnectedness of various social practices: because militancy exists in one arena we must not infer it in another. Industrial conflict is not a primordial experience which necessarily affects wider political allegiances⁶⁹.

The latter part is true but 'which necessarily' does not mean 'does not' or 'cannot'. Savage comes out with an unconvincing argument against the radicalising effects of the labour process. Citing the growth of the Labour vote whilst there was a halving of trade union membership in the 1920s he sees this as proof of the non-connection. Might it not show the shift from industrial to political spheres *precisely because of those connections* ? Perhaps the loss of economic muscle left only the avenue to political change expressed through the Labour Party. One might also argue that the period covered by Savage is the period of the ascendancy of the Labour Party and

that much of its growth was due to the national alternative it presented above all local or industrial considerations. There seems a giant leap from the isolation of women from the Labour Party, because of its lukewarm policies towards women, to then say that the: 'ability of the local Labour Party to join in struggles over public services, often related to the mobilisation of women, was a critical factor behind the Party's fortunes [in Preston]'.⁷⁰ Price and Savage are mutually exclusive in their theories and one has to point to the commonality of the industrial and social struggle. In order to attribute Labour's rise in Preston the industrial struggle is neglected. Yet in these communities some women will have been married to men working in industry or vice-versa and so although not directly involved in the labour process, women were acutely aware of it because they service the family. This also goes for those workers and their relatives active in the community at large.

Knox⁷¹ who is sympathetic to Savage, emphasises the low level of trade union membership in Scotland compared to England and Wales in 1892 and the role that sectionalism played industrially on Clydeside, there being one hundred unions in Scotland in 1900.⁷² He points to the long dominance of the Scottish Liberal Party and social and political factors such as housing and Irish Home Rule being of more importance in determining political allegiances; 'Experience of exploitation may define membership of the working class, but consciousness is the outcome of a much more complicated web of experiences and relationships'.⁷³

We now have to see the relevance of these two theories to our specific interest: women in the Communist Party. Price's emphasis on the crucial effect of the labour process is tempered with an awareness that this did not *revolutionise* the working class politically. It was defensive. So we do well to remind ourselves that the leadership of the Communist Party is not the proletariat, which is the essential and vital body to win socialism, but the elite of full time revolutionaries who lead the workers' Party that develops and nurtures the political consciousness of the masses. This was the classic input of Leninism⁷⁴ which shaped the communist parties internationally. Industrial workers are in direct conflict with capital at the major source of its wealth and so the actions of organised labour in the production process are more direct and can effect immediate change unlike any other. But work in other

spheres was also vitally important. No matter where communists were involved, by having a strong political ideology either from youth or developed through being involved in social or economic struggle before joining the Party, they were committed to the same struggle no matter where they concentrated their work. Reminiscences of industrial workers, like Arthur Exell's of Coventry⁷⁵, may show the centrality of struggle in the factory but they also show that this is only one area of struggle.

The employment of women could influence their political involvement though they were still excluded from much public life. Women were involved in local battles and in the Vale of Leven: 'At critical junctures the ties of class and politics overrode the divisions of gender'.⁷⁶ In two Scottish communities (Vale of Leven and Fife) CP members served as magistrates and on committees making it 'possible to implant the radical consciousness within the official order'.⁷⁷ This meant a socialist interpretation of statutory duties. Women were involved in the Party's activities and: 'The communists certainly had views on the position of women that were well in advance of general attitudes, but they were by no means immune themselves from assumptions of masculine supremacy.'⁷⁸

Macintyre shows the Communist Party putting over its views successfully. The three villages are an exception yet so was the CP as a party, distinct from any other. It is here that we must question the absorbing of revolutionary politics. In another work Macintyre attributes great importance to the Russian Revolution and the 'real theoretical need'⁷⁹ which this fuelled and the scientific nature of British Marxism until the early thirties. The level of communist education in the CPGB was criticised internationally⁸⁰ and this suggests that the advances made by the Party could have been even greater. Contrasting 'Labour Socialism' to 'Marxism' he shows the great theoretical advantage that the communists had and the vital ingredient which was the success of Bolshevism. Was this process dependent on the right circumstances and geographical area or the level of ideological awareness needed for such views to take root and produce an active Communist Party member? Or was it both ?

McKibbin reveals the contradictions in Britain that *stifled* the growth of a Communist Party. There was a mass working class, the majority of whom worked in industry and whom were manual workers. The structure of the British economy and industry *narrowed* 'the base of political collectivism'⁸¹ among the working class. Much of this was attributable to small-scale workshops. McKibbin concurs with Stedman-Jones that political activity took up only a small part of working class life 'For some men politics was their hobby but for most it was not'.⁸² Contractual as opposed to coercive politics, ideological dominance and the lack of an intelligentsia are essential points and McKibbin attributes much to the predominating character of British society in limiting communist influence and the development of Marxism.⁸³ It is hard to compromise on any of the two theses and one feels certain that the most important element increasing socialist activity and drawing people into communist politics from the 1920s onwards was the presence of a genuine Communist Party in Britain from 1920. Had MacLean or Pankhurst's alternatives taken root, it is questionable to what extent they would have stalled the influence of the CP, but the Party gathered momentum by attracting those sympathetic to its formation and retaining them through continuous education and activity. Macintyre seems to suggest that outwith the distinct characteristics of the towns and villages cited, it was the political organisation and ideology that produced success. This would then confirm the role of the vanguard party in attracting the most politically developed workers. The latter were both consciously active in the labour movement and those wrestling with the theoretical concepts that led to a distinct Marxist-Leninist Party in Britain linked to the Soviet Union.

Pamela Graves' *Labour Women*⁸⁴ is a comprehensive and detailed study covering the period 1918-1939. Graves increases our knowledge of women in the Labour Party in the same way as Bruley did about women in the CP. It is strong in several areas. The development of women's aspirations and then their disappointments is made clear and any suggestions that women were passively involved in Labour politics by sectionalism and by not pushing for major changes is disproved. Graves shows how determined some women were to fight for equal rights with men and for legislation legalising abortion. She is also very critical of the

reaction of the Labour hierarchy, women such as Marion Phillips included⁸⁵, in their attempts to circumvent radical policies. The evolution of policy decisions in women's sections and at British conference level is well accounted. Concerning the Communist Party, Graves sees women who joined the CP as expecting to play a more equal role with the men and so not expecting to be siphoned off into women's sections.⁸⁶ This rings true with much oral testimony in this study. There are similarities in activity from the early influence of fathers, the Socialist Sunday School to a seemingly natural affinity with the Women's Co-operative Guild of which so many women were members. Interestingly, concurring with above mentioned works, the work process definitely seems less of an influence in leading women into Labour politics during this period.⁸⁷ Ironically in this study one might also see similarities with Labour women, though more evidently after 1945, which might lead to criticism of the Communist Party for designating a stereotypically domestic role to female members in the Scottish district of the Party. The role of the Scottish Women's Advisory Committee can be seen as either perpetuating sexual division or else as nurturing and educating women members. Importantly in the CP women did not have to be active only in women's sections or the SWAC and so they were not ghettoised but, however ironic this may be, it would be remiss not to mention the strong (indeed damning) criticisms that a feminist historian could raise when studying the Communist politics in Britain. Graves' claims to having a representative sample, like all studies, need to be qualified. One hundred respondents took part either through oral or written testimony, fifty women and fifty men. This included some people in the ILP and the CP. The oral testimony is more anecdotal and is not really quantified or even contextualised. It is used mostly in chapter two to good effect and relates what specific people thought rather than claiming to be 'typical' although one does not doubt that this is the intention. The 1930s highlight issues that were central to women's struggles such as fighting against the Means Test and the wider issues of fascism and Spain.⁸⁸ Here there were some sympathies with the stance of the Communist Party though any links were discouraged or purposefully severed by the leadership.⁸⁹

Finally, a criticism of Graves' work must be recorded. Although claiming to be about women in Britain this has to be qualified. The reports of women's conferences at British level and policy decisions throughout the country justify this claim but none of the respondents were from Scotland or Wales. Therefore whilst stating that 'geographical distribution matched the pattern of the movement's regional strength in the inter-war period'⁹⁰ the admittance that no examples from Scotland and Wales are a 'significant omission'⁹¹ is even itself an understatement. This is an important point for two reasons. Firstly because of the crucial role the labour movement in Scotland played in the development of the Labour Party and specifically the ILP, of whom some of Graves' respondents were members. Secondly because of the fundamental and continuing development of Scottish history from the late 1960s which have shown that it cannot be omitted from any British history through presumptions of automatic similarity or marginal importance to the English experience. The exclusion of regions of England might be acceptable in such a study due to marginality, the omission of one nation negates a claim to any study being British.

This study includes testimony from women involved from the 1920s and 1930s and so we get some idea of women's political development and early impressions of left-wing activity and life in the Communist Party in its first twenty years. Originally the thesis was to have involved women active from 1945 onwards but it soon became apparent that this would overlook a whole number active from the 1920s and who had not been properly recognised in any Party history. It was seemed the importance of children's organisations may previously have been greatly underestimated in relation to women's political development. This thesis begins with the childhood experiences of some of the participants which led them to political involvement. Some women were influenced by events prior to the existence of the CPGB. Chapter Two also reveals how a religious, agnostic or atheistic upbringing may have been influential or even critical in determining a communist life for the participants. Although there was not an enormous amount of oral testimony in this sphere it became apparent early on in this study that the Socialist Sunday School and the Co-operative movement had influenced some children strongly especially in

Scotland in the first three decades of the century. Much archive material suggested that its influence continued into the 1950s and even as late as the 1960s though by this time it was nearly defunct. Women were very conscious in the 1920s and 1930s of the leap they were making when joining the Communist Party and the effect of this on family and friends. What membership of the Party did was put this activity into perspective enabling women to embrace a whole philosophy which met or came nearest to their ideals. It also allowed them to work closely and collectively with other members. To opponents it seemed that anything the leadership moved was accepted, yet this had serious effects in 1956⁹² and had clearly broken down by the 1980s.⁹³ In the bitterest of arguments the loyalty to democratic centralism was seen as an essential element of Party membership and crucial to the CP's survival as *the* revolutionary Party.

Recent communist history by Morgan⁹⁴, Attfield and Williams⁹⁵, covering the 1930s and events up to the Second World War and especially the transcripts of Central Committee meetings published by King and Matthews⁹⁶ have been crucial. Far from showing a dictatorial Party in its policy making bowing to the needs of the Soviet Union there were clear disagreements over the tactics and the changing of the Party line during the 1930s and up to the Second World War. On this aspect it was clear that women involved in the Party at the time remembered discussing the issue at branch and aggregate meetings and certainly some members knew the depth of disagreements on the Central Committee and who they supported at the time. Here Chapter Three provides original material despite the political themes being over familiar. We know much about the Communist Party's role in the 1930s amongst the unemployed and over issues such as Spain. From this formative period there does not appear to have been published any basic views by women as to their early impressions on entering and working in a highly disciplined and centrally structured party. What is vitally new in this thesis are the views of women as to the importance and effectiveness of the Party structure from branch level through to Area and Scottish Committee level in Scotland. The initial impressions of women who came into the Party and had to get to grips with democratic centralism and a Marxist syllabus of education are conveyed. These two aspects of party life seem to have

taken some adapting to as their central importance was unique to the Communist Party. The activity of the CP during the 1930s has often been described from a British perspective. In this study there is presented the view of an under-represented section, women, from within a Party District and who were not industrially based but came into communist politics through various other routes. Hence this thesis traces women's Party lives from the beginnings of the CPGB and not from the post-1945 period as was first intended. Despite the later material being stronger and more vibrant, we get a complete picture of the Party in Scotland from its birth to its death. The early years of Party life related here lay the basis for understanding the development of women in the post-war period. We can compare their reasons for joining and initial impressions of branches, education and social life. One might be surprised at the similar experiences and obstacles women faced as much as any contrast between the different eras.

The influence of the Soviet Union remained enormous in the CPGB. Most of the women interviewed had been to the Soviet Union at least once and their impressions of the socialist countries are related in Chapter Five. They had seen the development of Soviet society first hand and, despite reservations, still stood behind the Eastern Bloc in the perceived advances that had been made. Few saw the collapse coming and many were genuinely shocked when it occurred. The criticisms of the socialist countries are more open now and yet many of the women who went to these countries admit that they were inspired. The experience of a living socialism compensated for the lack of a mass Communist Party at home. This was not universally the view of the respondents and there were distinct criticisms of Soviet society that one may not have expected and were felt at the time, they were not just realising faults now when looking back.

The level of commitment to peace and international issues was certainly a strong aspect of women's involvement and the evidence shows that this often preceded their entry into the Party. The view of CP members involved in the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament so as blindly to aid Soviet peace initiatives should be laid to rest. One cannot dismiss this angle but there is more than enough evidence to show how peace was seen as much as a moral demand than as a socialist

one. The Soviet Union was supported because it was seen as the promoter of peace initiatives and, having lost so many people during the war. However it quickly became the enemy in the Cold War.

Although there is plenty of evidence to show that the Communist Party stood above others on the left for its pioneering role towards women its effectiveness here also threw up one of the areas of strongest conflict in the Party. From the end of the 1960s onwards feminist politics were gaining a foothold in the CPGB⁹⁷. It was not so much a split between men and women, young and old (though most of its advocates were of a younger generation) or a geographical divide. It was a strongly theoretical divide between those committed to the traditional communist politics of class struggle and those who now put gender, sexual and social issues above those of the classic economic and political struggle. This new aspect is important to Chapters Six and Seven in accounting for the new direction of the Party.

The most recent Communist Party histories show the great breadth of the Party's activities and the numerous aspects of its work that are still to be fully uncovered. *Opening The Books*⁹⁸, a compendium of new areas of research with a chapter by Bruley on communist women in Lancashire⁹⁹, maps out many exciting dimensions of research that are in their infancy. Some chapters are by authors who have produced larger works on the Party. . Taking a specific time period and subject area of the Party Srebrnik in his study of *London Jews and British Communism 1935-45*¹⁰⁰ shows how extensive and important Jewish activists were to the CP in the East End. His eighty-four pages of references and primary and secondary sources are hugely impressive and intimidating to any new scholar of CP history. Likewise Fishman¹⁰¹ has produced an in-depth and concise study of the Party's work among the unions and this thematic method will no doubt be repeated. Among the welter of research material Fishman has an impressive array of interviews for her study. The time in preparation and travel for what is only part of her sources should not be underestimated. Increasingly there are more articles¹⁰², periodicals¹⁰³ and conferences covering the Communist Party of Great Britain and thankfully it seems more people are willing to talk of their experiences. The amount of material available and the angles of Party history yet to be unearthed should convince most

people of the level of commitment of the Party membership in day to day political, economic, social and cultural activity over seventy one years of its existence.

Oral History

The works of Thompson¹⁰⁴ and Lummis¹⁰⁵ have been hugely influential in developing the discipline of oral history in Britain. Thompson especially has contributed the major work for all those entering the field. Yet there are differences between the two and indeed one might justify the type of oral history one intends to pursue and the methodology involved. For many oral historians there is a wider purpose to this approach to history; '....the richest possibilities for oral history lie within the development of a more socially conscious and democratic history'¹⁰⁶ It is a means of bringing in the very people excluded from conventional history and more importantly counters the history of elites. Thompson wholly refutes the snobbery and suspicion directed at oral history and is its most passionate defender. His first chapter is inspirational enough but he defends the discipline, which it is, by forwarding the importance of oral testimony to historical studies.

The changes in memory and the importance of present consciousness on the past leave many doubts as to the *authenticity* of oral evidence. Inevitably people forget and consequent changes affect perceptions. Thompson demonstrates however the *reduction* in memory loss in a specific test, showing that the loss of memory during the first nine months is as great as that during the next thirty-four years.¹⁰⁷ After that there is admittedly a 'sharp decline in average memory'.¹⁰⁸ Although immediate memory begins to show a progressive decline, especially after the age of thirty, *total memory* store is increasing. This is not to say that oral evidence in itself is adequate. There is a need to 'reveal sources of bias' by a standardised questionnaire and Thompson admits that: 'In some contexts, oral evidence is the best; in others it is supplementary, or complementary, to that of other sources'¹⁰⁹ It is because oral evidence is 'inherently unique' that it is so valuable, the sole original source. There demands then the utmost need to verify statements and compare dates, easily forgotten, of the informants and cross reference them. Oral history is anything else but *just accepting* statements as truth.

On the work process, Lummis points to the emotions one may expect to find from employees in the past and the common lack of resentment towards employers which may seem to counter Marxist expectations. This 'Golden Age' view may also tell us of the influence and control of historical imagery though it is essential to record and accept that class consciousness and antagonism must not *necessarily* be found. One has to accept the existence of moderacy and the effects of paternalism, as Smith does in Liverpool, or else oral history will become selectively biased against certain classes instead of naturally biased in favour of those people barely recorded in history and who are mainly middle or working class. As a discipline it cannot afford to be discretionary as this would contradict its purpose and perhaps this needs emphasising.

Yet Lummis is right to remind us that for modern oral history the 'prime interest' should be with classes and groups in society who did not leave much documentary evidence. This could be cross-class (i.e. accountants, civil servants, valets, small proprietors,) and naturally biased towards women (because of their *general* under representation) as well as obviously unearthing many experiences of the unorganised, specifically non-unionised working class. Such findings may justify the views of the middle and upper classes who contend that people are not rebellious but content. Lummis therefore declares that oral history is not democratic and radical, it is 'at best neutral and, used carelessly, overwhelmingly conservative'¹¹⁰. One may perhaps disagree with Lummis' pessimism concerning people's adaptability to poverty. Many have related their sad and terrible experiences of squalor without expressing resentment. Through this we can clearly discern its horrors.¹¹¹

Tosh¹¹² sees the benefit of oral history but he definitely errs on caution and one gets the impression he would not treat it as a major discipline. He cites that the 'voice of the past is inescapably the voice of the present too'.¹¹³ Rightly he sees the need to recognise the social forces that shape consciousness, the contemporary values at work. He states that: 'It is no disparagement of the individual to say that our lives are largely spent in situations which, from our subjective perspective, we cannot fully understand'¹¹⁴. Individuals make up the whole life experience and that whole experience is cumulative. It also depends on the perception of others. Tosh

is, understandably, more critical of oral tradition which is handed down verbally through the ages and may change to suit new rulers or chiefs. Yet it is hard to agree with his assertion that what cannot be sustained is; 'the notion that the historian, by listening to the 'voice of the past' can recreate these neglected territories of history with an authentic immediacy'.¹¹⁵

It is exactly the *recreation of authentic immediacy* which gives oral history its character. Oral testimony is not all interesting, vivid and startling but it *can be* and when related, personal experiences can be moving, illuminating, even extraordinary and can conjure up vivid images of the past and so help illuminate history to the contemporary audience. Fitzpatrick¹¹⁶ showed that 'spoken recollections can not only supplement the written records, but, more crucially, aid in their interpretation'.¹¹⁷

There have been political oral histories such as Fraser's¹¹⁸ and Skelley's¹¹⁹ and *Political Violence in Ulster*¹²⁰ yet few about political parties in Britain and fewer about women, though there have been political gender studies covering the early CPGB. (Bruley's study as stated above and Davin's¹²¹ study of women in Communist China.) Recently there has been Owings' study of women during the Third Reich in Germany.¹²² Oral history has allowed people to speak and yet different approaches vary the level of historical research and impact of their work. Thompson interviewed hundreds for *The Edwardians*.¹²³ Chamberlain¹²⁴ introduces the subject and leaves peoples recollections to speak for themselves. MacDougall¹²⁵ also relies heavily on this method and his editing and the information extracted is impressive. His interviews of activists in the National Unemployed Workers Movement and veterans from the Spanish Civil War are extensive. They include Communist Party members (some of whom are women) who were involved in the hunger marches and joined the CP in the late 1920s or early 1930s. These interviews tell us more about women in the Party in Scotland than any other source since McCrindle and Rowbotham's *Dutiful Daughters*¹²⁶, a work now twenty years old, of which six of the fourteen women interviewed were active in Labour and Communist Party politics in Scotland. Most recently Cohen¹²⁷ has picked a specific period, the Cold War, and collected reminiscences of communist childhood. Jackie

Kay recounts her communist upbringing in Scotland¹²⁸, her father (she was adopted) being John Kay who for many years was a Scottish Organiser based in Glasgow. Again the importance of the Scottish party can be seen through other respondents.

Oral testimony in this thesis

Central to this thesis is the importance and the originality of the oral testimony. The research presented here will show the extensive activities of women in the Communist Party in Scotland and the breadth of their political involvement. It contains evidence and political opinions on the Party in Scotland that are revealed for the first time. I believe it would have been impossible to have obtained such extensive interviews and revealing testimonies had the time not been right. That the time was right was due to demise of the CP and international events that had shaped the respondent's lives.

While meeting and interviewing the former Party women for this thesis I was made more than welcome and was given great hospitality. One was more than aware that the questions being forwarded would not have been answered previously and was often told so, not because of any vindictiveness or necessarily through distrust but because of loyalty to the Party. When these interviews were conducted , between 1994 and 1997 , one was painfully aware of the traumatic experiences for many of the women of two major events. Firstly there was the collapse of the Soviet Union and allied socialist countries, most symbolically with the physical destruction of the Berlin Wall in 1989, and so the end of socialism for many Party members. Secondly there had been the decline, amid bitter recriminations, within the CPGB itself. Many of the respondents were at a stage of despondency not least because the Conservative government was in its fifteenth year. Yet once Party lives were recounted and events recalled there emerged a fascinating and important history of women's activity which I admit to having seriously underestimated at the start of my research. There was no indication in any of the literature of the true value of women Party members in Scotland. The oral testimony illuminates areas of activity that publications and reports inevitably do not reveal. I found a level of commitment and on a variety of issues that my reading of the Party had barely prepared me for. As

mentioned earlier there was also the very important role of the Socialist Sunday School and the Woodcraft Folk as children's organisations that strongly influenced the political direction of their members. Having been unaware of these organisations I became convinced the Socialist Sunday School especially played a pivotal role in having steered many women towards communist politics. There is much archive material on this organisation and its roots were deep in the West of Scotland and yet it was small, indeed tiny, compared to the religious organisations it sought to counter. If there was little about women CP members in Scotland then there was inevitably even less on their formative influences. The centrality of equality between girls and boys within the Socialist Sunday School, apparent in minutes and the *Young Socialist* paper, seems to have been vital in influencing certain women towards communist politics and what they expected to be a more militant socialism than that of the Labour party and the ILP.

Finding women participants to be interviewed was not too hard. The three main groupings who had been a part of the CPGB in Scotland were approached. They were the Democratic Left, which had evolved from the CPGB, the Communist Party of Britain formed in 1988 from the splits in the CPGB and the Communist Party of Scotland which was formed in 1992 just after the CPGB became the Democratic Left. I received assistance from all three organisations who forwarded names of people who might be interested in being interviewed. The women were of various ages and differing political experiences who were active at all levels of the CPGB. Most responded initially and I soon had more than enough respondents in the West of Scotland and sought not to duplicate too many experiences from this area. This was regrettable as many other important Party women have inevitably been left out but there was a need for a geographical representation. Even though the Party was stronger in the West, and that is reflected here, it was still crucial to show the experiences of communist women throughout Scotland. Some women were contacted through recommendations and also, a most important angle, through reading Party literature and asking as to people's whereabouts. Although I was worried about the bias towards those in the CPB due to having received more names from this Party, this was rectified by the position of the respondents during key Party

debates. The majority of respondents interviewed supported the new draft of *The British Road to Socialism* in 1977 and were in support of the Party Executive Committee over the *Morning Star* dispute in the 1980s and so there is not an imbalance towards the politics of the CPB. I have tried to show the balance of ideas as they were in the Party and what the majority of members decided in Scotland. I would state that these major policy issues are not a concern until Chapter Seven.

There were a total of forty interviews conducted amounting to nearly eight hundred thousand words of transcription. Of these interviewees thirty-two were of women and nine were of men who were in the Communist Party (the one exception being a woman involved in organising the Socialist Sunday School as was her mother before her). Only the testimony of Party women is used in the main text. Undoubtedly many of the CP histories mentioned have relied on a greater number of interviewees or respondents. However they are often on a British wide basis and so as a percentage or as in-depth interviews they may still be deficient. What this thesis prioritised was detailed interviews covering women's lives in the Party and as many different aspects of women's activities in the Party. Scotland was covered because it is both a country with its own identity, culture and history and was, as a 'district', part of the Communist Party of Great Britain and essential in its contribution to the Party's strength in supplying members, industrial influence and political leadership.

By covering many of the geographical areas in Scotland and the activity in unique branches such as in the universities (especially Edinburgh) and those who perhaps worked abroad, it is intended to show the diversity of women's activity in Scotland. Had the sample of women merely mirrored exactly the social and geographical composition of the majority of women members then arguably it would have concentrated almost exclusively on the West of Scotland or, at most, the central industrial belt. The problem then arises of an unrepresentative sample being reflected in the thesis. Through Party literature, specifically Scottish CP circulars and minutes, I have tried to show how the views expressed by the interviewees were representative and reflect how women felt over certain issues. Here an important area was the way the Party handled women's issues and how much women thought should have been done in this area. (Let us not forget that they reveal the opposite at

times - what was not revealed in the written word). Also there were areas of disagreements which often crossed gender lines and came to a head over national and international issues. Again the danger arose of the predominant Party line on policy decisions being ignored and a bias developing from myself towards any one view or group of respondents, certainly one would not do this intentionally but sublimely there is undoubtedly a danger here. Thus the decisions of the Scottish Committee and what were minority and majority views within the Party over important debates are an essential part of the text. Of course this is not to suggest that minutes and circulars reflect accurately what was going on in the Party, they are also used here to show how differently women members might perceive events. As the Party leadership usually wanted to portray the Party as united the oral evidence shows how much division there was and how it continued or was resolved. One might feel that there was more debate and dissension than originally expected given the united front often displayed to the public until the late 1970s and with the exception of 1956. Again, this is an important aspect that arguably would not have been revealed before 1991. Despite potential problems the oral testimony is crucial to this thesis because not only does it supplement the archive material used, much of it previously inaccessible, but it greatly supplants it. I attempted to cover as many age groups and experiences within the Party as was possible. Therefore the ordinary branch activists, those who stayed within the confines of local activity, are included. Other variants are present. This included two women who had left in 1956, a mother and daughter both active in the Party, women committed to the work of the Scottish Women's Advisory Committee, those strongly involved in the YCL especially noticeable from the mid-1940s to the mid-1970s, those who visited the socialist countries and those who identified with the new feminist politics. Poignantly, some of the respondents have since died, only convincing me more of the value of oral testimony and the need to continue taping the lives of communists for posterity. It also reminds one of how unique are the experiences of people politically active in any epoch.

On the practicality of the interviews, a brief questionnaire was sent to women who had agreed to participate. Telephone calls then further explained the research needs of the thesis. The interview was then organised. Often this meant staying

several hours with the respondent and taping them (only a couple of women were not interviewed at home). A set questionnaire was followed which was modified after a trial run as the responses were often poor. As the questions were pruned, answers appeared more forthcoming. However the first ten interviews proved experimental and many of these early respondents were re-interviewed. All interviews were transcribed and sent to the respondent for spelling and accuracy as well as to exclude any material they did not wish published. In the text, where respondents are quoted, they appear in inverted commas for excerpts of less than three lines. In longer quotes the excerpt is indented. Lines preceding or following the quote indicate that this is a part of an answer to a question or, in the middle of a quote, that it has been edited. Where italics are used this has been to indicate words explicitly stressed by the respondent during the interview. The italics were present in the returned transcript to the respondents and so no advantage was taken by myself in order to stress points or dramatise phrases.

There were some faults with my methodology that were corrected but need mention. Some questions were far too long and received the appropriate short reply. One specific question on *The British Road to Socialism* was technically wrong. There was also the problem of a 'leading' question. No testimony has been replicated here that may have been extracted in this way. Considering the fact that it is a political history respondents were then asked their views about opposing theories and why they may have taken a certain stance. This was done openly and in some cases, such as the increasing differences from the seventies in the Party, questions were asked about the opposing sides and how women argued against political opponents, what support or objections there were to certain theories. Here it was sometimes hard not to get into a polemical discussion as often my interest could yield a spontaneous question.

It is important to remember the difference between the Party members interviewed. All seemed selfless in their dedication to the Party but not all were expressive. Therefore there is a disparity in interview length. Some interviewees were timid and naturally quiet. In some instances activity did not extend much beyond the branch. Yet it is important that their voices were recorded as this is not

an eclectic history which seeks the most articulate and foremost women in the CP in Scotland but hopes to be representative of a broad base.

Another unforeseen source of information was the numerous publications, letters, notes and photographs from people's personal collections that allowed me to build up a complete picture of individuals and their angle of involvement. Specifically, much information about the Scottish Women's Advisory Committee came from continuous discussions with Marion Henery, a former Secretary of the Advisory, in whose home I found a number of files with original source material from the fifties and sixties. This has been invaluable in helping to recount the activity of the Advisory from its base in the women's groups and Party branches.

Geographically, although activity in Glasgow and the West of Scotland is depicted heavily here, the experiences of women in other major cities and towns throughout Scotland are represented. Also included is information from additional Party sources. Those in important full-time Party positions, - an industrial organiser, three Scottish secretaries one of whom was also General Secretary. The male partner of one time Scottish Party official and later National Women's Organiser for the Party, Margaret Hunter, related her activity and the circumstances of her tragic death. Their information helped me get a bigger picture of the Scottish Party and the distribution and gender balance of its membership. These sources were strategically well placed as officials in the Party to evaluate the overall strengths and weaknesses of the Party at certain times. People involved in specific groups or campaigns in the Party were also interviewed. I have not sought to downgrade, denigrate or perpetuate any specific theory or to show sympathy with any one view in the Party. The conflicting sides that developed in the latter years are shown and there is greater analysis on this area. Preconceptions can easily be confirmed if taken out of context. Initially it had seemed that the demise of the Party occurred with the arrival of new theories and the increasing predominance of gender politics. What gave cause for fundamental revision of this, now admitted, bias were not only the well developed views of those who became feminists but the observations of many others who would disagree with prioritising gender politics.

Many critical views stated here can be found in *all* political parties - disillusionment, anger, frustration, indecision. The content of this thesis is that of a group of women committed to socialism and specifically revolutionary socialism that had its foundation in the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 and the formation of the Communist International. The women interviewed were individuals with a common political goal consciously aware of numerous issues that demanded decisions and action. This led them to the Communist Party and, until they left, convinced them of their continuing role in that Party. And it is the role of women in the CPGB in Scotland that this thesis aims to reveal. Their political development, changing perspectives and progression through the Party as events unfolded through the seventy years of Communist Party association. This thesis does not have a theoretical structure or basis from which to judge the CP or to point, as could easily be done and most certainly from a feminist angle following on from Bruley's study, to many of its deficiencies. It attempts to reveal the role of women in the CP in Scotland, to see whether they were a marginalised group within it or to what extent they were integrally a part of the Party and its work over the years. It will reveal to what extent women's involvement has been under-estimated or omitted from our perceptions of the Communist Party in Scotland.

¹ S. Reynolds, *Britannica's Typesetters: Women Compositors in Edinburgh*: (Edinburgh 1989) p.142

² Commenting on the wide literature of the European Communist parties Anderson states: 'a variety that stems directly from the centrality in our century of the International Communist movement as the focal point of conflict between capital and labour' P. Anderson 'Communist Party History' in R. Samuel (Ed) *People's History And Socialist Theory*, (London 1981). p.145

³ J. Hinton, 'Coventry Communism : A Study of Factory Politics in the Second World War' in *History Workshop Journal* Issue 10 Autumn 1990 p.92

⁴ C. Farman, *The General Strike* (London 1974) p.54

⁵ H. Dewar, *Communist Politics in Britain :The CPGB From its Origins to the Second World War* (London 1976) , p.137

⁶ H. Pelling, *The British Communist Party: A Historical Profile*. (London 1958)

⁷ K. Morgan, *Against Fascism and War: Ruptures and Continuities in British Communist Politics*, (Manchester 1989) p.8

⁸ M. Cornforth 3 Volumes *Dialectical Materialism :An Introduction* Volume 1 - *Materialism and the Dialectical Method* Volume 2 -*Historical Materialism* and Volume 3 - *Theory of Knowledge* ',(London 1952) New Edition 1977, E. Burns, *An Introduction to Marxism* (London 1937)

⁹ T.A Jackson, *Ireland Her Own* ,(London,1946) A.L. Morton, *A People's History of England* ,(London 1938), A. Hutt, *The Post War History of the British Working Class* ,(London 1937),

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- ¹¹ N. Branson. *History of the Communist Party of Great Britain 1927-1941*. (London 1985)
- ¹² N. Branson, *History of the Communist Party of Great Britain 1941-1951*. (London 1997)
- ¹³ See D. Hyde, *I Believed*.(London 1952) and B Darke. *The Communist Technique in Britain* (London 1952)
- ¹⁴ K. Newton. *The Sociology of British Communism*. (London 1969)
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.* p9
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.* p.48
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.* p.6
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.* p.43
- ¹⁹ *Ibid.* p.9
- ²⁰ *Ibid.* p.100 and p.110
- ²¹ *Ibid.* p.107
- ²² *bid* Dewar p.15
- ²³ W. Gallacher, *Revolt On The Clyde* (London 1936)
- ²⁴ W. Hannington *Unemployed Struggles 1919-1936* (London 1937)
- ²⁵ R. Stewart, *Breaking the Fetters* (London 1967)
- ²⁶ P. Piratin, *Our Flag Stays Red* , (London 1948) New Edition 1978
- ²⁷ R. Croucher, *We Refuse to Starve in Silence (1920-46): A History of the National Unemployed Workers Movement* (London 1987)
- ²⁸ *Ibid.* p.103
- ²⁹ *Ibid.* p.149
- ³⁰ *Ibid.* p.206 'The fact is that the NUWM did mobilise hundreds of thousands of people in large-scale protests, which in almost every case led to some improvement in government proposals , generally announced at some time after the decision to organise a Hunger March had been made public. To ignore the timing of these concessions ,or to refuse to acknowledge them as such , is to turn a blind eye to chronology . to do violence to the historical record and to insult the intelligence of the reader'.
- ³¹ *Ibid.* p139-40
- ³² H. Corr, 'Helen Crawford (1877-1954)' in W. Knox (Ed): *Scottish Labour Leaders 1918-1939* ,(Edinburgh 1984) p.81-6
- ³³ *Ibid.*
- ³⁴ M. Docherty, *A Miner's Lass* (Preston 1992)
- ³⁵ H. MacShane with J. Smith. *No Mean Fighter* , (London 1978)
- ³⁶ H. Crawford Anderson, *Memoirs 194?* Manuscript in Marx Memorial Library, copy in William Gallacher Memorial Library [Henceforth WGML] Glasgow.
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- ³⁸ M. Woodhouse and B. Pearce. *Essays in the History of Communism in Britain* ,(London 1975)
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- ⁴¹ W. Thompson, *The Good Old Cause: British Communism 1920-1991* ,(London 1992)
- ⁴² *Ibid.* , p.171-217
- ⁴³ S. Bruley, *Leninism, Stalinism and the Women's Movement in Britain 1920-1939* (New York 1986)
- ⁴⁴ *Ibid.* p.124
- ⁴⁵ *Ibid.* p.262
- ⁴⁶ *Ibid.* p.299
- ⁴⁷ C.M Gabbidon. 'Party Life: An Examination of the Branch Life of the CPGB Between the Wars.' D.Phil. Sussex University 1991
- ⁴⁸ *Ibid.* p.7

⁴⁹ *Ibid.* p.22 and p.25 also footnote 54 Chapter 1 - show the importance of the Socialist Sunday School to the Party in Glasgow.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.* p.40

⁵¹ *Ibid.* p.80

⁵² Morgan, *Against Fascism and War*, p.9

⁵³ S. Nujam 'A Radical Past : The Legacy of the Fife Miners' Edinburgh Ph.D. 1988

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* p.5

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* p.7

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* p.59

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* p.203

⁵⁸ S. Macintyre *:Little Moscow's: Communism and Working Class Militancy in Inter-War Britain* (London 1980)

⁵⁹ *Ibid.* p35

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* p55-6, 68 and 74

⁶¹ R. Price *Labour in British Society* (London 1986)

⁶² M. Savage *The Dynamics of Working Class Politics: The Labour Movement in Preston, 1880-1940* (Cambridge 1987)

⁶³ Price, *Labour in British Society*, p.3

⁶⁴ *Ibid.* p.216

⁶⁵ Under Labour Governments there were the Donovan Commission Report 1968 and Bullock Report 1977

⁶⁶ Price, *Labour in British Society*, p.225

⁶⁷ *Ibid.* p240

⁶⁸ Savage, *The Dynamics of Working Class Politics*, p.179

⁶⁹ *Ibid.* p.193

⁷⁰ M. Savage, 'Urban Politics and the Rise of the Labour Party, 1919-39' in L. Jamieson and H. Corr (Eds) *State, Private Life's, Political change* (Basingstoke 1990) p.209

⁷¹ W. Knox, 'The Political and workplace culture of the Scottish working-class' in H. Corr and L. Jamieson (Eds) *Politics of Everyday Life : Continuity and Change in Work and the Family*, (Basingstoke 1990) pp.162-185

⁷² *Ibid.* p.171

⁷³ *Ibid.* p.180

⁷⁴ V.I Lenin, *What Is To Be Done?*(1902) (Moscow 1947) On the economic struggle:

'...this struggle can never give rise to such an organisation as will combine, in one general assault, all the manifestations of political opposition, protest, and indignation, an organisation that will consist of professional revolutionaries and be led by the real political leaders of the entire people' p.97

Also

'And we must see to it, not only that the masses "advance" concrete demands, but that the masses of workers "advance" an increasing number of such professional revolutionaries' p.107 'I assert:(3)such an organisation must consist chiefly of people professionally engaged in revolutionary activity;

[This was the third of five points] p121

And

'...the "economic struggle against the employers and the government" can never satisfy revolutionaries and opposite extremes will always appear here and there. Only a centralised, militant organisation that consistently carries out a Social-Democratic policy, that satisfies, so to speak all revolutionary instincts and strivings, can safeguard the movement against making thoughtless attacks and prepare attacks that hold out the promise of success'. p.134

⁷⁵ A. Exell, 'Morris Motors in the 1930s Part 1' *History Workshop Journal* Issue 6 Autumn 1978, pp52-78, Part 2 *HWJ* Issue 7 pp.45-65 and Part 3 "Morris Motors in the 1940s" *HWJ* Issue 9 pp.90-114

⁷⁶ Macintyre, *Little Moscows*, p.148

- ⁷⁷ *Ibid.* p.170
- ⁷⁸ *Ibid.* p.145
- ⁷⁹ S. Macintyre, *A Proletarian Science: Marxism in Britain 1917-1933* . (Cambridge 1980) p.23
- ⁸⁰ *Ibid.* p.86
- ⁸¹ R. McKibbin, *The Ideologies of Class and Social relations in Britain 1880-1950* (Oxford 1990) p.7
- ⁸² *Ibid.* p.38
- ⁸³ *Ibid.* see pages 6,7,11,26,32,38 and 41.
- ⁸⁴ P. Graves *Labour Women: Women in British Working Class Politics 1918-1939* (Cambridge 1994).
- ⁸⁵ *Ibid.* p.86
- ⁸⁶ *ibid.* pp.156-7
- ⁸⁷ *Ibid.* p.63
- ⁸⁸ *ibid.* p.208
- ⁸⁹ *ibid.* p.204
- ⁹⁰ *ibid.* p.42
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- ⁹³ Thompson *The Good Old Cause* , pp.187-196
- ⁹⁴ Morgan, *Against Fascism and War*.
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- ⁹⁸ G. Andrews, N. Fishman and K. Morgan (Eds.) *Opening The Books: Essays on the Social and Cultural History of the Communist Party* (London 1995)
- ⁹⁹ S. Bruley, 'Women and Communism: A Case Study of the Lancashire Weavers in the Depression' in G. Andrews, N. Fishman and K. Morgan (Eds.) *Opening The Books* pp.64-82
- ¹⁰⁰ H.F. Srebrnik, *London Jews and British Communism 1935-45* (Ilford 1995)
- ¹⁰¹ N. Fishman, *The British Communist Party and the Trade Unions 1933-45* (London 1994)
- ¹⁰² M. Worley, 'The British Communist Party 1920-45' in *The Historian* Number 55 Autumn 1997 pp 26-28 It is stated the author is currently completing a thesis on the CPGB.
- ¹⁰³ *Science and Society* Spring 1997 Vol.61 No.1 Special Issue, K. Morgan (Ed): 'Communism in Britain and the British Empire' (New York 1997)
- ¹⁰⁴ P. Thompson, *The Voice of the Past* (Oxford 1978). Second Edition 1988.
- ¹⁰⁵ T. Lummis, *Listening to History* (London.1987)
- ¹⁰⁶ Thompson, *The Voice of the Past* . p. viii
- ¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.* p.112
- ¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.* p.113 Also stated in C. Davis, K. Back and K. Maclean *Oral History: From Tape to Type*, (Chicago 1978) p.20
- ¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.* p.132
- ¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*
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- ¹¹² J. Tosh, *The Pursuit of History: Aims, Methods and New Directions in the Study of Modern History* (London 1991) Second Edition
- ¹¹³ *Ibid.* p.214
- ¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.* p227

¹¹⁶ D. Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish Life: Provincial experience of War and Revolution 1913-1921* (London 1977)

¹¹⁷ *History Workshop Journal* Issue 8 Autumn 1979 .p. i

¹¹⁸ R. Fraser, *Blood of Spain: Experience of Civil War 1936-1939* (London 1979)

¹¹⁹ J. Skelley (Ed), *The General Strike* (London 1976)

¹²⁰ W.H. Van Voris, *Violence in Ulster: An Oral Documentary* (Massachusetts .1975).

¹²¹ D. Davin, 'Women-work': *Women and the Party in Revolutionary China*, (Oxford 1976)

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¹²⁷ P. Cohen, *Children of the Revolution: Communist Childhood in Cold War Britain* (London 1997)

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Chapter Two

Becoming a Militant : Politicisation from Childhood

'Look forward to the day when all men and women will be free citizens of one fatherland , and live together as brothers and sisters in peace and righteousness'¹

The Tenth Socialist Precept of the Socialist Sunday School

For those women who joined the Communist Party at its inception in Scotland in January 1921 there were many different factors that had led them to a position of radical or revolutionary politics. There were various influences of family, religion and socialist institutions that would prove decisive in their decision to become communists and which played a more pivotal role in their socialist education than work relations. This was especially true where heavy industry was still the domain of the male worker in Scotland.

This chapter shows the political development of young women through the central importance of community-based groups and the influence of political ideology through families and left-wing organisations. For many women in this study the development of socialist politics had occurred in childhood. This had been through involvement with certain working class children's and youth organisations that were established by the turn of the century. Central to this chapter will be the Socialist Sunday School and its critical role in developing a militant and well educated cadre of young people from which the Communist Party benefited. They created an environment where young people could be more receptive to radical ideas. There existed several small groups which preached revolutionary politics and who became prominent in the conflict between workers and the government during the First World War. 'Red Clydeside' came to symbolise not only opposition to war regulations on the workforce but a tradition which those on the left, including the Communist Party, could proudly point to when tracing their own socialist roots.

As so many respondents were active prior to the thirties, the value of the oral testimony is in its highlighting the importance of certain institutions in the politicising process. The chapter will also detail life in the Young Communist League and CP branches up to and including the Second World War and the activity of leading communist women who influenced a new generation of activists. There is a final section on the continued benefits of the Socialist Sunday School to the Communist Party from the 1940s.

Socialist Sunday School and other influences.

A minority of children were taught socialist politics from an early age in an institution that was well established by the turn of the century: The Socialist Sunday School. Although the Labour Churches and Cinderella Clubs had existed in England, it was the impetus of ILP members in Glasgow which set up the Socialist Sunday School on February 2nd 1896². Alex Gossip the Glasgow and District Secretary of the United Operative Cabinet and Chair Makers Society of Scotland, who associated strongly with, but never joined the Communist Party, and Caroline Martin a lecturer at Glasgow University who had learned her social theories from the New Testament³ were its founders.⁴ Tom Anderson, an independent maverick left-winger who became strongly associated with the movement, claimed to have started the first school in 1894⁵ but this seems doubtful although his role in the Schools proved decisive. At a meeting on 13th January 1907 he was responsible for moving that women be included in the tenth socialist precept and so encouraged the equality of the children in the schools⁶. Anderson's small amendment meant that girls and young women would be treated as equals in the Schools. Considering how often the precepts were used, some participants remembering them up to the present day, one must see how fundamentally important this inclusion was in determining a less stereotypical role for young women in the schools. Therefore the socialism of the Schools did not disappoint its young believers.

Although one may point to the gender bias and reactionary nature in lectures at the start of the century - in a lecture on 'Socialism and sex equality' Alfred Russell described women as the 'weaker vessel' and he thought of sex equality as an

impossible aim⁷ - it seems that these views did not last long into the century. Even the obvious division that 'The New Needlework Classes'⁸ would seemingly induce did not mean exclusion for boys, they were free to attend and were encouraged to. This was a role performed by women traditionally but the school emphasised its benefits to all although its inclusion may suggest that even the schools were not entirely free of carrying on traditions which enclosed women. Girls and boys were unvarying in all their activities; they shared all classes, went on picnics together and were given the same responsibilities in the running of the school and in its education classes.

The Socialist Sunday School had branches throughout Scotland and was most prominent in Glasgow where there were branches in many areas of the city. It became a part of the National Council of British Socialist Sunday School Unions in 1909, there being five unions - called districts - of which two were in Scotland; Glasgow and Edinburgh, which included Fife in its district.⁹ Through regular meetings, with classes for the very young who were organised as the 'Sunbeams'¹⁰, its aim was to educate children in the ideas of socialism¹¹ and to combat the influence of the churches, which in Scotland was considerable. It held that 'as the orthodox Sunday Schools serve as a recruiting ground for the churches of all creeds, so will the Socialist Sunday Schools become the chief recruiting ground for the adult Socialist organisations in the future'¹². And so they were. Meetings were weekly and involved a comprehensive curriculum of activity:

The Socialist Sunday School taught us not to...just accept things but to try and analyse them and try to see what was right and whether the truth was being told or whether things were being hushed up, and to be friends with one another, to help each other always and in general [a] simple message of getting the fact that socialists believed in helping each other to a better life and [were] anti-war...¹³

In the Socialist Sunday School the aim was to positively educate children into embracing a different way of life and rejecting existing standards. Its approach was

avowedly socialist though more utopian than scientific in presentation with its precepts , not dissimilar from catechisms , though it was scientific in the way it sought to cover a sufficiently wide area of subjects and educate members in classes For instance, a miner would bring along a lump of coal and talk about its extraction and its uses or a baker would bring along a cake and illustrated the inequality of the class system by the equal or unequal division of the cake¹⁴ Children were given practical lessons and logical arguments that seemed convincing and hard to refute:

I think it was very influential , very influential. I was the youngest of the family and my two brothers were members of the Socialist Sunday School, Willie would be about eighteen years older than I and Bob would be two years younger than that...I would be taken down to Coalbrook Street into the ILP rooms and we had speakers on astronomy and various things and visits from other Socialist Sunday Schools and we were also connected to the Glasgow Union of Socialist Sunday Schools, so through that I was very interested as a child...¹⁵ '...up the stairs from us we had Charlie Sloane who was a miner and they were members of the Socialist Sunday School and he played the accordion at the Sunday School , so you were not isolated because you did not go to church..¹⁶

There were branches throughout the West of Scotland and in Edinburgh and Fife. As the Socialist Sunday School did not have its own premises until the 1920s meeting halls were often provided by the local Co-operative Society or more usually the Independent Labour Party¹⁷. The ILP was affiliated to the Labour Party and was the most politically dominant organisation on the left. It encouraged its members to send their children to the Socialist Sunday School and the two organisations were seen as synonymous until the thirties.¹⁸

The Proletarian Sunday School was a small offshoot that was founded in Glasgow by Tom Anderson, now a dissident from the Socialist Sunday Schools. It had little impact and did not survive long. It forwarded an outright class war approach similar to the syndicalism of the SLP and was aimed towards the youth.¹⁹

Anderson's publication stressed the importance of equality and was farsighted in economic demands for women. The war had 'levelled some of our notions , and women now demand the same rate; and we say "Hear hear!", we even go further and claim a uniform rate for all workers...'²⁰. In later years Anderson also reminded people of the role John Maclean had played in opening his classes to women even before they had political rights:

The Women Guilds of the Co-operative Society found in Comrade John a teacher and a friend, and I have heard many a women speak of his class and his teaching in very moving terms . Up till Comrade John's time the woman was never considered; to have suggested to her to come to an economic class you would have been laughed at...²¹

In Fife there seemed to be differences that made the Proletarian Sunday School more acceptable for some children, it was less formal with no minute taking and was a smaller school²². Here they used the songbook of the International Workers of the World²³ (IWW) a syndicalist organisation, and the school was organised by the daughter of a French émigré whose father, Lawrence Storione, had already set up the Anarchist Communist League²⁴:

The Proletarian Sunday School was more doon to the working -class , you weren't restrained in any way when you were there and werenae kept from saying what you wanted to say when you were wanting to say it....I liked the Proletarian Sunday School because everybody was friendly with one another whereas sometimes at the Socialist Sunday School , while we were there every Sunday some of them didnae talk to you...The Proletarian Sunday School was run by Lawrence Storione's daughter, Annie Storione. Lawrence Storione had to flee from France and he came across from France dressed as a women and he worked in the pits and it was him that used to come to the hoose to collect the dues and he'd

discussions with my father and it was him that asked me to come to the Proletarian Sunday School.²⁵

In this instance parochialism may have been a factor. Another reason may have been that this strongly socialist (and later a communist) area produced socialist schools that were more to the left than elsewhere because of the strong left-wing culture. But whichever school one attended regular education and accumulated knowledge could open up more avenues for further self-education. The purpose of the Socialist Sunday Schools was not merely to espouse the socialist doctrine but to make younger people more aware of their environment and to cover as many pertinent topics as possible. It was not only an alternative to religious education and the imposed standards and morals handed down by authority. The schools also sought to educate children by discussing and coming to understand the subjects presented and not just by rote:

Through the [Socialist] Sunday School the horizons widened a bit because we from the Sunday school formed a choir, the Cambuslang Labour Choir and that was a great experience and my pal from Cambuslang , her father was a smelter in the Steelworks in Cambuslang , Jenny Laurie her name was , and she was a very intelligent person , we were pals. We used to go to the theatre , up in the Gods, and we'd come out and be singing all the songs , opera in the street, and having a carry on, that was the kind of person she was and I was!...²⁶

As well as being a British-wide body the movement was also affiliated to the International Federation of Young People's Organisations set up in 1907²⁷ and so there was a known organisational bond with children abroad and there was also the principle of solidarity with workers in struggle²⁸. There was attendance at May Day marches and opposition to wars which led to outright rejection of the First World War despite the ambiguity and compromise of respected socialists throughout Britain at this point. Children belonging to the Schools found themselves organised as a

small minority from an early age. As young socialists they did not face overt hostility but they *were* different not least because they were taught to be independent and 'to respect but not to bow down to others'. Their organisations structure was openly democratic and did not have a hierarchical form as did the religious Sunday Schools or state schooling. The Socialist Ten Commandments were learned off by heart and were put into practice through the activities of the Socialist Sunday Schools. The education classes positively encouraged children to question and not to accept what they were told as fact by the adults who taught them²⁹. Speakers learned to fear and respect the institution when addressing its scrutinising members³⁰. The practical activities of the schools involved rambles in the countryside around the cities, socials and out-door meetings that brought young people closer. The activity of these schools and their aura cannot but seem similar to that of the coming Young Communist League and especially the Communist Party whose rules and adherence to the doctrines of Marx and Lenin required acknowledgement, and at least a formal acceptance of them. What was also needed was a devotion to the cause the Party and the League espoused.

Crucially for the political development of women there were socialist or religious influences to which they were receptive³¹ and if the Socialist Sunday School movement was proportionately stronger in Scotland than elsewhere in Britain, it was strongest in Glasgow and the West of Scotland. Within this small milieu, a tradition of socialist values was well established by the time of the First World War. Therefore for children at their most formative stage there were events to match the optimistic beliefs and theories they were taught. Variety allowed for greater comparison between the socialism of different groups and parties. They could also contrast their teachings to the political and religious organisations whose influence and pervasiveness among working class communities should not be underestimated. The schools inversely reflected the indomitable strength of organised religion and the strength of the state and, like the socialist activists in the dilution battles, they were a minority even in their own communities and class. Yet it was this culture and a certain resilience that nurtured a comprehension of the work needed to build the socialist movement. Few could have little doubt as to how far away socialism was in

Britain especially having faced the jingoism of the First World War. Yet being part of a small cohesive group of socialists who could organise effectively at least made it seem possible one day. The rationalisation process through a socialist education is vital here, as was the practical experience that was an essential part of early political life. The Socialist Sunday School taught its pupils to contemplate their lives by learning about science, geography and politics, but it also did a lot more for some. It was set up in opposition to the huge influence of religious Sunday schools³² and as much reflected the weaknesses, numerically, of those opposed to organised religion from an atheistic political standpoint. This was especially pertinent to Scotland where Protestantism and its historical influence was very strong and where the influx of immigrants from Ireland, most of them Catholics, brought a new dimension to Scottish social and political life. There were the benefits to the left of a natural opposition to British colonialism from Irish Catholics who still faced some religious discrimination.

There was the discipline and tradition of Calvinism, an important point made by Kendall³³ and a strong tradition of broad based education that had its roots in the Reformation in Scotland. Regular learning and quoting from the bible could develop ones ability to justify and develop argument to the extent that it spread beyond religion.³⁴ There was a philosophical tradition in Scotland that, married with this education, could enlighten people further than the restrictions of an advanced theology. It opened minds to the logic of dialectical materialism which the Communist Party introduced wholesale with its Marxist syllabi. The Socialist Sunday School turned the traditional method of classroom teaching on its head. Instead of dictatorial and fearful instruction, children were encouraged to question the adult speakers who addressed them. The strongest organisations of the working class were the trade unions and their conduct of meetings: elected positions and minute taking, were mirrored by the positions and responsibilities that those attending the Socialist Sunday School undertook. There was an obvious similarity between the formal manner of meetings and the discipline of trade union branch business. Many of the adults who supervised the schools promoted the positive aspects of their labour organisations. This approach to education encouraged a democratic atmosphere and

so also encouraged a questioning of all perceived values which later included those of the established left in Scotland. The intrinsic teaching of both bodies was for a world socialism based on peace, friendship and love and was often put over, ironically but not surprisingly, in a religious manner. It was visionary and not too fervent. But the politics were utopian and were limited in their practical effects to Britain. Yet through the radicalism of the ILP and the anti-establishment teachings of the Socialist Sunday School for some young people the next step could be Marxism.

World War One, 'Red Clydeside' and The Russian Revolution.

The school's strength lay in their deep conviction and the war did not affect their activity but seemed to strengthen the resolve of members to stand by its teachings. There were signs of growth in Scotland with Glasgow accounting for over a quarter of all sales of *The Young Socialist* monthly magazine at the beginning of 1914³⁵ and by 1915 it could report of Glasgow, where the magazine was printed, that 'All the schools in this District are in a very healthy condition, despite the adverse circumstances which presently prevail...'³⁶. Notwithstanding the ubiquitous jingoism, some schools also went on the offensive with the authorities such as the Rutherglen School which passed a resolution to the town council protesting 'against the arbitrary treatment meted out by the Rutherglen Local Tribunal to young men who, as boys, have been trained in this school and are still members of it, and who claim exemption from military service on conscientious grounds...'³⁷ Throughout the organisation there were members who became victims of the military authorities because they naturally opposed war just as they had been taught to. Through the pages of *The Young Socialist* members would learn of the persecution of fellow comrades throughout Britain for their socialist principles as those who practised the anti-militarism and internationalism of the organisation were punished for being conscientious objectors³⁸. As new schools sprouted in Blantyre, Govan, Ayr, Greenock and Johnstone the magazine proclaimed 'we know that nothing will shake our comrades' steadfastness in the cause of international friendship...'³⁹. The traditional singing of *The Red Flag* at some schools⁴⁰ and the organisations pride in objecting to the war reflected their proud emotional internationalism at this time⁴¹.

During the war women became politicised through activity in the factories where they were sent and where government restrictions were being forcibly imposed on the workforce. Socially women became politicised as they took a leading role in opposition to rent increases. This manifested itself in active campaigning around the close knit tenements and overcrowded communities and eventually support from protesting shipyard workers. The agitation culminated in the success of the Rent Restriction Act in 1915. Active in this agitation was a young Rose Kerrigan:

Now I found out about it in the shop one day when I was going up to the classes and the [Socialist] Sunday School, I learned about this and I came home and I told my mother that we'd agreed not to pay the increase in our rents. She on the other hand said 'Oh, we're the first people they'll put out Rose' she said ' I could never do that on my own', so I went up our close, we had fourteen tenants, it was a four storey building, and explained it to all the women and they agreed to join the strike...these women were all housewives between twenty-five and sixty or thereabouts and I was only twelve but I convinced my group and we never paid the extra and we never fell into debt either, we just paid the ordinary rent and that went on and Lloyd George was so upset about this , he was so anxious to keep the munitions coming from our area that he capitulated...so that's one of the victories of British history.⁴²

Members of the Independent Labour Party , the left-wing organisation that totally dominated Scottish Labour politics for the first two decades of the century⁴³ and 'until the 1930s ...was effectively the Labour Party on the ground in Clydeside'⁴⁴ , had experienced the fudging and compliance of the Labour Party leadership towards the war effort. Few had come out in total opposition. The number of activists involved in the British Socialist Party or the Socialist Labour Party was far smaller in comparison but on Clydeside they were strongly active in opposition to the war. The success of their tactics depended on actions among a militant working class population. However much the Red Clydeside period has been mythologized and though it did not necessarily suggest a possible socialist revolution , no greater anti-

war episode took place in Britain. There were limitations to the industrial conflict and, despite early success, in the end its aims failed. It was the *political effects* that were permanent and proved undoubtedly beneficial for the coming Communist Party. Red Clydeside educated and inspired socialists fighting against the war effort and what they saw as needless slaughter. Conflict with the establishment continued after the war. With an increase in unemployment and a world depression, skilled workers organised with army veterans against the governments austerity measures. In Scotland one of the last major conflicts before the miners' strikes which culminated in the General Strike, took place in Glasgow over the Forty Hour Week. This resulted in a riot in George Square in the city centre:

Yeah, Manny Shinwell were arrested. They read the Riot Act from the Town Hall steps, the square was packed with people and I was at the other end, you know, the station end, near Queen Street station, and I was selling *The [Strike] Bulletin* and I knew if I was caught with *The [Strike] Bulletin* in my hands I would be in trouble. But just as I was making up my mind to make myself scarce, the police, after they'd read the Riot Act started to [attack] the people and there was a lorry going up towards High Street with empty lemonade bottles I think and the chaps just grabbed these and fought back and it was a real battle, I got out of the way knowing that I was going to be in trouble once they started on people around that edge of the crowd and I don't know what happened after that, that was Nineteen-nineteen which was the fight for the forty-hour week⁴⁵

The Russian Revolution was welcomed by militant socialists because it seemed to confirm the Marxist theory of workers inevitably overthrowing capitalism. Lenin's small but disciplined Bolshevik Party seemed to offer a new organisation that could introduce socialism through revolution. Inevitably people were increasingly attracted to this success against the ruling class as it became obvious by 1920 that the purely economic struggle had been decisively defeated on the Clyde.

Women Pioneers in the Communist Party

For women who joined the Communist Party in this period the road appeared logical from ILP , BSP or SLP politics to the more decisive and advanced theories of Leninism which were the basis for the founding of the Communist International. The formation of the Communist Party of Great Britain allied to the new Soviet Republic was a calculated, logical and , eventually after negotiations , decisive move that was influenced by a theoretical deficit in British working class politics. The Party was formed at a time when there was demoralisation and uncertainty due to economic depression in Britain and Europe. It seems unlikely that there was a route that could have been taken that would have delivered a stronger organisation for socialism. Already such avenues had been considered , practically explored , and had proved their limits.⁴⁶ As Hinton and Hyman point out , the conditions of the time were as much against the CPGB quickly becoming a mass party especially as the reformist leaders had not been undermined and there was the continued strength of Labour institutions⁴⁷. The founding members of the Communist Party recognised there was a need for a new political party based on revolutionary tactics and action yet these had limited resonance in the British Labour movement, not least because of the limited development of Marxism.⁴⁸ Scottish Marxism was swiftly matured by the arrival of a socialist state and permanently affected by its permutations especially when the CP was established in Britain. The importance of women to this movement was outlined by Alexandra Kollantai:

..The new, Third, Communist International needs only to set itself the task of utilising the female proletariat , of developing the entire breadth of its initiative in order to draw the women workers into the cause of struggling for and building a new way of life and developing a new ethic, a new relationship between the sexes..⁴⁹

Women active on the left who had thought that the Labour Party could deliver socialism had put their hopes in the mission of the Clydeside MP's who left Glasgow

for London in 1922. By this time women such as Helen Crawford , Jenny Hyslop and a young Rose Kerrigan had already decided to join the Communist Party despite the odds against building a mass party because of the ILP's supremacy Their ages also represent different generations of Scottish women who came into the Communist Party about the same time.

Born in 1877 Crawford was from a strongly religious background. Her father was a Calvinist and her mother a Methodist. She married a Presbyterian minister, who was an ardent anti-militarist. Having been an active and militant suffragette in the Women's Social and Political Union , suffering arrest and staging hunger strikes , and then opposing the war , she was made secretary of the Glasgow Women's Housing Association and became active in rent battles.⁵⁰ She became honorary secretary of the Women's Peace Crusade in 1917. An occasional lecturer to the Socialist Sunday School from the ILP⁵¹, she served on the ILP Scottish Divisional Council, was part of the Left Wing organisation of the ILP and in 1920 she visited the Soviet Union and arrived just as the Second Congress of the Communist International ended⁵² , though she managed to meet Lenin. She joined the CPGB in 1920 and in 1921 she was appointed on to the Executive Committee of the Party⁵³ , edited a women's page in the weekly paper *Communist* and she helped set up the *Sunday Worker*⁵⁴. In the 1930s Crawford was active on issues such as Spain and campaigned on various international issues. Her influence on women members in the Party was enormous and she was always noticeable gliding through the streets of Glasgow as Marion Robertson remembers 'I used to see her coming down Renfield Street with these lovely grey capes and she wore the suffragette colour, the grey and the purple and a wee bit fluttery thing in her coat' ⁵⁵ Active on international issues Crawford made a big impression on Party women who saw how she could chair public meetings. As Effie O'Hare remembers when she attended a meeting for the Meerut Prisoners⁵⁶:

I was taken into the meeting to sit there and listen and there was this lady, very nice looking , elegant lady , in the chair. Beautiful golden hair , everything , and she managed that conference with all the men and all the

things *absolutely beautifully* and I thought 'Oh I would like to be able to do that'⁵⁷.

After the war Crawford was appointed as the first woman councillor in Dunoon, she was still active in the Party and travelled with a Peace bus in 1947⁵⁸ a few years before her death in 1954.

Jenny Hyslop, born in 1898, also joined the Communist Party in the early 1920s. In 1921 she and her husband moved to Clydebank and when they got there the Rent Strike was underway, in opposition to the Rent and Mortgages Interest (Restrictions) Act which had nullified the 1915 Rent Restrictions Act⁵⁹. Neighbours asked them to support the strike by paying only the standard rent and not the increase. The women were central to organising opposition to the increases and played a cat and mouse game with the bailiffs such as changing the nameplates on doors or getting other people to answer the knock of the authorities. Armed with a big bell, Jenny Hyslop went down the streets announcing the arrival of an eviction squad and the people in the neighbourhood huddled round en masse to stop the evictions taking place⁶⁰, sometimes with Jenny and a group of women resisting entry of the flat by barricading the doors. The strike lasted longer in Clydebank than in Glasgow and initially the strikers were successful getting the 'Notice of Increase' invalidated in certain cases. The House of Lords also upheld a test case, but by 1926 the law supported the factors and the strike was finished by 1928. In 1938 Hyslop became a councillor as she was co-opted on by Finlay Hart⁶¹ and served for eight years. During the Second World War she was a senior officer in the Warden's Service and the first woman Sectional Head for the ARP in the West of Scotland. She commanded a post in Clydebank and was active during the two nights of the blitz on 13-14th March 1941 in which the town suffered hundreds of fatalities. As well as managing the horrors of bereavement and identification she lost, with thousands of others, her home⁶². However it was the defiance of the people to the courts over the issue of rents that formed a tradition which produced later battles over the same issue in the late Fifties and early Seventies in Clydebank.

Rose Klasko [later Kerrigan] was a young teenager when the political opposition to the First World War developed in Glasgow. Strongly influenced by her father's radicalism and noticing the subordinate role of women, such as her mother, Rose became active as a member of the Socialist Sunday School. Having been active in helping the Socialist Labour Party in its offices and street activity, Rose noticed the differences between the left parties as well as the dominance of the ILP and during the war worked against jingoism in the movement⁶³. She attended numerous education classes some of which, on economics, were given by John Maclean.⁶⁴ She helped send famine relief to Russia and was a foundation member of the Communist Party in Scotland at the age of eighteen. Prior to joining the CPGB she had been involved with the Communist Labour Party which existed Scotland from October 1920 due to the rejection of Scottish delegates to the new CPGB seeking affiliation to the Labour Party. It was at the second unity conference at Leeds in January 1921 when the CLP took many of its members into the Communist Party of Great Britain. Socially, she fought for better provision of contraception for women by using the Marie Stopes clinic in Glasgow, even though these enlightened institutions were for women to stop having more children rather than those who wished to have none. Rose married Peter Kerrigan in 1926 and in 1935 they travelled to the Soviet Union where they stayed for a few months as Peter was British organiser for the Seventh Congress of the Communist International⁶⁵. Rose moved to London in 1939 when Peter became the Party's National Industrial Organiser and she remained a member of the CPGB for seventy years.

There was the influence of women in the Party from outside the Scottish District who had an impact. Isabel Brown was one of five women delegates who attended the first Communist Party Congress in 1921. Born on Tyneside in 1894 her husband, Ernest Brown, was District Organiser for the CP on Tyneside where she was the chairperson⁶⁶. Ernest became Scottish Organiser and Isabel stood at a by-election in Kilmarnock in 1928 where she was arrested and assaulted by the police⁶⁷. She stayed in Scotland for eighteen months and was women's editor of *The Mineworker*⁶⁸. It was on international issues that she made her mark⁶⁹, for instance defending those accused of burning down the Reichstag. She also campaigned

nation-wide for the Spanish Republic which led Finlay Hart, a Communist councillor in Clydebank, to comment. 'Isabel Brown bled audiences white when she appealed at public meetings on behalf of Spain'. She later became Women's Organiser of the CP during the war⁷⁰ and in 1948 stood as a candidate in Kilmarnock again.⁷¹

Oh she stayed with me when she came here, Isabel, a grand old war-horse. I remember one meeting during the war in the public hall and it was packed and there was supposed to be a Russian film come first and it didn't turn up and Isabel kept that meeting going right through with questions on that platform in front of the screen there for the *whole* hour of the meeting. I can tell you something, a man that was a Tory but he'd been at the meeting because it was well advertised and he said 'Can you tell me who was that woman that took the meeting last night?' I said 'Isabel Brown, she was a schoolteacher at one time' he said 'A marvellous woman and she held that meeting' he said 'And all those questions, I never heard anything like it'. That was an outsider, not any of our crowd.⁷²

Despite the low profile of women in the Party generally, there were women who were pioneers with their broad experience and who had been involved in many formative campaigns leading up to the Party's birth. There was a legacy of socialist women who continued their radical activity in the Communist Party. For those that joined the Party up until the Second World War the Socialist Sunday School acted by example as an important pre-YCL body for the Communist Party. It may also explain the failure of the communist children's organisation to take hold in Britain and Scotland, as they did in certain other countries. Despite the *Young Worker* paper eventually becoming a weekly⁷³ the Pioneer movement never really took hold despite activity during the General Strike in some areas⁷⁴, especially the coal districts, and close work with the ILP Guild of Youth. Indeed their membership never exceeded one thousand in Britain and its highest point was in 1927⁷⁵. One reason for this might have been the relative strength of alternative organisations to the established Cub and

Scout movements. The Co-operative movement was very strong in Scotland with a mass membership and would prove to be an important area of work in the future for women in the Communist Party. There was the Co-operative Women's Guild which many of them would join for life, despite later discrimination. The Woodcraft Folk was an independent organisation for children which, like the co-ops, was not overtly socialist but taught equality and friendship amongst its members:

I suppose my first sort of relationship with anything political was when I was very young and I joined the Woodcraft Folk. My eldest brother was involved in setting it up in the Vale [of Leven] and another brother of mine took over the job as headman...I joined the Woodcraft Folk and it was a co-operative youth organisation , boys and girls, it was sort of political in as much as it was associated with the co-operative movement , so between that and the fact that in my family , I'm one of nine , my elder brothers were political.⁷⁶

The Woodcraft Folk was founded in London, in 1925.⁷⁷ Formed as an alternative to the militarism of the Boy Scouts its activities were for both sexes and it had branches in Glasgow and the West of Scotland. Its structure and the names of its members reflected the organisation of the native American Indians and their democratic approach. The Co-operative movement decided to sponsor the Woodcraft Folk as it did not have its own organisation for children.⁷⁸ There were different groups for the ages, the Elfins for the young and the Hardihoods for the older children. One of the areas where it met regularly was Shettleston in the East End of Glasgow:

I was a member of the Strathclyde Fellowship it was called , the Woodcraft Folk sort of organisation that I was associated with and it was in the Woodcraft Folk that I met my husband Eric, and from there I joined the Young Communist League but I would say that was mainly because of political interest within my own family that I came and not as

a member of the Woodcraft Folk... I was Silver Birch which, again, comes from that American Indian sort of thing and it meant that children just called their leaders by their Woodcraft name so it meant there wasn't any of this Mr or Mrs or Miss or anything of that kind. It was very democratic.⁷⁹

The Woodcraft Folk was not an overtly socialist organisation, was not political and did not strongly emphasise education but it did have a strong international dimension.⁸⁰ Again girls and young women were given confidence, because of a lack of institutionalised discrimination, to feel equal and to express themselves. Through activity in these organisations they had greater expectations of equality when they were adults. The international affiliates of the Woodcraft Folk could at times appear much stronger and institutionalised than in Britain where there was limited support:

When we went to Holland after the war in an exchange, this isn't the Socialist Sunday School, but with an exchange with the Woodcraft Folk, the trade unions in Holland all put money into the youth organisation and something like that was really required in this country because we worked on a shoe string and we couldn't provide halls and things although we used the Co-operative Halls...Everything was done on a shoestring and it was very difficult because people who were active in the movement were trying to do the work with the children, the socialist education, the recreational work etc. But they were also having to spend time and energy raising funds to carry out this kind of work as well and I think this is one of the reasons for the demise because the uniformed organisations could offer so much more by way of recreational activities for the children, their football leagues and that sort of thing. Things that we couldn't offer to the children...⁸¹

Shettleston was an area where the Socialist Sunday School was established and where the Labour Colleges held classes, some of which were for women. It was also

where Labour MP John Wheatley , a major figure in the ILP and arguably its most able intellect , had been based. The ILP's power lay in the East end of Glasgow. Wheatley had formed the Catholic Socialist Society (CSS) in 1906 and attracted the wrath of the church hierarchy.⁸² The CSS tried to counter the anti-socialist teachings of the church and identify with the causes of the poor and for this Wheatley was attacked by the leaders of the church.⁸³ As an MP his housing reforms of the 1920s and his early death ensured , like John MacLean , a more lasting respect for his socialist commitment compared to his contemporaries.

One may argue that the Labour Party failed to develop both educationally and ideologically its adult membership in the way the Socialist Sunday School had so influenced its children.⁸⁴ When leaving the schools youngsters may have expected to join an equally militant organisation. The importance of the ILP in developing potential young socialists was that they were the dominant section of the Labour Party in Scotland and were the radical section of the established labour movement. And so in Scotland , among the left , there was already a culture of dissent and a socialist opposition against the British right-wing labour establishment and , in Wheatley, against the conservatism of the church.

Therefore there was already a socialist and democratic culture when the Communist Party was formed in Scotland and arguably the curricula and discipline expected of membership of the Party would be more appealing to those who had experienced the advantages of having attended the schools, of which a significant number were girls. Rose Klasko (later Kerrigan) had experienced this politicisation process with her formative influences coming from her father, a Jewish refugee from Eastern Europe who had come to Glasgow from Dublin:

My father , I would call him a socialist , was a radical but he wasn't a member of any party as you understood and the reason was because he never got naturalised, cost too much money then.....He supported the Suffragettes which , when I was eight year old and they were active, I thought was wonderful... they were very good and early on in my life I

realised that it wasn't their fault that boys had things easier than us girls who were always in drudges...⁸⁵

In many instances there was a special bond with one or both parents. If it was the father this could be due to political development as a result of trade union work or by young women not being limited to domestic activity as were so many. Having been to various left-wing meetings with her brother, Rose learned to argue against established views in support of the First World War:

I was eleven when the war broke out, my father was anti-war and we went to war to save 'Little Belgium' which had been invaded by the Germans and my Dad said that wasn't true, the war was imminent because Germany needed to expand markets and she had no outlet like we had, we had colonies and all that , specifically India, so they started the war, well, when I told my mates at school this Oh!, they called me pro-German and god knows what and I was really hounded...we were told about the Socialist Sunday School and Willie and I went with all these socialists and enjoyed their company , went to their cycles , went to their rambles, all that sort of thing , so that was where I was nurtured and I read an awful lot of socialist literature between the age of twelve and twenty⁸⁶

Influences in different environments

Not all female recruits to the Communist Party came from working class backgrounds with direct experience of class struggle. Rationalising political arguments in an atmosphere of democratic debate could draw people to the theories of Marxism. Contrary to those from working-class backgrounds, there was more time for the middle and upper classes to ponder , study and debate theoretical , philosophical and moral arguments:

...My father was an MP for West Edinburgh,... John Gordon Jamieson, but I think he was a pretty incompetent MP really but he belonged to an

old and sort of paternalistic school of thought among the Tories, you don't get that sort *anymore* now. I mean he was a lover of human beings, he was a real Scotsman, he was a strong egalitarian tendency you know, he was a liberal-minded man but he believed in the hierarchy of society and the people who were privileged had been bred for centuries as masters, it was their duty to look after the poor and be kind to them and so on and so on. It was real sort of paternalistic attitude. Well I was very fond of him, we loved each other dearly and he used to confide in me the problems of politics. So I was brought up with politics. I was also brought up with *lots* of religion... Well he was in the United Free Church in fact but he was very undenominational, he was a very close student of Christ and Jesus' teaching. And when I got to the age of about fourteen, fifteen, sixteen, a young teenager, I found I *could not* equate Christianity the way he had been teaching it with his politics, and this was very disturbing.⁸⁷

Among the upper middle-class the experience of the empire, perhaps through relatives within its administration, could lead to greater understanding of the plight of peoples under colonial rule. This may have been rare as cultural dominance and economic influence perpetuated an empire mentality among the Conservative and Unionist Party and the Liberal Unionists in Scotland. Yet not all Civil Servants were blindly obedient or unquestioning over the British government policies:

I had a cousin ...Thomas Hodgkins, who was Secretary to Sir Arthur Dunwaupe in Palestine at the time, when I was twenty-two I went to stay with him in Palestine with my aunt and uncle, his parents, and we used to sit up till the dawn talking about imperialism and that was the beginning of my conversion. I found there was a whole school of thought into which I could move and develop from my own internal protest and my Christianity into this, and this was communism... Thomas was told to leave because he had published articles in the Arab press that

said 'the British Empire is cheating you of your land' and so this wouldn't do you see. He said 'the British Empire is like a rich man who is promising one sovereign to two blind beggars', that was the pungent illustration that he produced in the Arab press. So of course this wouldn't do and he was told he was given three weeks to get out, so he lost his job didn't he.⁸⁸

The attitude of parents to religion was important because the views of the main churches, and religion in general, could be all-pervasive. This constituted an entrenched part of peoples' culture either geographically or ethnically. Criticism of the establishment from its centre did not necessarily mean embracing left wing politics but it did make one different by questioning actions and not remaining subservient to officialdom. In this case it is an example of a socialist consciousness being developed against the mainstream thought of people in the same class. Women came into the Communist Party believing in socialist politics that had been learned through different experiences. They had all rejected conventional thought and had openly involved themselves in socialist politics from an early age. They were now ready to commit themselves to a unique political organisation which was active in several key areas in Scotland.

Joining the Young Communist League and the Communist Party of Great Britain - 1920s to the 1940s.

From its formation the Communist Party was trying to make an impact and win new members, especially in working class organisations. It would try to influence youth groups and approached those in the Socialist Sunday School by selling papers such as the *Sunday Worker*. This was Marion Henery's first contact with the Party and she was immediately receptive to its ideas, despite opposition:

...there was quite a kick up and I myself thought they had every right to sell the *Sunday Worker*. That was the first step I took to associating myself with the less respectable members of society who were the

unemployed and who had a hut in Cambuslang. This friend of mine , the very idea of going to the Sunday School and being associated with these down at heel folk in this hut was abhorrent. There were wonderful people in that branch of the Party and one of them was Danny Docherty and he had a single end and his wife and him had no family but the single end was the headquarters of the Communist Party and he had a duplicator and he ran off a bulletin and he was the lawyer of the people in that area, that influenced me...⁸⁹

The increasing number of local activists that the Party produced could have a lasting effect on young people who came into contact with them. Often the parents of a friend or a person well-known in the community, their disposition towards their children and people generally could shape the outlook of young people. Party members seemed to dedicate their lives to high profile campaigns on political and social issues such as in Cambuslang where the Party had taken root:

The old man , Andy Mackie , wasn't an intellectual he was an old miner who had worked hard all his life and a really down to earth man who did all the knocking doors, chalking the pavement, speaking. He did everything , he was a one man communist party ...he was a totally honest man respected by everyone who knew him, even his *enemies*, and that had a big effect on me⁹⁰.

This aspect of Party work may have been more impressive to female members. Activity in the community by people who devoted all their time to community work was a more identifiable environment for women as they were less likely to have been involved in industrial organisation and struggle. This was especially true in Scotland where there was little diversity of employment and a limited scope for women's employment.⁹¹ For the first generation of communist women, the neighbourhood was their base. If the class war was obvious in a traditional industrial environment with workers pitched against management then these divisions were equally clear to

communists dealing with housing problems or fighting for amenities in their locality where poverty was often widespread. All the women interviewed who came into the Party before the Second World War were active in the social sphere and it is important to recognise how much of their socialist activity was applied in this area. It was also a logical step for those who wanted a radical and actively committed party not confined to parliamentary politics but based in the community as the ILP in Scotland had been at its strongest.

Fife

From the 1920s the Party cultivated a strong membership base among the mining towns in the Fife area where there was a strong socialist culture. This developed into a considerable political force similar to other industrial areas in Scotland, e.g. Lanarkshire where mining was also dominant and where it also achieved the election of Communists to the Parish and Town Councils despite opposition from both the Catholic Church and Orange and Masonic organisations.⁹² Inevitably Fife remained a stronghold during the General Strike in 1926. It was in this year Mary Docherty, much influenced by her father's political activity, joined the YCL. The miners' brutal defeat made a lasting impression on her:

Well I hadn't much activity during the General Strike, it was just the end of the General Strike that I joined the Party and I wasn't actively involved until later on. This place, it was like a death because there were nae pit horns or nothing and everything was silent and you were wondering what was wrong with it. And nae transport [was] allowed in or out of Cowdenbeath, there was pickets put on every entrance and outway, and it was only medical and food stuff that was actually allowed in. Every organisation in the town and union and trades council formed themselves into Councils of Action and they met everyday to discuss what their next step was going to be and there was big meetings held both in the public park and marches held all the time. After the General Strike was finished the miners still stayed out on strike and the Fife miners didnae go back for

a month after the other miners went back in other places, they were that disgusted at having to go back, the way they had to go back that they ...to be rebellious , a month longer than the other areas .⁹³

Here the Party had established a base and there was room for wider and bolder activity including organising children at an early age. In Lumphinnans in Fife young people were organised by the YCL and encouraged by Party members like Bob Selkirk, a miner who was later to serve on the Town Council in Cowdenbeath. Selkirk organised activities such as rambles with the children and was more than willing to encourage their political development. A few branches calling themselves the Young Comrades were formed.⁹⁴ There was a lot of activity in this area with several youth groups and the growing influence of the Party which supported children who decided to challenge the traditional Victoria Day holiday and who organised a school strike to win May Day instead:

The YCL'ers were supposed to be responsible for children you see , so they helped us with meetings and chalking up the slogans. The night before the school strike, on the Monday night , May Day was on the Tuesday and on the Monday night some of our bairns from Cowdenbeath went with me, and we went to Lochgelly and we chaked up from Lochgelly right doon through Lumphinnans to Cowdenbeath 'School strike, May Day for a schools strike', 'School strike for a holiday' you ken 'Children's holiday, May Day , School strike' we done that. We went to the school gates on the May Day to see how many children were off the school and asking them not to go into school, some of the YCL'ers went in the morning and that. Anyway the schools strike you couldnae say was a hundred per cent because you couldn't expect all the bairns to come out because we couldn't get in touch . But anyway it was fifty per cent , you would say , successful because the next year when the Fife education authority were discussing the school holidays for the next year, May Day was put down for all these areas where we had been on strike , they all got May day for a holiday, and they've had it ever since.⁹⁵

Having won seats on Lochgelly Town Council and with members on the Fife Education Authority the use of the strap was restricted, better school meals were provided and there was the recognition of May day as a permanent holiday⁹⁶ A meeting was arranged with children marching from different areas and congregating in Lochgelly Park with a social evening arranged at the Miner's Institute. When speaker at the rally, J.V. Leckie, heard that tickets were being sold for the social, he paid for the rest of the children to get in.

Despite the exceptions of a couple of Party men in Bowhill who had helped in the success of the strike, there was the complaint that men in the Party expected women to organise the children. For women their expectations and involvement in Party activity became restricted due to social convention and because the Party failed to address this matter. Women expected more equality as it had often been experienced in earlier organisations as well as being the central element of socialism. Here the influence of the YCL was critical as to whether one would go on to join the Party. If it lived up to expectations then the Party could expect a continual flow of new female recruits. In Scotland the YCL was primarily an organisation of social activity that brought young people together and bonded them much as the politics in the Party branches would do. With a focus on group activities and team work there seemed to be a continuation of an equal approach towards women in the YCL that had existed in the Socialist Sunday School and Woodcraft Folk. Outings and collective campaigning brought young people closer. Isa Porte lost her father in the First World War when she was seven and her mother died in a flu epidemic soon after. Influenced by socialist politics, it was in the late 1920s that she first experienced the camaraderie of a political organisation:

My friend Jessie that worked in the work I was in, in upholstery work, invited the girls to a ramble in Calderwood Glen near East Kilbride before it was a town and four of us went to the ramble and I liked the company and I joined the Young Communist League from then. The others didn't but I did...Well we had education classes which I found very difficult.

We had maybe a Party member who was a bit of an educationalist , talking about money value and these sort of things and about politics generally. And we went rambles, we enjoyed ourselves as well as being studious, we chalked pavements and were always in the anti-war sort of thing. That was it really. We had this club - the British Workers Sports Federation which we all joined and a swimming club, had a camp at East Kilbride and rambles. Things that young people like.⁹⁷

Having earlier questioned religion, here was a young women joining the YCL because of the practical and social life of the organisation. It is interesting to note that there was less interest in education in this case and that was not the primary concern in joining. Isa Porte moved to the East coast in the early 1930s where there was a branch of the Young Pioneers , the communist pre-YCL body for children, '...I was only involved in the Pioneers when I went to work in Fife and joined the YCL in Fife and helped to run a Pioneer group of mostly the Party member's children'⁹⁸. Although there seemed to be an equality in activities in the YCL there were also, in the publications of the YCL in the 1930s , instances of young women being expected to play the usual role model as receptive to the delights of make up and body toning.⁹⁹ The influences of capitalist society and the lack of sustained opposition and education to these stereotypes meant that even in the Communist Party women increasingly had a specific role rather than an equal one.

The Vale of Leven

Lumphinnans in Fife was termed 'Little Moscow' as were two other places in Britain where the Communist Party was to make a significant impact. These were Maerdy in South Wales , also a mining town, and the Vale of Leven in Dunbartonshire, West of Glasgow. Here , in the early 1930s, the Communist Party won elections to the County Council , a continuation of their strength from the District Council where they had six councillors¹⁰⁰. There was a strong concentration of women workers in the Vale and a lack of a predominant skilled male working class culture among the community. Thus family ties were stronger resulting in a greater

social identity and awareness that politicised people. Women were often directly involved in the political campaigns as 'at critical junctures the ties of class and politics overrode the divisions of gender'¹⁰¹, though Macintyre does not idealise the realities of a women's place even in this exceptional enclave¹⁰².

The Vale had a history of radicalism having been an active Chartist area. Its population was doubled with the influx of Catholic Irish immigrants who came over from 1850-1900¹⁰³. The dominance of a couple of industrial firms, bad housing conditions and regularly high unemployment from 1922 led to a focus for community politicisation and a strong catchment area for the Communist Party. By the early 1930s there was a strong branch of the National Unemployed Workers Movement and a branch of the Friends of the Soviet Union¹⁰⁴. For Effie O'Hare, a young woman who had just arrived in Britain, the harsh conditions and rigid social structures were a culture shock:

....women took their place along with men, there was no difference and New Zealand of course had the vote long before anyone else you know, Nineteen-ten, I never knew what it was not to have a vote. It was always difficult for me to come in here and live in an urban area...I got here and of course I landed in the middle of the Nineteen thirty-one slump and being a New Zealander who could walk out of a job and into another one in the same day, didn't realise what I was coming to. I got the first shock of my life that you didn't just get jobs no matter what you had¹⁰⁵

The Communist Party in the Vale of Leven found it could quickly mobilise people around basic issues such as fighting for improved housing and sanitary provisions. There was a close working relationship, most of the time, at local level with the ILP and the Labour Party and this was maintained between the wars with the three parties gaining a majority of seats on the council. One of the Communist county councillors was Dan O'Hare, an engineer, soon blacklisted, whose parents came from County Armagh in Northern Ireland. He first served on the Cardross Parish Council and then sat on the Dumbarton County Council. Continually active in the area, holding regular

meetings with the other councillors at the fountain on a Friday night, he went around the area with his horse and fruit-cart , dealing with people's problems. One of the successes on the council was the building of a sewage system for the area which was long overdue and which was a cause for celebration among the Communist Party and the Left parties who controlled the Council.¹⁰⁶

It was only natural that in the Vale of Leven there was also a high level of activity in working class organisations and that those born in the 1930s would be readily influenced by family members who were involved in social or political groups including the CP which had become established along with older organisations such as the Co-operative movement. There was a rich culture of labour movement groups that offered different levels of involvement in social or political activity¹⁰⁷. Yet there still had to be a reason for choosing the YCL and the CP above all the other parties that were active on the left, especially where there *was* a choice , as in the Vale of Leven:

...we never seemed to have very much and you could see the difference between the haves and have nots. I just felt we had to change society and thought the Communist Party was the most likely. When I was a wee lassie and there were elections going on , you were shouting for the Labour Party , "*Vote ! Vote! Vote! for Davy Kirkwood*" or whoever was the person but I was never ever attracted to the Labour Party...never. I joined the YCL probably when I was about nineteen and from then on it was just a natural progression to joining the Communist Party, I was quite convinced that the Communist Party was the Party that could change society.¹⁰⁸

Along the River Clyde communities which relied on heavy industry suffered the catastrophic effects of a world glut in shipbuilding causing conditions which would influence a generation brought up in the 1930s. Clydebank grew from the late nineteenth century and was solely based on heavy industry, especially shipbuilding. The community was almost totally working class with little diversity in employment :

...we had terrible poverty, it's unbelievable , I don't think anyone could imagine it now , what like it was and I think that fostered a rebellious spirit in me without it being specifically socialist or anything ..[We] went down to Ilford to workTed Bramley was the [CP] Organiser down there and he used to hold street corner meetings , it was leading up to the Spanish Civil War, and Emily, before I left , joined the Party but I had to come home because I got word that my father and that wasn't managing and I came home to help to look after them and the first thing I did was seek out the Communist Party and joined it...¹⁰⁹

The YCL was often only briefly entertained by those who felt they belonged more in the local party branch: ‘..I felt my place was more in the Party, I was a married woman by that time, I thought the League was too young for me.’¹¹⁰

By the 1930s the Party had made an impact on the left and had stabilised its membership though it was still shunned by the Labour establishment. Apart from the Labour Party in some areas, the CP seemed the only Party of the left campaigning among communities especially since the ILP's disaffiliation from the Labour Party in 1931 had hastened its demise. It was during this decade that the Communist Party developed its work on national and international issues.

The 1930s

The major issue in Britain during the 1930s was unemployment and the fight against means testing and benefit cuts. Since the 1920s the CP had tried to organise the unemployed and had put all its efforts into making the National Unemployed Workers Movement into a mass organisation. Through demonstrations and Hunger Marches the NUWM was instrumental in reversing some of the drastic austerity measures of the National Government. This was the most graphic way of highlighting the poverty of areas of high unemployment which were often those where the staple industries had gone into decline. In Scotland these were located in the central belt and the coalfields. It was on these broad issues that the CP could win

sympathisers whilst sustaining its intense political campaigning. Some of the Party women became active on the Hunger Marches¹¹¹, stewarded them¹¹² so helping to entrench the Party's overwhelming authority in the NUWM and to publicise its militant activities.

As Fascism spread in Europe the British Union of Fascists tried to recruit more people through public rallies and public meetings. In Scotland they had limited success. They concentrated their efforts in Aberdeen where they met regular anti-fascist opposition. Communist Party members faced fines and imprisonment for their disruption of fascist meetings which they regularly interrupted.¹¹³ From 1936 to 1939 the local leader of the BUF, Chambers-Hunter¹¹⁴, tried unsuccessfully to expand membership in Aberdeen. The Communist Party had already established a base in the city and women such as Jean Lennox, Nora Williamson and Nan Cooney were involved soon after its formation. The YCL used socials to attract youth. Here young people could sing, dance and get cheap refreshments:

I went along to a social of the YCL and of course [they] were very poor and they rented a room at the top of a building in Seventeen St. Nicholas Street at that time, which is now demolished I think, and they had socials there and you used to get tea and what they called sinkers, a sinker was a great big ginger cake with raisins in it, and we used to sing and dance and things like that. But the thing that attracted me to the YCL was I thought how brave they were and it seemed so romantic to me and this drew me to the YCL, it wasnae any political consciousness or any formed idea, it wasn't Marxism or anything like that, it was really I thought this was so romantic to be fighting for working people in this way...¹¹⁵.

As with all active YCL branches *Challenge* was sold on the streets and there was the tradition of open-air agitation that was carried on by the Party and could inspire people to join:

...and there were meetings in the Market Stance on a Sunday night and you would go along there and listen to a' the different orators and there was a sort of cleavage in the Party I think at that time even and there was a very famous family called the Shepherds and there was quite a few of them in the Party and some of them used to speak in the Market Stance and Bob Cooney used to speak in the Market Stance and I think that Bob Cooney's oratory was one of the things that drew me to the Party because he could explain everything so well and relate political events to the international scene.¹¹⁶

The Market Stance was the centre of the Party's public activity and from where they had regularly organised to oppose the fascists who had tried to arrange meetings there. It was the meeting point for distributing anti-fascist literature and finding out from sympathisers how to oppose the public appearances of the fascists.¹¹⁷

The Spanish Civil War became the major issue for Communist Parties throughout Europe with campaigns to aid the Republic from 1935¹¹⁸. The impression that the defeat of the Republican government in Spain left was great. It was the first major international issue that many Communist Party members were deeply aware of due to the regular reports that came back via Party speakers or publications. There was also the knowledge that some Party members from Scotland had gone over to fight for the Republic.

Women were directed towards collecting money and knitting for Spain and the need to support the fight against fascism was seen as urgent and obvious in much the same way support for peace in Vietnam would be thirty years later. Through Scottish Party members who had volunteered to fight, Communists were involved in direct conflict with fascism in Spain. The solidarity action was also reminiscent of the aid for the young Soviet Republic. It was the first of many actions of internationalism which were also allied to supporting the foreign policy of the Soviet Union which had dramatically changed in 1935 at the Seventh Congress of the Comintern in Moscow, where some Scottish members were present. The new policy elicited a cold response from the Labour Party with the exception of the dissident Labour League of

Youth¹¹⁹, some of whose members were so disillusioned at the end of this period that in 1939 they jumped over to the YCL in Scotland¹²⁰. It was not just a question of there being a difference between the two parties; the CP was seemingly the only party that *cared* about the immediate prospects if the fascists advanced in Spain and Europe. The International Brigade brought together people from all countries who were often from their respective Communist Parties and who knew that defeat could only mean deeper conflict ahead. May Halfpenny (later Annan) joined the Party as the war was ending:

At that time, they were bringing Spanish refugees, children, over from Spain and there was quite a movement in Clydebanks but the YCL...we knew a war was coming and we were against the war and we circularised all the organisations to hear a speaker from the YCL, the Women's Guilds - and the Women's Guilds in those days were big big meetings, there were a lot of women at it and I didnae really have any training, or anything. The Party is great for just telling you to do a thing and you go and do it and I addressed quite a number of meetings at that time...I remember Harry Pollitt, we had a meeting in the Clydebanks Town Hall, again it was a huge meeting, and Harry Pollitt said 'if you don't stop the bombs falling on Madrid they will fall on Clydebanks' - which *what prophetic words, you cannae believe it, that it could be said...*¹²¹

For the people of Clydebanks the pertinence of Pollitts' words would become evident within a few years.¹²² Of events in the thirties it would be the enduring sacrifice of young men who had gone to Spain to fight, many of whom had died, that would especially move future generations of Party women. Sacrifice in this harsh and brutal conflict left no room for romantic notions, but endless respect for selfless courage. The Scottish contingent accounted for 20% of the total volunteers from Britain and in composition the communist contribution from Scotland was proportionately large with 60% of the 476 volunteers being in the Communist Party¹²³. The legacy of these volunteers was to influence women who became active in the Communist Party in the 1960s.

In 1937 women in the Communist Party accounted for only 16% of the membership, 364 out of 2,318 members in Scotland ¹²⁴ Women's Sections were just being developed , and Jenny Hyslop was put in charge of women's work Geographically 49 of the 70 party branches were in Glasgow , Lanarkshire and Fife , the latter having a membership of 305¹²⁵ - about 13% of the total Scottish party membership. There were 41 factory branches, 19 of which were in Glasgow and only one each in Edinburgh and Perth though there would be growth in later years.¹²⁶ The percentage of women in the CP in Scotland would never go above one third , this level achieved in the post-war period. One may wonder whether it would have been lower but for the prevalence of socialist politics and community activity in labour movement organisations which developed young women's political awareness in the absence of being industrial workers. Added to this there was also the diversity of religious backgrounds. Most importantly it was those secular organisations and especially the Socialist Sunday School which laid a distinct path to the Communist Party for women in the inter-war period. It was within these organisations, as we shall see from women's subsequent experience of the Party structures and the pressure of social norms , that for the first and last time they *were* equal.

The Legacy of the Socialist Sunday School in the post-war period

Young women who came into the YCL in the 1940s during the Second World War were influenced by a generation who had been involved in struggles during the First World War and who had been involved in the pioneering years of the Party. Now there was a direct communist legacy that one could respect and learn from as well as the traditional routes to socialist politics:

...there was a big picture of Keir Hardie so there was always that talk in the house. My mother in particular wanted us to join the Socialist Sunday School , but for whatever reason, I never actually did which in later years I rather regretted when I met people who had come through the Socialist Sunday School...I found them to be kinder people for a start, their whole sort of education in the Socialist Sunday School was one of peace and one

of comradeship that without the Socialist Sunday School you didn't get. I mean you went to church and you were told to do what God told you and that was it , there was nothing else, so as I say , I rather regret the Socialist Sunday School gap ..¹²⁷

The influence and activity of the schools is still crucial to people in this study of whom all were active after 1940. If one looks at its activities in Glasgow during the Second World War and then the Cold War and into the 1950s the realities of international politics seem to have finished off the sentimental idealism that existed in the early part of the century. There is also evidence to show that keeping a consistent position led to the schools being identified with activities close to the Communist Party. Having always been pacifist the Socialist Sunday School now had to decide whether to support the Soviet Union in the war. It decided against participation in the Anglo-Russian demonstration in October 1941 'as doing so would commit the union to a pro-war attitude'¹²⁸. However this decision was soon reversed.¹²⁹ Messages of support were also sent to the peoples of the Soviet Union and five pounds was sent from Maryhill branch to the Soviet embassy with 'fraternal greetings to the children of the USSR'¹³⁰. When it came to the aggregate meeting of adults it was decided not to take a decision on the nature of the war and although agreeing that Russia was a socialist state it was stated that 'war could not be justified even in defence of a socialist state'¹³¹. It is interesting to note that the heart of the issue was the war and there was no wholesale opposition to the nature of the Soviet state and a film show at Maryhill of Soviet films confirms a natural sympathy¹³².

Even as the numbers of schools and children attending declined there was still a strong political link with the ILP¹³³, and also a natural link with the Communist Party. It was this link with the CP which no doubt encouraged the Catholic church in Pollokshaws forbidding its child members from attending the school¹³⁴. In the post-war period and at the height of the Cold War there is evidence of stronger links with organisations with views not hostile to the CP. The YCL Choir¹³⁵ and some Party branches still involved themselves with the schools. Having suffered losses there seemed to be a stabilising of membership in remaining schools¹³⁶ and in the Gorbals

the school received support from the CP Women's Section there.¹³⁷ The Management Committee decided to urge the National Executive Committee to support the National Peace Council campaign to ban the atom bomb¹³⁸ whilst there was a resolution sent condemning Labour MP Woodrow Wyatt for advocating the use of the atom bomb in the event of war with Russia.¹³⁹ At one meeting there were fraternal delegates sent from the Glasgow Trades and Labour Council, the City Labour Party and a woman represented the Communist Party City Committee and the Organisation of Democratic Youth.¹⁴⁰ At the same meeting a letter was sent condemning the execution of Martinville Negroes.

Children were encouraged to adopt pen-pals through the Scottish-USSR Society¹⁴¹ and a month later the society presented a film show. A letter at the same meeting was received from the Women's International Democratic Federation urging support for a conference on children and peace in Berlin in September 1951. This was referred to the NEC. Later in the same year there was a speaker on a 'Visit to Poland' and in the new year on the Berlin Peace Festival.¹⁴²

In 1952 a move to support International Women's Day in London was defeated¹⁴³ though an amendment was carried that it go to the schools for a decision with the result that five were in favour and three against¹⁴⁴, this perhaps showing that the Management Committee were only out of touch when they were slightly conservative!. They decided not to take part in the British Youth Festival but instead asked for a report.¹⁴⁵ In May the Socialist Sunday Schools marched with the disaffiliated Glasgow Trades Council which was seen to have been too dominated by the CP and so was reconstituted¹⁴⁶. May Day greetings were sent to the Labour Party, Trades Council, ILP and CP and there was correspondence from the World Federation of Democratic Youth, a body supported by the CP, forwarding their constitution.¹⁴⁷ There were regular meetings with the British-Polish Friendship society who showed the film 'Young Chopin'¹⁴⁸ and a delegate meeting agreed that a party of children from the schools in Nitshill and Pollok could attend a CP social.¹⁴⁹

Later in the Fifties, at a crucial time for the Communist Party, there was still cultural activity and socialist politics directly pertinent to the day such as a talk on the Suez Canal and on the schools anniversary in 1957 there were delegates from the

Labour Party, Communist Party, Trades Council, the YCL, the Woodcraft Folk and the Labour Youth section¹⁵⁰. The YCL Choir still did the rounds¹⁵¹ and even ex-CP members contributed with Harry McShane 'agreeable' to take classes for the Youth Section¹⁵². As a speaker he joined people like Fred Reid who talked on literature¹⁵³ and Rab Chalmers who delivered talks on socialism¹⁵⁴. At a centenary demonstration for Robert Smillie in Larkhall in June 1957 the school presented extracts from Smillie's life while Abe Moffat, President of the Scottish NUM and a CP member, spoke on 'The Scottish Miner's are proud of Smillie's great work'.¹⁵⁵

Especially in the West of Scotland, where it was always stronger, the Socialist Sunday School was an important organisation for many communists and it was respected for its equality and non-discrimination both in gender and political terms. There were few attempts to exclude or discriminate against the CP and the causes it supported. In the post-war period, perhaps because of disproportionate influence from CP parents, the Socialist Sunday School was decidedly sympathetic to the Eastern Bloc countries and were susceptible to appeals from organisations associated with the CP or the Soviet Union such as some of the organisations mentioned. That there was not even protests about these activities from other parties is initially surprising though it probably reflects more the respect for the Socialist Sunday Schools and a desire not to incur their disfavour. This may also show an apathetic attitude to the schools from the other parties and the aforementioned communist activities that dovetailed in with those of the schools is not dwarfed by greater interest or correspondence by the Labour Party whom one might have expected to have had stronger links just through its size and political influence.

Finally, if one looks at the gender division at the schools from 1940 one finds exceptionally high female attendance. Govanhill School, opened in 1909¹⁵⁶, was in an area of one of the strongest Communist Party branches in Glasgow in later years. The breakdown of the attendance roll from 1940 to 1955 illustrates the attendance of young women. From 1941-1950 girls and young women accounted for more than half the members in attendance with 26 out of the 38 of those in attendance in 1946-7 and at times nearly three-quarters with 30 out of 45 members for session 1947-8.¹⁵⁷ In the session 1951-52 there was an average of 30-34 children in attendance, 21 girls

, in the 1952-3 session, 25 children, of which 15 girls, in the 1953-4 session , 22 children, 14 girls and in the 1954-5 session 16 children, 8 girls.¹⁵⁸ The boys had reached an equal number. The school closed in November 1956.¹⁵⁹ A long established branch, there is no reason to believe that Govanhill was exceptional, it was in a very strong working class area of Glasgow and had been one of the longer lasting branches.

The uniqueness of having a membership where the ratio of female to male was equal, or in this instance was higher , and in this in an organisation that preached socialism, may be the lasting feature of the Socialist Sunday Schools. Most importantly was the effect on girls and young women whose socialist consciousness was developed with young boys and men in the same socialist institutions and where they were equal. Entering the adult world and the work process , this unique environment would be lost forever.

Conclusion

An essential debate of the last thirty years has been about the effects of the formation of the Communist Party and whether or not its existence diverted a truly socialist path that was being formed by socialists in Britain. There is a relegating of the politically conscious and developed path that a minority took in adopting and supporting the principles of the Communist International. The drawn out negotiations, conflicts, doubts and resignations that occurred during that process should leave one in no doubt as to how well-scrutinised this decision was. This had come firstly after having rejected purely formal parliamentary politics as represented by the Labour Party and the non-Marxist ILP Left, and secondly by rejecting syndicalism and industrial militancy as forwarded by the SLP and some smaller sects whose limitations were obvious to all by the end of the Forty Hours Strike. Arguably those active on the Clyde had the benefits of a diversity of groups and opinions which enriched their environment more than anywhere else in Britain. That there was an indigenous deficiency in not having developed a strong Marxist theoretical basis for the Party's existence or a polemical tradition is rather obvious despite the proximity in activity and empathy of the Socialist Labour Party to the internationalism displayed

by the dissident groups of the Second International. Indeed , whatever its major faults and volte face in the future, the Communist Party in Britain, especially after the Second World War, would produce many noted trade union leaders and academic scholars.

The majority of women (or men) who attended Socialist Sunday School did not go into the Communist Party. Many went into the Labour Party . Those women that did go into the CP were used to being part of a minority anyway. They were a minority by being in the Socialist Sunday School and they were to remain in a minority party but they seem the one discernible group who continued developing their political activity from leaving the Socialist Sunday School and joining the Communist Party both before and after 1945. Party members still appreciated and utilised the Socialist Sunday School even when it was on the decline. Here was a legacy that began at the end of the nineteenth century and benefited the CP until the schools successor closed in the early 1970s.

That the Communist Party was less successful with the Young Pioneers in Scotland may be due to the fact that the Socialist Sunday School was so well established and supplanted much of the same work that the Pioneers intended as a social organisation and school, that it was rendered superfluous.¹⁶⁰ The Socialist Sunday School pre-dated the revolutionary movement in Russia: it was a home grown established asset that the CPGB would have been mistaken to have interfered with or ignored. Instead they wisely kept a respectful distance by formally disassociating , a move that merely urged a positive response from the Sunday School Board for them to continue sending their children to the schools.¹⁶¹ After all one could join the YCL when a teenager.

As in the later politics of the Communist Party during the Popular Front period when the party offered the schools formal assistance and was refused¹⁶², the schools brought together children from all political households of the left. The adults were so dedicated to the schools that they worked together running the organisation and taught the children irrespective of their own political differences in their respective parties.¹⁶³ Hence the absence of imposing any one doctrine on the children , which the Communist Party could have decided to do, led to a unity and a

camaraderie that was invaluable. The respect for the schools was widespread among the left and was respected by the Communist Party as it pre-dated its birth and its independence was honoured as it had been advantageous for the Party as some party members had benefited from the school's teachings.

The Party's attention to education and especially formal Marxist education made it seem a continuation of the schools in their social organisation. Also there had been a natural empathy to Marxism in the schools, not by emphasising theory but in respect and acceptance of Marx's contribution to socialist thought and the activities of the next generation of his followers such as Liebknecht, Luxemburg and Mehring¹⁶⁴ from the German socialist movement, and lessons on the importance of the Paris Commune.¹⁶⁵ The YCL concentrated on practical social activity and did not expect an immediate knowledge of political theory, so, when people joined from the schools, there was no demanding transition to this new political body but more a semblance of previous expectations. Therefore the YCL, which one might expect to strongly appeal to women, was a logical next step as was the Party after that. Marxism espoused equality and there was a developed critique of the historical subjugation of women. Such theories were either not talked about or barely mentioned in the Labour Party compared to the Communist Party where the politics of class war and a fundamental rejection of capitalism were its *raison d'être*.

Having been involved in a small organisation that strongly rejected religion, encouraged its members to question authority and to treat all people in their organisation equally and was 'different' from the established social organisations for children, the experience of being against the tide and proposing a revolutionary philosophy *inevitably* had the effect of leading some women to communism. For them, organising as a strong ordered minority against the stream and firm in their belief, insulated them to an extent from the enormous task of defeating British capitalism. There could be safety, comfort and comradeship especially in a like-minded but small membership. From the schools there was also the instruction of the precepts and the formal drill of the agenda at meetings that young men from the schools might get from their work and an allied union involvement but which young women were less likely to encounter. Consequently there was no advantage of one

gender over the other. The rules and discipline of the Communist Party might just as well have been the elder of the Socialist Sunday School.

The Socialist Sunday School was not a seminary for Marxism, at least not in any formal sense, but it stayed consistent to its socialist politics and did not dilute them at any time. As it was run for and by children the corruption of real political power was irrelevant and did not affect them. The impression of how adult socialists acted and justified their actions affected the children and so could be measured against the school's teachings. Although the Russian Revolution was welcomed and there was support from the schools, there was a distinct lack of articles in its publications. That the schools seemed quiet on this crucial event may reflect the dominant influence of the ILP and some uncertainty towards the Bolsheviks. Yet the schools did collect for Russian children and, just as importantly, they did not show any antipathy towards the revolutionary regime. This, long after the Communist Party was its only defender.

One might also be able to see how the Leninist theory of an elite party with a small dedicated leadership might seem acceptable to those who had belonged to an organisation which educated its members and propounded socialism and internally had not greatly changed. It adhered strongly to supporting organisations it had always been associated with and was consistent in this, even through the First World War, the Second World War and the Cold War periods. It did not deviate from its aims and its survival surely depended on its staying true to its principles and not disillusioning past and present members who were its constituency. Finally there was the one enduring benefit of the Socialist Sunday School that was taken for granted: there was no gender discrimination or role play that was deliberately or blindly imposed. For the first and last time women were treated as equals in a political organisation.

¹ Socialist precept no.10, Socialist Precepts and Declaration card, National Council of British Socialist Sunday Schools .undated [post 1907], TD1206/2/1-3, Glasgow City Archive/Strathclyde Regional Archive [henceforth GCA/SRA].

² F. Reid 'Socialist Sunday Schools in Britain 1892-1939' in the *International Review of Social History* Volume XI 1966. p23-4 'The modern Socialist Sunday School movement is to be dated from this Glasgow inception' I am grateful to W.Hamish Fraser for alerting me to this article.

³ Reid 'Socialist Sunday Schools in Britain' p.24

- ¹ H. Corr : 'Clarice Marion McNab Shaw (1883-1946)' p.247 and 'William Martin Haddow (1865-1945)', p.133 in W.Knox (Ed) *Scottish Labour Leaders 1918-1939 : A Biographical Dictionary*. (Edinburgh , 1984). p.84
- ⁵ GCA/SRA TD591, Tom Anderson Album , p.1
- ⁶ GCA/SRA, TD1399/1, Essays and lectures given by Alfred Russell 1900-1922, at a meeting held on 13 January 1907, p.27
- ⁷ GCA/SRA , TD1399/1, Russell, pp.183-192
- ⁸ *The Young Socialist* , Vol. XVII, January 1917, No. 1, 'The New Needlework Classes' by L. Glasier Foster was to be a regular feature..p.7
- ⁹ Reid 'Socialist Sunday Schools in Britain 1892-1939', *International Review of Social History* p.29.
- ¹⁰ Socialist Sunday Schools ; Aims , Objects and Organisations , National Council of British Socialist Sunday Schools [henceforth NCBSSS] (undated) Basic principles unaltered since 1892 p.6 William Gallacher Memorial Library, Glasgow [henceforth WGML]
- ¹¹ *The Young Socialist* Vol. XX1 October 1921 No.10 the editor mentions the Sunbeams for the first time and suggests the name be adopted.p.2. Also interview with Edith Findlay 10 September 1995 p.4.
- ¹² Socialist Sunday Schools , NCBSSS, but an older undated edition p.4 [WGML]
- ¹³ Rose Kerrigan 9/7/95 p3
- ¹⁴ Edith Findlay 10/9/95 p.4
- ¹⁵ Marion Henery 6/4/94 and 17/11/95 p.1
- ¹⁶ Marion Henery 6/4/94 and 17/11/95 p.3
- ¹⁷ '17 schools - some used Labour Club Hall (Springburn) or ILP - Shettleston, Tollcross and Southside, Scotstoun and Whiteinch, Parkhead, Maryhill, Bridgeton, Cambuslang, Central- Co-op Halls'. Glasgow and District Socialist Sunday Schools Union , Memorandum of Season's Arrangement's 1929-30 p.18 [WGML]
- ¹⁸ Mary Docherty 14/5/94 and 14/3/95 p.1
- ¹⁹ National Library of Scotland [henceforth NLS] 1964.40 *The Revolution: Means the Abolition of the Capitalist State and the Inauguration of an Industrial Republic: A magazine for Young Workers* [official organ of the Socialist School] see Vol. 1 No. 3 for its more militant Socialist Ten commandments.. This appears to be Tom Anderson's Proletarian Sunday School.
- ²⁰ *Ibid* p.47
- ²¹ [MLGR], G3335.330924, *John MacLean* by Comrade Tom [Tom Anderson], Glasgow , 1930, 2nd edition 1938, p.14
- ²² M. Docherty, *A Miner's Lass*, (Cowdenbeath, 1992) p.27
- ²³ Docherty, *A Miner's Lass* p.27
- ²⁴ S. Nujam 'A Radical Past: The Legacy of the Fife Miners' Edinburgh University Ph.D.thesis 1988 p.211
- ²⁵ Mary Docherty 14/5/94 and 14/3/95 p.1-2
- ²⁶ Marion Henery 6/4/94 and 17/11/95 p.1
- ²⁷ Reid 'Socialist Sunday Schools in Britain 1892-1939' *International Review of Social History* p.28
- ²⁸ Glasgow and District Socialist Sunday School Union. [henceforth GDSSSU] Mitchell Library Glasgow Room [henceforth [MLGR]] G3335, College Socialist Sunday School - log book 1899-1968 p.167 collection for Dublin Strike
- ²⁹ *Ibid*. To the extent that it states; 'The opportunity for asking questions at lessons has not been taken advantage of by the children , although no excuse can be offered for this'.
- ³⁰ Edith Findlay 10/9/95 p.4
- ³¹ C.M Gabbidon 'Party Life : An Examination of the Branch Life of the CPGB Between the Wars'. Unpublished D. Phil Sussex University, 1991, states that the vast majority of CP'ers had grown up in socialist households and that over 50% in Glasgow had one parent from Ireland who was Protestant or Catholic. p.21
- ³² J. Smith, *Labour Tradition in Glasgow and Liverpool* in *History Workshop Journal* issue 17 Spring 1984 p.37
- ³³ W. Kendall, *The Revolutionary Movement in Britain 1900-1921*, (London, 1969) pp 68 and 72

- ¹¹ It led Helen Crawford, to see Presbyterianism for instance as more democratic than the 'English or Roman church'. *Autobiography* [WGML] p.48
- ³⁵ *The Young Socialist*, Vol. XIV January 1914, No.1. 'Glasgow has hitched its wagon to a star, and is soaring so high as almost to defy competition', p 7
- ³⁶ *The Young Socialist*, Vol XV December 1915, No.12, p 191.
- ³⁷ GCA/SRA RU4/5/102 The E.C. of Rutherglen Socialist Sunday School March 1916.
- ³⁸ *The Young Socialist* February 1917 Vol. XVII . . No.2 pp15-16.
- ³⁹ *The Young Socialist* October 1917, Vol. XVII No.10, p.111
- ⁴⁰ *The Young Socialist* December 1917, Vol. XVII. . No. 12, p.143
- ⁴¹ *Ibid* 'ABC of Conscientious objection' p.135
- ⁴² Rose Kerrigan 9/7/95 p5
- ⁴³ R.J Morris, 'The ILP,1893-1932: Introduction' in Alan McKinlay and R.J. Morris (Ed)*The ILP on Clydeside 1893-1932: From foundation to disintegration.* . Manchester, 1991, p.4.
- ⁴⁴ A. McKinlay, 'Doubtful wisdom and uncertain promise': Strategy, Ideology and Organisation, 1918-1922' in McKinlay and Morris (Ed): *The ILP on Clydeside*, 1991, p.129.
- ⁴⁵ Rose Kerrigan 9/7/95 p.5
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- ⁴⁸ J. Klugmann, *History of the Communist Party of Great Britain Volume One: Formation and Early Years 1919-1924*, (London, 1968) .p.71
- ⁴⁹ A. Kollantai : 'Working Women's Day and the Third International' in *The Communist International in Lenin's Time ; Founding of the Communist International: Proceedings and Documents of the First Congress: March 1919*, Edited by J. Riddell, (New York 1987) p.310
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- ⁵¹ *The Young Socialist* , September 1917, Vol. XVII, , No.9, p.107.
- ⁵² H. Crawford, *Autobiography* p.191[WGML]
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- ⁵⁴ *Ibid* p.84-5
- ⁵⁵ Marion Robertson 19/4/94 p.18
- ⁵⁶ *Daily Worker* January 17 1933
- ⁵⁷ Effie O'Hare 23/3/94 and 20/3/96 p.9 also see p.12, 19 , 44-5.
- ⁵⁸ Jenny Richardson 31/3/94 p.10
- ⁵⁹ S. Damer, *The Clydebanks Rent Struggles of the 1920's*, 1974 p.4
- ⁶⁰ J. Hyslop Interview 9/3/83 Tape 0060-1 , Side 1 , Clydebanks Public Library [CPL]
- ⁶¹ F. Hart, *Sixty Exciting Years* , unpublished autobiography, copy [CPL] p.73
- ⁶² *Evening Times* 13th, 14th and 15/3/41
- ⁶³ W. Gallacher, *Revolt on the Clyde* , (London 1978) Fourth Edition, p.189
- ⁶⁴ Interview with Rose Kerrigan by Catriona Burness , 15/7/93, p.4
- ⁶⁵ Rose Kerrigan 9/7/95 p.9
- ⁶⁶ M. Hill, *Red Roses for Isabel: Highlights of the life of Isabel Brown* (Preston 1982) p.10
- ⁶⁷ Hart, *Sixty Exciting Years* p.69
- ⁶⁸ Hill, *Red Roses for Isabel* p.27
- ⁶⁹ Mabs Skinner 15/4/94: '...Isabel Brown in my estimation, if you have got to have a heroine at all, that is mine. She died when she was eighty-one , she just got on fine with me'. p.15-16
- ⁷⁰ Hill, *Red Roses for Isabel* p.90
- ⁷¹ *Scottish Committee Organisation Report for April 1949* , WGML , p.6
- ⁷² Effie O'Hare 23/3/94 and 20/3/94 she continues '...I can tell you something, a man that was a Tory but he'd been at the meeting because it was well advertised and he said 'Can you tell me who was that woman that took the meeting last night?' I said 'Isabel Brown, she was a schoolteacher at one time' he said 'A marvellous women and she held that meeting' he said 'And all those questions, I never heard anything like it' that was an outsider, not any of our crowd'. p.43

- ⁷³ *The Young Communist International : Between the Fourth and Fifth Congresses: 1924-1928*. CPGB, London 1928 p.147
- ⁷⁴ *Ibid* p.109.
- ⁷⁵ *Ibid* p.151
- ⁷⁶ Marion Easdale 23/3/94 p 1
- ⁷⁷ C. Salt and M. Wilson. *We Are of One Blood : Memories of the first 60 Years of the Woodcraft Folk 1925-1985* (London 1985) p.2-3
- ⁷⁸ *Ibid* p.4
- ⁷⁹ Mary Park 13/12/94 and 13/11/96 p2-3
- ⁸⁰ Edith Findlay 10/9/95 p.15 'But they were more international and they were more for the social side of the camping and that which was a good thing...' and p.16.
- ⁸¹ Mary Park 13/12/94 and 13/11/96: p.49-50
- ⁸² I. Wood, 'John Wheatley 1869-1930' in Knox (Ed) *Scottish Labour Leaders* p.276-77
- ⁸³ W. Knox, 'Introduction : A Social and Political Analysis of Scottish Labour Leadership Between the Two World Wars': in W. Knox *ibid : Scottish Labour Leaders*, p.30
- ⁸⁴ See B. Cowe, 'The Making of a Clydeside Communist' in *Marxism Today* April 1973. On Rutherglen Socialist Sunday School: 'Could anyone ask for a better one?' p.112. On the Bolshevik Revolution he says it had not 'exactly fitted the socialist precepts we had been taught and caused me and others my own age to seek knowledge and understanding' p.113
- ⁸⁵ Rose Kerrigan 9/7/95 p2
- ⁸⁶ Rose Kerrigan 9/7/95 pp2-3
- ⁸⁷ Mary Cowan 16/3/94 p.1-2
- ⁸⁸ Mary Cowan 16/3/94 p 1-2
- ⁸⁹ Marion Henery 6/4/94 and 17/11/95 p2-3
- ⁹⁰ Isa Porte 12/12/96 p.16
- ⁹¹ Interview with Joe and Marion Henery , Tape 7 Side 2 198? [WGML]
- ⁹² J. McLean, *The 1926 General Strike in Lanarkshire* in *Our History Journal* Spring 1976 p.65
- ⁹³ Mary Docherty 14/5/94 and 14/3/95 p.4
- ⁹⁴ Mary Docherty 14/5/94 and 14/3/95 pp.2-3
- ⁹⁵ Mary Docherty 14/5/94 and 14/3/95 pp.2-3
- ⁹⁶ Mary Docherty 14/5/94 and 14/3/95 pp.2-3 and M. Docherty (Ed), *Auld Bob Selkirk: A Man in a Million* (Cowdenbeath, 1996) p.108
- ⁹⁷ Isa Porte 12/12/96 p.17
- ⁹⁸ Isa Porte 12/12/96 p.18.
- ⁹⁹ *Challenge* January 21 1939 'Keep fit and beautiful with Liane' p.9 though the letters 'The Fights on 'Cosmetics versus the rest' show that some women had other ideas. p.10
- ¹⁰⁰ R. Gallacher, 'The Vale of Leven 1914-75: Changes in Working Class Organisation and Action' in T. Dickson (Ed) *Capital and Class in Scotland* , (Edinburgh 1982). p.194
- ¹⁰¹ S. Macintyre, *Little Moscows: Communism and Working-Class Militancy in Inter-war Britain*, (London , 1980), p.18.
- ¹⁰² *Ibid* p.148 , he also says 'The communists themselves certainly had views on the position of women that were well in advance of general attitudes, but they were by no means immune themselves from assumptions of masculine supremacy'. p.145.
- ¹⁰³ Gallacher 'The Vale of Leven 1914-1975' in Dickson (Ed): *Capital and Class in Scotland* p.188
- ¹⁰⁴ *Ibid* Gallacher puts the figures at 1,300 and 300 plus respectively. P.193
- ¹⁰⁵ Effie O'Hare 23/3/94 p.10
- ¹⁰⁶ Effie O'Hare 23/3/94 p.2
- ¹⁰⁷ Marion Easdale 23/3/94 p.1
- ¹⁰⁸ Marion Easdale 23/3/94 p.2
- ¹⁰⁹ May Annan 22/4/94 p.1
- ¹¹⁰ May Annan 22/4/94 p.1
- ¹¹¹ I. MacDougall *Voices of the Hunger Marches* . (Edinburgh. 1986), interviews with Marion Henery and Isa Porte. Also Docherty 14/5/94 and 14/3/95 p.44

- ¹¹⁷ Interview with Joe and Marion Henry . Tape 7 Side 2. 198?, for a good description of what went on socially on the marches. WGML.
- ¹¹³ L. Kibblewhite and A. Rigby *Fascism in Aberdeen: Street Politics in the 1930s* (Aberdeen 1978) p.30
- ¹¹⁴ *Ibid* p 8
- ¹¹⁵ Alice Milne 10/7/94 p.3
- ¹¹⁶ Alice Milne 10/7/94 p.3
- ¹¹⁷ Kibblewhite and Rigby, *Fascism in Aberdeen* p.10
- ¹¹⁸ See *Challenge* Vol.1 No.9 October 1935 p.1, Vol.5.No 3 January 21 1939 p.1, Vol 5 No.5 4th February 1939.p.1, Vol.5 no.31 August 12 1939 p.2
- ¹¹⁹ *Advance* April 1938 Vol. 1 no 2. p.1
- ¹²⁰ Bob Horne 15/9/94 p.13
- ¹²¹ May Annan 22/4/94 p.1
- ¹²² They were especially prophetic for the people of Clydebank because of the bombardment and devastation that they suffered in March 1941 after three nights of continuous bombing. This killed 534 people , injured hundreds and displaced thousands. It was the worst and most destructive bombing anywhere in Scotland during World War Two.
- ¹²³ *Scottish Marxist* No.16 Summer 1978. 60% were from the CP, 20% from the Labour Party / ILP and 20% no party. 230 came from Glasgow p.11
- ¹²⁴ *Communist Party of Great Britain Scottish District Congress, July 1937, [WGML]* p.1
- ¹²⁵ *Ibid* p.4
- ¹²⁶ *Ibid* p.1
- ¹²⁷ Jenny Richardson 31/3/94 p.1
- ¹²⁸ . [MLGR]. G3335, GDSSSU North West 18th September 1941, in reply to a request from Glasgow Trades Council and Burgh Labour Party.
- ¹²⁹ [MLGR], G3335, GDSSSU. Glasgow North West Monthly Delegate Meeting 21 September 1941.
- ¹³⁰ [MLGR], G3335 19th October 1941 meeting.
- ¹³¹ . [MLGR] ,G3335, GDSSSU 4 January 1942.meeting
- ¹³² [MLGR], G3335, GDSSSU Management Committee meeting, 12 November 1942
- ¹³³ [MLGR] G3335, GDSSSU , minutes from 5th June 1941, ILP Shettleston and 14th August 1941, Partick ILP both requesting speakers.
- ¹³⁴ [MLGR]. G3335 , GDSSSU AGM 12th April 1942 minutes
- ¹³⁵ [MLGR] G3335 , GDSSSU Delegate meeting 14 April 1957 - they visited the Knightswood and Nitshill branches.
- ¹³⁶ [MLGR]. G3335, GDSSSU Minute Book Session Starting 1950-53 College House and Lansdowne Crescent. AGM 30 April 1950 states: 'Most schools are handing in consistently steady reports of attendances and work attained during the season' p.2
- ¹³⁷ GDSSSU Minute Book Session Starting 1950-53 *ibid* p.6
- ¹³⁸ [MLGR], G3335, GDSSSU meeting 17th September 1950
- ¹³⁹ [MLGR], G3335, GDSSSU Management Committee 14 December 1950 p.36
- ¹⁴⁰ [MLGR]. G3335, GDSSSU Management Committee meeting 15th February 1951, the woman was Marion Robertson. p.54
- ¹⁴¹ [MLGR], G3335, GDSSSU meeting 20 May 1951 p.80
- ¹⁴² [MLGR]. G3335, GDSSSU meeting 23 August 1951 p.89
- ¹⁴³ [MLGR], G3335, GDSSSU meeting 20 January 1952 p.117
- ¹⁴⁴ [MLGR], G3335, GDSSSU meeting 16 February 1952 p.125
- ¹⁴⁵ [MLGR], G3335, GDSSSU 20 April 1952 p.140
- ¹⁴⁶ [MLGR], G3335, GDSSSU Management Committee 13 November 1952 p. 177
- ¹⁴⁷ [MLGR], G3335, GDSSSU Management Committee 22 April 1954
- ¹⁴⁸ [MLGR], G3335, GDSSSU Management Committee 12 April 1956
- ¹⁴⁹ [MLGR]. G3335, GDSSSU Delegate meeting 22 April 1956
- ¹⁵⁰ [MLGR], G3335, GDSSSU Management Committee meeting 17 January 1957
- ¹⁵¹ [MLGR], G3335, GDSSSU minutes October 1955-October 1958. Minutes of Delegate meeting Sunday 15th December 1957. Visits from YCL Choir to Pollok, Springburn and Knightswood.

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- ¹⁵⁷ [MLGR]. G3335, GDSSSU Management Committee 17 October 1957
- ¹⁵³ [MLGR]. G3335, GDSSSU Delegate meeting 20 February 1957
- ¹⁵⁴ [MLGR]. G3335, GDSSSU Delegate meeting 16 September 1956
- ¹⁵⁵ [MLGR]. G3335, GDSSSU, Robert Smillie Centenary Booklet June 8 1957
- ¹⁵⁶ GCA/SRA .TD1399/1 . Essays and lectures given by Alfred Russell. p 29
- ¹⁵⁷ . [MLGR]. G3335, GDSSSU Govanhill Socialist Sunday School Juvenile Roll Book 1940-55 session 1951-52
- ¹⁵⁸ *Ibid*
- ¹⁵⁹ *Ibid*
- ¹⁶⁰ *The Young Socialist* Vol. XXI, October 1921, No.10, the sub-editor remarks that having read in *Communist* about the YCL, it was only doing what the Socialist Sunday School already did. p.12
- ¹⁶¹ Reid 'Socialist Sunday Schools in Britain 1892-1939' *International Review of Social History* p.39
- ¹⁶² *Ibid* p.43
- ¹⁶³ GCA/SRA . TD1399/2. . Essays and lectures given by Alfred Russell .paper read at Glasgow Educational meeting of the Socialist Sunday School 25 January 1920 : '...it has been stated that socialists are united only within the socialists' schools movement . but that does not really carry us very far...' p.225.
- ¹⁶⁴ GCA/SRA TD1399/2 . lecture given on 'International Heroes' to Springburn Socialist Sunday School 11 January 1920, Alfred Russell. p.p198-9
- ¹⁶⁵ *Ibid* lesson given on 'The Paris Commune' to Springburn on 14 and 21 March 1920 . p.207.

Chapter Three

The Experience of Women Activists in the Party Structure-1945-1960

The Party developed me, enormously so. I always found the Communist Party a great support and definitely it developed me otherwise I can't explain how I could have done the things... I mean you thought you were right and that what you were doing was trying to better the conditions of the working class whatever way you were.

That was the confidence you had...¹

There is a need to emphasise that the issue of gender and the women's role was not the primary reason offered by those women interviewed for getting actively involved. For most it was because the Communist Party seemed a stronger political body and the emphasis was on changing society en bloc. There was still the primary aim of fighting for socialism and that was seen as paramount. Therefore, although some might find limitations and be disappointed at their place, there seems to have been less made of the role of women in the Party, the issue of gender and a 'women's role', and more towards a collective, or what was perceived as being a collective, approach to the class struggle and building the Communist Party into the vanguard party in Britain. Collective activity among members was central to continuing active Party membership as was the unity of purpose among women in the branches from the 1940s to the beginning of the 1960s. It is the impact of this activity especially within the Party structure and the issues that were campaigned for among the population in the factories, working class organisations and communities, that is the main concern in this period. The experiences of women who joined the Party from 1920-44 are noticeably different from women who joined later. They were still of a generation dictated to by the social constraints that existed long before industrialisation in Scotland and the rural and religious influences which compounded their restriction. Of those women that joined after 1945 one might sub-divide them

into those who joined between 1945-60 and those who came in after 1960 as the Sixties brought pronounced social changes which affected young peoples environment and was reflected immediately in the YCL. Yet there were also the similarities of what women expected in a Communist Party and what role they actually played irrespective of the time of their involvement.²

Women who joined the Party were not deliberately confined to any one area of work by the Party leadership and depending on their circumstances they could decide whether or not they were content to play a role within the branch or whether they wanted to try and make a contribution within the Party's higher structures. Here there was a similarity to male Party members as not all communists wanted to be potential leaders or wanted to advance beyond the activity of the branches. Still, there do seem to have been more restrictions on women in the Party dictated by family life and domestic priorities and the limited awareness initially of advancing solutions to these problems among Party members themselves.

From 1945

During the Second World War the CP reached its peak in membership with 56,000³ in 1942 yet there was a steady decline from the end of the war and by June 1947 it was down to 38,579⁴ followed by a recovery to 40,616 members by 1949⁵. In Scotland the membership stood at 6,869 in 1946 with women accounting for 1,521⁶ which was 22% of the Scottish membership, a very slight increase in the year 1945-6 despite the decrease in employed women⁷. There was the advantage for the Party of being associated with the Soviet Union which was greeted positively by people for the first time, due in no small way to the recognition of the sacrifice in war of the Soviet Union and by the work carried out by communists in the localities and factories which did not always reflect the national policy of the Party.⁸ With 158 Party branches and 54 factory and pit committees in Scotland there was a strong base which had been built up since the late 1930s and the reduction in unemployment⁹.

From the General Election of 1945 there was the anticipation of great changes from the incoming Labour Government whose large victory was an expression of support for measures that would hopefully leave the poverty of the

Thirties and the horrors of the war behind. The Communist Party also shared in this enthusiasm but soon realised that the reforms that were being put through were not going to change society fundamentally towards socialism, the argument being that the radical changes merely strengthened capitalism through restructuring the economy. This analysis soon threw up in Party literature the call for a more democratic nationalisation and a greater redistribution in wealth, a call which was noticeably allied to an emphasis upon recognising the role that Parliament was to play in achieving this aim.

Consequently the new CP manifesto *The British Road to Socialism* published in 1951 stressed the need for socialist nationalisation of the major industries¹⁰ as a contrast to the limited influence workers representatives had in the public sector. The aim was still avowedly to get rid of capitalism but with an emphasis on changes through Parliament and alliances with the working class playing the leading role. It was also an indication of the effects of the Cold War that the Party's anti-US attitude now extolled some of the possibilities within the structure of the British state as a means of fighting for a British identity against a perceived invasion of American influence and culture. Rather than just being the announcement of the Party's belief in a common cause with other classes, *The British Road to Socialism* may also be seen as the policy the Soviet Union needed, stressing the possibilities from its affiliate parties within old established institutions, in order to fight off the most virulently hostile aspects of Cold War propaganda against the Eastern Bloc. It was also a means of countering the American military presence in Britain by stressing that it was fighting for the restoration of Parliaments' control of financial, economic and military affairs.¹¹

Whatever its merits or faults the 1951 edition, which was reprinted six times and sold 200,000 copies¹² in Britain, was a well presented and articulate document which could not be easily dismissed by critics on the left. Likewise, from 1945, the Scottish District came out with a radical economic programme for Scotland which emphasised the state of the traditional industries and the need for greater investment and public ownership. It was stated that in war work employment '...in many cases has meant improvements in conditions, and the issue of equal pay for equal work

comes sharply to the fore ...¹³ a call for a measure that had been brought to the forefront of trade union activity during the war¹⁴. It was a measure that the Party continually reiterated¹⁵ after the war, included in its programme *The Socialist Road for Britain* in 1949¹⁶ and would fight strongly for over the next four decades.

Scottish Party policy on the Scottish economy had developed from an optimistic outlook which declared 'never before in the history of Scotland has a more hopeful period opened in front of the Scottish people as a whole'¹⁷ and a programme of demands after Labour's 1945 election victory¹⁸ to a more developed critique in the late 1940s with the publication of John Gollan's book *Scottish Prospect*.¹⁹ Gollan reiterated the problem of over-reliance on heavy capital goods industries and the lack of new light industries²⁰, and provided a most detailed breakdown of the state of industries in Scotland and measures that were needed to diversify and improve productivity with more workers participation. Critical of the Labour government²¹, Gollan saw a need for a reform movement echoing those of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth century to achieve devolution.²² Momentum increased by 1949 with half a million people having signed the Scottish Covenant calling for more self-government and a Scottish Parliament²³ and from the 1950s there was greater emphasis from the Party in stressing the needs of the Scottish economy within a national political identity which were to be embodied in this institution.²⁴ This had been a long called for measure from the Party as well as the Nationalists on the fringe.²⁵

There was also a need of 'a voice for women and young people'²⁶ and for a Scottish Parliament to have a women's committee²⁷, proof that the Party was taking on the issue of women. In its submission to the Royal Commission, the Scottish Committee of the Communist Party stated that more than 70,000 men and women were out of work²⁸, that there was annual emigration of 20,000 men and women each year and that the 'dread disease' of tuberculosis was responsible for a high death rate especially among women²⁹. Suggested solutions to these problems were a 40 hour week, more holidays with full pay and, as stated, equal pay for equal work which 'would be the rule throughout industry and the professions.'³⁰

From the evidence of the new programme and the radical reforms which it now forwarded, if the Party accepted constitutional procedure and was no longer overtly calling for revolution, it was still raising demands and pressing for policies that were strongly socialist. These had been strenuously worked out and argued for in the Party with a noticeable maturity in its approach to specific economic issues. This was not necessarily the Scottish District supplanting nationalism for socialism, the call was for men and women to fight for better conditions and for a Britain where '...the bosses will be swept aside and the workers will take control'.³¹ Over the next thirty years the Party would strengthen its calls for setting up a Scottish Parliament and during the 1950s it would be the Scottish NUM led by Abe Moffat that would get this demand adopted by the Scottish Trades Union Congress. There was also however a period where not all were excited by the issue of devolution.

The Cold War

The late 1940s also saw the evaporation of any sympathy with the Soviet Union by Western governments as the divisions in Europe were confirmed by the pro-Soviet governments in Eastern Europe, and those in the rest of Western Europe supported by the United States through Marshall Aid and the political policy of the Truman Doctrine. The Communist Party saw the latter as relinquishing independence to American foreign policy.³²

The Cold War in Scotland did not see the surfacing of mass incidents of violence and intimidation towards communists as had occurred elsewhere, such as with McCarthyism in the USA and the 'murdered'³³ Rosenbergs, but violence and potentially antagonistic situations were not uncommon. The press gave plenty of examples of what were perceived to be communist intolerance or aggression. An example was the Soviet brides, women in the Soviet Union who had married British servicemen but were not allowed to leave and come to Britain. There was also an incident in 1949 involving the British Navy and the newly formed People's Republic of China. Inevitably this affected all aspects of Party work such as candidates campaigning in local council campaigns such as in Aberdeen:

...at the time that I stood as a candidate there was considerable anti-Communist feeling because the *Amethyst* warship had been attacked by the Chinese, I think on the Yangtze River , and so there was considerable animosity towards me from various people. One man , sort of ex-colonial type who came to a meeting, challenged me on the issue of the *Amethyst* and said did I not feel ashamed to be standing there as a communist candidate when brave British sailors had been killed by communist action, and I said that this was something outside my control, it was an international incident and that I also felt for the families of these men , whereupon he doubted my sincerity and marched out of the hall. But I don't think he impressed the people who were concerned about the rents and this was the real issue and nae the *Amethyst*, people thought that was very remote from them at that time.³⁴

Disruption of meetings did occur, as well as the attempt by some authorities to ban communists from renting public halls such as in Glasgow.

In 1949 a deputation from the Glasgow Committee of the Communist Party lobbied the Magistrates Committee and argued for the use of public halls for Sunday public meetings³⁵ but still faced a ban. This was after being refused applications for a licence and having to take recourse to legal action. The Party was refused a licence in December 1949 and CP women had led a protest with sandwich boards at the time.³⁶ A similar situation rose again in 1951 when the Party accused the magistrates of acting in a political manner.³⁷ The change in the council's attitude towards the Communist Party had occurred since the District Council elections in 1949 which had seen the Labour Party just retaining its dominance with a majority of one over the other parties³⁸, the most numerous of whom were the Progressives (who were really Conservatives). They were virulent anti-Communists and with the two votes of the ex-officio, unelected, Dean of Guild and the Deacon Convenor they elected a non-Labour Party Lord Provost.³⁹ In July 1950 , the Lord Provost hosted a meeting to institute the Scottish Society for Friendship with the Spanish People which called

for full diplomatic recognition of the regime though it stated it was non-political. There was a representative from the Spanish embassy present, businessmen, Progressive councillors and also the Labour MP's Alice Cullen (for the Gorbals) and John McGovern (Shettleston) and Labour councillor Mary McAllister present (yet another example of the diversity of social democracy at that time).⁴⁰ Outside there was a demonstration mostly of communists who picketed the meeting with 'Franco's Friends' on their placards. In Edinburgh the Trades Council banned the Communist Party from participating in May day⁴¹ and even areas like Clydebank also suffered hostility:

...I remember Jimmy Paterson, we had a thing that you put up and stood up on it and you spoke to the people, and Jimmy and we were gathered all around about but him but *oh my god* we got *stoned*, oh aye that was at the end of Livingstone Street. Aye we did and at that time they broke the windows in the Party office a few times as well, threw bricks through. Now that's in spite of the fact that the communist's worked very hard on behalf of the people...⁴²

The most celebrated casualty of the Party in Scotland at this time was Willie Gallacher who had been a Communist MP since 1935 and who lost his West Fife seat in the General Election of 1950.⁴³ In July the CP was kicked out of the National Covenant Committee on which it had been represented.⁴⁴

This all occurred as the war in Korea was developing, caused, in the Party's analysis, by a breach of the peace by American imperialism.⁴⁵ Yet it also shows the cohesiveness and a certain amount of respect for the Party's thirty years of activity in Scotland that the most permanent effects of this period were measures by the Labour Party and trade unions at British level to disenfranchise communists from holding office in certain unions. The ability for the Party to ride the storm of establishment opposition and intimidatory measures in this period may have something to do with its everyday basic work carried out by members and its influence in several areas such as the unions, mostly engineering, shipbuilding and the NUM, and some

communities. Certainly it was proud that its members immediately attempted to give a political explanation for events and when war did break out was visible at parades and with “Hands Off Korea” resolutions which in Scotland were commended as a good counter-attack to the public’s perception of the war.⁴⁶ But despite the solid efforts even these could not stop a certain amount of isolation, such as the ban imposed on the British Peace Committee by the STUC.⁴⁷ The Committee was also banned from using public halls in Glasgow along with the CP (and the magistrates refused to even give an explanation that year).⁴⁸ More seriously for the Scottish District of the Party, the STUC disaffiliated Glasgow Trades Council in 1951 for going against Congress policy and wound it up the following year for supporting (by a majority of 134) the call for a Five Power Peace Pact.⁴⁹ As part of the World Peace Congress the British Peace Committee involved many Party members who campaigned for the World Peace Council’s proposal for a Five-Power Peace Pact⁵⁰ (and helped gain one and a quarter million signatures) and the Stockholm Peace Appeal for the banning of the atom bomb⁵¹ which achieved 1,300,000⁵². The issue of peace would be an integral part of many Party women’s involvement⁵³ including CND in later years.

If there were defeats and isolation to a degree in the STUC and the unions, where the TGWU imposed a ban on communists during this period⁵⁴, at least there was always the CP’s strength in the Scottish NUM. The NUM conference, whose Executive Committee comprised of ten CP and ten Labour Party members⁵⁵ condemned these anti-Communist measures and retained a strong Party influenced left-wing which tried to counter the right-wing in the STUC.

The Young Communist League

The YCL instilled a spirit of comradeship that had followed on from other youth organisations though by now, in the 1940s, the political activity was more intense and there was less naiveté about the tasks ahead. The days of rambles and socialising were still important but would be overtaken by emphasising the need to build the YCL into a politicised mass youth body. Young Communists were also aware of the work the Party did in numerous areas as well as campaigning on issues

such as support for the Soviet Union and for liberation movements which the youth would learn more about from the 1950s. But the cohesiveness of the earlier youth organisations and the communal activities that had been a part of youth social life continued and were still central though a foretaste of what to expect in the branches was the emphasis on education which was an important part of the YCL curriculum.

It was at Marxist classes, we attended classes, it was expected of us that we should attend Marxist classes and day schools and weekend schools even, where as I say all these lecturers came and spoke to us. But in Govan YCL we didn't restrict ourselves to Marxists, we even had the Moderator of the Church of Scotland addressing us at one point and he went to the Assembly a couple of weeks later and told them that he was quite hopeful because the communists were turning to God (*laughs*). We had all sorts of people who came and spoke to us.⁵⁶

YCL branches were also involved in the traditional marches and activities of the labour movement such as the annual May day marches. The Party always tried to have organised and well presented sections especially on the largest march , in Glasgow, where contingents converged onto the main march from all over the city.⁵⁷ The end of the war signalled optimistic expectations for members of the Young Communist League which, like the Party, gained new members. Even if there was not a move towards socialism from the Labour Government there was a major reform programme and there were better employment prospects and therefore a potentially stronger movement from which to build.

But there were always problems with the YCL in that its membership never really took off , even within the limited expectations of the Party. The YCL Scottish District could boast , along with Lancashire and London , of high sales of special issues of *Challenge* and in 1948 weekly sales were 12,500. There was a British membership of 2,000 which was up 25%⁵⁸ and this reached 3,543 in 1949.⁵⁹ But there were criticisms that not enough priority was being given to building up the organisation⁶⁰ and by 1952 there were only 673 YCL members in Scotland. This

was up from the 481 of 1950⁶¹, but it was still hard to recruit and sales of *Challenge* were low.⁶² Within the YCL there was a similar structure to that of the Party with committees at area and district level. This is where some women developed their political skills, through regular attendance and getting the League involved in broad based social campaigns.

You were always expected to work hard in the movement if you were on the Glasgow Committee or Scottish Committee of the League and we used to discuss politics, the political situation. The first item on the agenda was the political situation and each one of us took it in turn to introduce each week the political report which was then discussed among all the committee. And we planned events and campaigns and I mean the YCL were the people that were involved in getting the football pitches at Glasgow Green, we were the people that started the campaign and it gathered momentum. Unfortunately all our campaigns didn't gather the same momentum (*laughs*)...⁶³

From the late forties and up to the mid-fifties, what the Party at British level could not foresee was that children's and youth organisations by keeping their traditional characteristics would not be as appealing as they had been. Youth from the ages of fourteen to twenty-one were no longer immediately living the perceived adult life of marriage and a family as more opportunities in employment and better wages, education and lifestyle slowly opened up the generation gap and led to new and freer social activities.

The strength of the Communist Party in Scotland during the 1950s and 1960s, and any stabilising of membership that occurred, cannot but partly be attributed to the better economic circumstances that existed in the post-war period. Also for members, internationally, compared to the situation faced in Europe in the thirties, there was greater confidence for the prospects of positive change with the growth of the non-aligned movement and more countries with links with the Soviet Union.

Particularly stimulating could be meeting people from British colonies who were fighting for independence, and who introduced an alternative perspective.

...he was a doctor on the ward and at night we'd go out for a walk at nine o'clock when I'd finished. And there were new housing schemes in Edinburgh, big new housing schemes built and he says 'If Egyptian workers had houses like this they'd think they had socialism' and the other thing I can remember, he talked about the Soviet Union and his father was very influenced by the Soviet Union. His father was obviously quite a large landowner, grew cotton, and the old man had been to the Soviet Union and had been very impressed by what he saw there. I think what we used to call the Third World then was looking, they looked to Russia that had been also a very backward country and I think that they thought that there was a possibility of going forward that way.⁶⁴

There was a small but active YCL in Edinburgh and also a diverse and growing Student Branch that attracted teenagers in the early 1960s and offered the contrasts of different nationalities' experience. Although more diverse than the experience of Party members in the other major cities; the cosmopolitanism that university life offered and the influence of anti-colonial and socialist politics, strengthened political belief. This was in an alternative manner to that of large industrial working class branches in the other areas on the east coast such as Dundee and the mining towns in Fife and Lothian.

Culture

There was one area where the YCL did become influential in Scotland and where the Party established some influence. Culturally there was the YCL Choir founded in 1945, which was conducted by Jimmy Callan and travelled widely throughout Britain and Europe entering competitions and singing at international events such as socialist festivals, youth festivals and at folk and cultural gatherings. However most of its

activity was spent doing regular concerts in Glasgow and Scotland singing at trade union branches, in factories to night-shift workers and Socialist Sunday Schools.⁶⁵

Sometimes we had the YCL choir singing or one of the things the YCL choir did was Burns' *Jolly Beggars* and sometimes we would put that on which was very popular, it was more like a little play rather than just singing. One time I remember we had six meetings one after the other in cinemas all over Glasgow...I think it was three Sunday nights in succession, and we had two meetings in each, the Coliseum, the Regal in Sauchiehall Street, the Plaza in Govan, big cinema in Clydebank, this went on and these cinemas were full and anyone knowing a Glasgow cinema knows what that means, its hundreds of people and yet we could fill these places.⁶⁶

The choir was integral to Party activity with its members giving concerts in towns and villages at weekends where the YCL and the Party had been active during the day with propaganda work and street meetings⁶⁷. Naturally the composition of the choir changed with members, not all in the YCL or the Party, leaving and joining but it was a proud Party institution, with its own constitution⁶⁸, and one that made its mark and was well appreciated for its musical ability. The choir went on to greater recognition during the 1950s when it won first place at various festivals and initially faced some hostility from the establishment during the Cold War when the BBC insisted that left-wing organisations changed their names⁶⁹:

...the choir had been very successful in local festivals here, and they started an elimination to see who would represent Scotland and the night we sang everyone in the hall, because of their applause, were quite convinced that we had won but when the adjudicators announced the winners another choir were announced as winners, so it meant that we didn't get but then that was understandable because they couldn't allow a Communist Party organisation to represent Scotland in the Festival of Britain. Anyone who

won the Glasgow Festival was broadcast - any choir/singer could get a broadcast and we applied to be broadcasted and they said yes they would broadcast the choir if we changed our name, so we said 'no' we couldn't do that so they said 'well we're sorry , we can't let you broadcast' . .⁷⁰

The National Cultural Committee of the Party sought to countenance the effect of American hostility and mass produced entertainment which it saw as undermining and cheapening indigenous culture⁷¹. As far as being a cultural asset and a great body for countering media hostility to communist politics the YCL Choir more than made up for some of the deficiencies of the youth organisation. During the 1950s it became the Party's best known institution with its wide repertoire from around the world , including songs from the communist bloc.⁷² The choir's contribution , which was to raise the 'political consciousness of young people through Cultural Heritage'⁷³, was recognised by the Scottish Party leadership which stated in 1953: '...we cannot adequately express our appreciation for the very big contribution made by the YCL Choir to the work of the League and the Party...'.⁷⁴ Callan's contribution was again recognised but also contributory to its success were Jim and Isobel Service who were an integral part of the choir's set up.

One of the most memorable appearances the choir made was at the Bi-centenary celebrations of the birth of Robert Burns held on January 25th 1959 at St. Andrew's Hall in Glasgow. Over three thousand people attended, with hundreds unable to get into what was probably the most successful single cultural concert put on by the Party in Scotland. It involved singing, theatre and speeches from Party members and sympathetic artists.

Branch Education.

In order to retain members it was essential for the Party to start its education at a basic level in the branches and then to offer an advanced level for those who were seen as leading members; the cadre. This group was identified as numbering between 700-1,000 in Scotland in 1948⁷⁵, about ten to fifteen per cent of the membership. Education was central to advancing members' confidence and a belief

in the Party's policies as well as the wider theories of Marxism which many knew of but few had developed before they came into the Party. Party tutors regularly lectured to the branches:

...Willie Joss and Aitken Ferguson used to come down here on a Sunday morning and Dan always said 'You'd better go and you'll learn something' And I would go to the meeting and it would be a lecture on topical things that were happening, Willie Joss and Aitken Ferguson and other people in the Party as well but those were my two main [favourites]. I can always remember Aitken Ferguson, his different shades of grey (*laughs*), not black and white but two shades of grey in the political scene, Willie Joss was a marvellous man...⁷⁶

Aitken Ferguson had been a member of the Socialist Labour Party and was active in it along with Peter Kerrigan and Dan O'Hare and they had socialised as a group. Bill Joss had been educating Party members since the 1920s around Scotland and was one of its most established and popular Party tutors⁷⁷, a role he continued until his death in the 1960s. One can see a continuation in the importance of education from the children's organisations and the old parties that made up the CPGB and also the importance that education had played in the Scottish Labour movement from the days of John Maclean and the establishment of the Scottish Labour Colleges. The Party was conscious of the lack of theory in the labour movement and saw this as one reason for the continuance of reactionary ideas. The education that members usually received comprised of the basic theories of Marxism; dialectical materialism and political economy, the history of the British labour movement, and the more contemporary works that were part of the international communist movement, usually works by Stalin or the Soviet Party's official publications

...there was a book issued by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union called *A Short History of the CPSU* which everybody bought and of course there was chapters on it on dialectical materialism and historical

materialism and , well you know that was an education , I mean I had no idea, you've got to understand our level of education. I hadn't heard of anything like that, even in the Branch. Although we were always having education classes to try and help you, but that book was like a bible, it really was. I used to lie in bed and read it every night, it explained things, up until then I had went against religion you know but that explained. It explained how what you might call evolution - I had never heard of anything like that and this book explained it all and it was really wonderful...

The materialist conception of history was the heart of Marxist theory and by reading the briefer and more popular works such as *The Communist Manifesto* and *The Origin of the Family ,Private Property and the State*, members learned the very basis of revolutionary theory. The Communist Party also had works written by Emile Burns and Maurice Cornforth among others which made Marxism more accessible before the harder works were tackled and showed that there was an indigenous group of Party theorists who could simplify and popularise Marxism for education in the Party. In the late 1940s Gallacher's *The Case for Communism* published by Penguin Books sold 100,000 copies of which 65,000 were handled by the Party bookshops.⁷⁸

It was the teaching of the dialectical process that convinced members fundamentally of the truth of their cause and gave them some confidence to understand the processes involved in their lives , the economic bases of systems and a premise for arguing against and rejecting religion:

Because you thought it was based on a material conception of life , that all life had sprung from some sort o' material , you nae longer believed in any sort of idealist conception o' mankind , so therefore it gave you this firm belief that because man had developed fae that stage and life had developed fae the amoeba stage probably, that inevitably there was this sort of progression of mankind and that inevitably, or so you

thought at the time, it would lead to a better life and a more developed form of humanity...all these sort of things seemed to flow fae this conception of man's development and therefore it didnae *replace* religion but it gave you the same sort of structure that people and religious faith must have.⁷⁹

Not all women (or men) wanted to go into depth on a theoretical level and one must emphasise the main priority for most Party women who were not in full-time paid work was action around issues in their areas and having as much personal contact with people as they could. But education existed at all levels , branch, weekend schools and even week long schools for cadres, and there was a wide range. For those not involved in a trade union branch or not used to public speaking there could be a reticence and lack of confidence in meetings:

Well at first I used to not even speak at branch meetings and then I used to sit and think somebody was saying - it wasnae just right. And I said 'if I'm wrong they'll sort me out, I'll say what I think' and I did that and in our Cambuslang Branch earlier on we had Mick McGahey, you know who became a miners leader, he was just a young man but he was doing a man's job down a pit and was very good. He encouraged the women, he'd say 'What is the women folk thinking about this?' In the branch he encouraged us to say what we thought too.⁸⁰

Literature was to be organised by a team at District and branch level headed by the Propaganda Secretary⁸¹, a term later changed, and a Central Literature Commission at British level met monthly to direct work in the Districts.⁸² Each branch was expected to have a Literature Secretary and the selling of literature on stalls and in street sales was encouraged. Education at all levels was guided by a national education syllabus that was continually renewed and included detailed papers with explanations of the Partys' policies and later *The British Road to Socialism* which tutors would relate to branches. The Party produced *Marxist Study Themes*: a series

on various issues including a six part study theme on *The British Road* with booklets such as *The British State* which detailed aspects of the programme with contemporary examples⁸³ explaining it in greater depth to members. There was a list of approved speakers that was kept and updated by the District Committee and approved tutors were available to go to the branches:

I think the main membership, they took it very well, I never heard anyone say we shouldn't have it because I think we felt at that time that Marxism was our Bible and that we had to learn as much as we could about Marxism so that we could explain to people just exactly what political economy meant, what dialectical materialism meant, incidentally I don't know that I ever learned very much about dialectical materialism (*laughs*) but I got to know the basis of it and you were able to argue with people about how capitalism was on the wrong lines...⁸⁴

Inevitably the deeper theoretical works could seem complicated but were essential in widening members understanding of how capitalism operated and the eventual inevitability of socialism. Once the prose was conquered, the works of other major figures were more accessible to members:

It gave me an understanding of what Marx was actually getting at and showing how the problems of the world could be solved by economics. Some of it was over my head and it still is, I mean economics : I'm just inclined to shut off, somebody's throwing a lot of facts and figures at me. But on the whole I did find it, and particularly Lenin, I found he helped me a lot. *Lenin on Ireland* and *Lenin on Women*, those books.⁸⁵

For women who wished to develop their Marxist education or concentrate on subjects there would be the opportunity of attending schools and devoting (or sacrificing!) more time to activity within the Party's structures. Some were encouraged even though the time and effort might have meant greater inconvenience

in the domestic sphere. There was also the human element, the shyness and feeling of being intimidated by deep political tracts and the very genuine fear of presenting oneself in public⁸⁶:

I always shook like a *leaf* before I decided to speak but I always had something I wanted to say, some question I wanted to ask or something. So it was a very difficult to get the confidence to speak but I always felt I ought to.⁸⁷

Where the theory did seem to be accepted and even enjoyed was when it was presented in the environment of a residential weekend school in a place away from the branch where women could feel confident together and felt less inhibited. What could put members off and what they were not always prepared for was having to face criticism from national tutors. The positive side to the residential schools was that members met in what was a more informal atmosphere, either at schools for women specifically or for the Party cadre. Here they could learn at a better pace than time allowed at branch level when work and practical political activities did not afford the time to study deeply. Members knew what to expect and a greater camaraderie often emerged:

...we went to one doon in Hastings and I must say I thoroughly enjoyed it and was very instrumental in one of the young women who were there who was very reticent and didnae mix and I was the one who broke the mould and before we were finished she was taking part in the discussion and I was her buddy, I had that kind of nature that I could break down reserve with people maybe my experience in some of the other things I'd gone to for the Party made me feel that I wouldnae allow anybody to be as isolated as I was you know, see I went to a Party school one time and although the tutor felt, he had a wee talk with me after and he said to me he knew I would come on all right but I would really need to try and get myself more involved ...⁸⁸

The Party Branch , Campaigning and the *Daily Worker*

The Party branch was the main area of activity for nearly all women.⁸⁹ At its rudimentary level correspondence was read out and reports were given from the leadership in Scotland , including those from the Executive in London discussed at Scottish level, and from other committees within the Party. There was an awareness from the Party centre that not all members took an interest or knew about the operating role of the District and Executive Committees.⁹⁰ At local Branch level an executive committee would oversee the administrative running of the branch. This body would make sure that decisions were carried out between branch meetings and would then report back to members. This was to allow more important business to be discussed by the branch as well as developing a leadership at local level. Crucially it was here , at branch level , that the closeness and respect for other members was developed. This would be a most important element in insulating members from the fact they were in a small Party with a lot of work to do to make any impact and who , at times, faced suspicion and hostility.

Much of the emphasis of the branch was promoting the Party by selling the *Daily Worker* and running Bazaars for the paper. Additional fund-raising was a central feature for raising the money which , along with the laborious task of collecting dues, the full-time organisers depended on for their income and which went to paying the cost of premises and publications:

...oh the *Daily Worker*, we fought hard for the *Daily Worker*. We used to go out every weekend round with the *Daily Worker* and I remember there was a special push on one weekend and John and I , we stood at the foot of Kilbowie Road, one at each side and we won the prize for the whole of Britain for selling the most *Daily Workers* at a particular time which maybe it is not a great deal but...⁹¹

In Cowdenbeath the Party branch met weekly. There had been a tradition of selling Party publications and producing local papers for the pits before the arrival of the

Daily Worker in 1930. Later there was a Scottish edition of the paper and the Saturday edition covered the weekend affording the best opportunity outside of the workplace to push sales:

...the *Daily Worker* - we used to go out canvassing for the *Daily Worker* nearly every Saturday or we organised areas to sell the *Daily Worker* and we had members of the Party that went out on a regular Saturday round themselves with extra papers on a Saturday. 'Saturday readers' they got and you tried to get the 'Saturday reader' to become a daily reader and my father went out as a 'Saturday reader' with the papers until he was nearly eighty.⁹²

At the end of the war sales of the paper had reached 11,749 per day⁹³ and 12,463 a day in 1951⁹⁴ with increased sales around events and demonstrations. By 1955 the weekend sale was 7,600⁹⁵. Thereafter sales in Scotland began to decline and from then on it was increasingly hard keeping up to the previous years figure. In order to draw support from the wider movement, the People's Press Printing Society was formed in 1946 with 1,462 shareholders in Scotland by July.⁹⁶ For those active Party members there was the responsibility to keep up and to increase their sales of the paper. If a member established a round then it would become a daily or weekly exercise of picking up the papers and delivering them to supporters and if they could not be caught at the right time, some felt an obligation of paying for all the papers that they took:

...The one thing that was a problem though with the *Daily Worker* was you see you were always rather hesitant to tell people maybe they hadnae paid you the last week and that could go on and you had to pay and I didnae have a lot of money at that time...it wasnae that they were great *Daily Worker* readers but they were *Daily Worker* supporters but if they werenae in and you put it through the door and you went the

next week, they would only give you the money for the one and you hated to say to them 'I put it through your door last week'...⁹⁷

Although fund-raising was hugely important for the Party there seemed to be an over reliance on women members to do the most mundane, and as far as political results were concerned, the less rewarding tasks. The role of the Bazaars was discussed at District Conferences for women but in the forties and fifties the designating of roles was not heavily questioned and there was still a culture that was to be challenged:

I'll tell you what I most remember about Party work was one side of it was jumble sale and making money for the *Daily Worker* which involved you going on a Friday night to sort out the tables in this hall and then getting down there early on a Saturday and the men would come and help you *then* but it was basically the women's job. Although the men were there and they would help you up to a point it wasn't considered really an equal partnership. I think we were partly to blame in that the women would get on with it and get it done and get some money rather than have a stramash about it because the men *did* come...⁹⁸.

An immense amount of energy and organising went into the bazaars , it was not as if women played a secondary role of importance in the fund-raising but it was not at the forefront of the Party's political campaigning. Some women were not unaware of this pigeon-holing of their activity and that it could be taken for granted, as it was in the home. The question of fund-raising and the Bazaars is a fundamental one pertaining to the post-war era. This comes to the heart of criticism that grew and came to the fore in 1970s, that of the women's role:

Oh aye. Well of course, I think it's nae use blaming the men for this because women themselves saw themselves as the tea makers and the

providers, the knitwear at the bazaars and the baked things, because of women's traditional roles and because they can dae these things, it naturally follows that in these situations women did these things and it wasnae really a question of the men saying 'You're there to mak' the tea' , the women accepted that role.⁹⁹

For women who had less time to devote to Party activity due to family commitments and looking after children, which they invariably still did, baking or making items for the bazaars was a way of contributing and keeping in touch with the Party. This activity did not mean that women were any less politically developed¹⁰⁰ , it was essential for raising funds for the Party.

Although the local branch was where most women attended, there was always the problem for Party couples of prioritising who could go and who should stay at home if there were children. The importance that the Party gave to industrial work and the priority of workplace branches meant that many women who worked in the home might be relegated in practice by this order of importance:

The women were the minority because in a whole lot of areas like the mining areas, the women just didn't go to meetings. It was either them or their men and so the men were there. The men were just waiting on the women making their tea when they came in and that was the kind of relationship. Taking into account the kind of work that the men did: now Joe worked in the pit and we had to be up in the morning, about five o'clock or something he had to be there. So I was also involved with getting up with him and at the same time I was doing a whole lot of other things as well. It was a very hard life, a miner's life...¹⁰¹

In less industrial areas, areas where branches were often smaller, the women's presence was more notable. An example would be Aberdeen: 'there was people like Jean Lennox and of course her young daughter, she would be in the Party along with her brothers...and people like Mrs Lunan and there was quite a few women. Bob

Cooney's wife , Nan Cooney, quite a few women in the branch'¹⁰². But having been a part of the YCL where there was more equality in activity, there was a natural expectation of couples to carry on with their equal level of involvement in the Party in the same way :

...I was a member of the Committee in Govan Branch and when Kenneth was born I couldn't get out, I had to stay in the house...So I wrote a letter to our Branch Committee and said I wished a discussion on the situation. So one of the women was sent up to look after the baby while I went to have the discussion and the decision at last of the Committee was that they would co-opt me onto the Committee and one week Bill would come and the next week I would come, and the week I was there Bill would look after the baby (*laughs*) - that was my night out once a fortnight.¹⁰³

Women still found themselves in the domestic sphere because of the overwhelming culture that demanded they were to stay in the house. And yet the Party did introduce more mechanisms , such as the Women's Advisory and women's sections, to try encourage women to get involved and to campaign on what were seen as women's issues. This approach was primarily in order to forward a more forceful external impact on social issues rather than developing a critique of internal exigencies. Another consideration was for women who were working and were also trying to attend meetings:

We usually had a meeting every fortnight. I always attended them if my shifts were right, if I was on a late shift I couldn't but I attended them when I could. It was a very active branch at that time , the branch secretary was Bill Mackenzie who taught me a great deal and was a very fine person. He and his wife. There was quite a number in it at that time, there must have been about twenty members in it and Bill used to stand in the municipal election for one of the wards in Johnstone. He was a councillor for a number of years in Johnstone.¹⁰⁴

There was a recognition of the paramount importance of trade union and industrial work to the Party and the emphasis that this was given in the branches. The intensity of the industrial presence in households and communities, and the knowledge of relatives and friends work conditions meant that it was impossible to separate industrial work from family and Party life. Women in industry were afforded as much importance by the Party and more work-based people meant that the Party's influence on the shop-floor was potentially greater than ever. It was now benefiting from more favourable employment opportunities although there was little diversity from the traditional jobs opportunities of factory and office work. Yet such was the industrial culture that enveloped family life there was an understanding of the limitations this posed:

No, no that was life. My father, he went back to the yard when the war was on and went to work in the torpedo factory, he'd been away too long really in a way. For example, the hardship of his life, the terrible shifts that he worked but he had a job, my father was never unemployed and when my mother and father would go to Rent Tribunals, they were two people out of a street that was full of unemployed people and I knew then, and you kind of take it in by osmosis as I've said, that it was the employed who fought for the unemployed because when you're unemployed your morale goes...in every way. And therefore people would come to my mother and father's door with trouble all the time and the CP people were seen like that.¹⁰⁵

Correcting the imbalance

If non-industrial members in the branches deferred to the recognised importance of industrial activity, important steps *were* taken to organise and educate female members. The first advance in this area in Scotland was the setting up of a Women's Department in 1944.¹⁰⁶ This was run by Agnes Maxwell and then by Rhoda Fraser who was to have a profound effect on the nature of women's activity

in the Party over the next thirteen years and on that generation of communist women in Scotland. An inaugural conference was held in April 1944 with 109 delegates.¹⁰⁷ Women's sections were formed and in mining communities it was miners wives who made up most of the membership.¹⁰⁸

The emphasis on women's groups increased in the 1940s with continual encouragement of their growth and the development of the Scottish Women's Advisory Council (SWAC) at British and District level¹⁰⁹. Irrespective of the intent of individuals, the Party started to emphasise the need to organise and recruit women into the Party in a more positive and meaningful way than had been the case before. By 1947 the SWAC had regular meetings with representatives from nine Areas¹¹⁰, there were 40 women's sections operating and the first District women's school under its authority.¹¹¹ The success of this policy and the work of the SWAC can be seen by the 'considerable recruitment'¹¹² of women that occurred between 1947 and 1948 with an increase from 1,408 to 1,695, an increase of 20% and taking women up to 26%¹¹³ of the Scottish membership, an all time high. Sales of *Woman Today* published by the Party were 1,650 by November 1947¹¹⁴, at least theoretically suggesting nearly one copy bought per female member.

It was the resilience of women in the structure at its base, in the branches, and with help from some in the leadership, that resulted in an emphasis on encouraging their development towards a more politicised and organised contribution in the Party. As well as Fife, where women's sections were at one time more numerous, the Party had a presence among some of the mining villages in Lanarkshire. Prior to gaining more statutory rights and massively increased state services after the reforms of 1945, in certain areas the Communist Party was relied upon to help people with a variety of problems that were more social than political. Communists saw it as their job and duty to help people with the most basic of issues such as disputes with the authorities:

...we went back to the village that I was brought up in, Douglaswater, Riggside, and that was a very large branch...A hundred people in it and the activities that we got up to: there were a lot of things at that

particular time where individuals came about problems about housing, a lot of personal problems that people had with the establishment as it were , folk were having problems with what we called the 'Parish' at that time and [I] remember we dealt with a particular problem for somebody about the adoption of their daughter's illegitimate child and getting, before the adoption coming through, getting allowance for this child...¹¹⁵

Women , as an integral part of the branch, could win the trust and confidence of people and this is where the Party's strength in communities lay. It was also necessary to build up a base from where there was little membership or activity. This could be a hard task and a culture shock especially if ,through war-time displacement, one came from Britain's largest city and Party district to a non-industrial part of Scotland:

...You see the Communist Party in London was pretty big and very strong and on so many trade union branches and committees and things, the Communist Party was very *well known* at political activity and because of results they got they were respected. No, communists up in the Highlands was considered an absolute Russian , Bolshevik, oh no, not on. Not on. I not only had to compete against the fact that I was English, that I was a women, I was also a communist (*laughs*). Oh yes I got a lot of stick.¹¹⁶

The Area and City Committees.

The Area Committee covered the activities of local and industrial branches in a designated geographical area such as in Lanarkshire, Dunbartonshire or Fife. In the major cities there were City Committees. Delegates would be elected from branches and this gave women who had the confidence to speak at meetings , and whose ability had been noticed ,the opportunity to be elected:

You took part in discussion if you felt that you could make a contribution , I was never terribly intellectual but I was able to ask questions for clarification and I think I must have made a contribution because as a result of my work in the branch I was nominated to go on to the City Committee.¹¹⁷

It was the next step up in the structure of the Party from the branch and received reports from the Scottish Committee but was also slanted towards the more administrative tasks and those of its specific geographical location. It was still the starting level for future leaders and was the base from where full-timers for the area would forward the policies of the Party to go through the branches:

The Area Committee was a guiding arm if you might put it like that...And they would discuss the aims, the general aims of what we should be doing. For instance in the summer we would discuss a summer campaign and that was going out , a propaganda campaign, we would go out, how many meetings we would hold. That was one of the things that we tried to do and each branch had to then take it back to their own branch and discuss it and see how they could fit it in, what they could do. Then there was always a political statement to start with , always. The political statement would be given by the comrade who was on the Scottish Committee and he would bring the statement from the Scottish Committee who in turn would be getting it reported from the National Committee. So therefore it was a fairly direct line. But then there were a lot of local things....¹¹⁸

The Glasgow City Committee covered all the branches in the immediate city boundaries , industrial and local, who elected delegates to attend. Since the thirties it had been seen as a very cohesive body that worked closely with the membership in the local branches¹¹⁹ , an advantage due to having a full-time Secretary and a couple of Organisers which not all Area Committees had. It was the first step up to a level

where , despite the usual Party business on the agenda, there was more political discussion and a more comprehensive view of the Party's work could be gauged. There were city committees in Aberdeen, Dundee, and Edinburgh as well as Area Committee's where the Party had any semblance of strength. These committees were seen as the first step to advance for those who wanted to develop their leadership potential or devote their abilities to specialising on specific issues with a view to helping to formulate policy by being part of an Advisory Committee that would report to the Scottish Committee:

...There wasnae any use of just putting somebody to the City Committee who wasnae showing any progress in their branch because the City Committee helped the development of you from your own branch level, it helped you to develop as well because you heard other comrades , who were maybe much better than you were, discussing certain things and you could pick up from them. So I would say that it was a great educational basis for me and also was a basis where you learned how to conduct campaigns where you would go back to your branch and say 'I think we should try and do this that and the other thing' ...¹²⁰

The Scottish Committee and the Secretariat.

The level of debate at the Scottish Committee was very much higher with the more mundane activities being given second place to political debate. The reports of the National Committee (or the 'Executive') , which met monthly in London , were given priority and were discussed in depth. The Scottish Committee had delegates on it who were elected at Congress to give, theoretically, a balanced body which represented the Party's membership and base. The authority of the Party's hierarchy was enormous and the dedication and ability of many of its full time organisers attracted the respect of many members. Even if the individual was not liked , the role of the Organiser was seen as essential. Yet it would be wrong to see the Scottish

Committee as meeting just to endorse everything that came its way from the highest body of the British Party.

...but the debates were fairly fierce and there were people in the Party who didnae agree with everything that was there but they were listened to and if they could be corrected and were prepared to accept correction ...so that was always discussed and always was , it maybe wasnae agreed , we came to a kind of *fait accompli* if you can put it like that, that people were allowed , not to have an anti-Party point of view , don't get me wrong, but there was sections where people felt we werenae doing the right thing here and werenae doing the right thing there that maybe if you did it this other way we would make progress quicker.¹²¹

This is an important point. What is stressed here is the difference between voicing opposition openly in discussion and being anti-Party which suggested organising and arguing to the detriment of the Party , factions, and having another agenda thus ignoring majority decisions. What seems clear from some women's experiences, is that there was strong discussion which was genuinely allowed and it seems to have been far more a feature within the Party structure than hitherto was the accepted view. Also women who reached this level were treated as equals in what was a naturally elitist body, elected at Congress usually through the Recommended List. This was the Party leaderships preferred list of candidates from the full list of nominees to the National Committee or the District Committee.

The supreme body in the Scottish Party was the Secretariat, a group of around ten members from the Scottish Committee which was seen as the leadership body and ultimate authority of the Party in Scotland¹²². (It would later change its name to the Executive Committee in the Sixties.) As far as democracy was concerned, constitutionally the structure of the Party allowed branches to debate matters openly and to express their views to their local Area Committee or to the Scottish Committee.

Democratic Centralism

The system of organisation and accountability that the Party operated, and was embodied in the rules, was that of democratic centralism devised by Lenin. Its form had developed under conditions of great intimidation by the Tsarist authorities against nearly all opposition forces in Russia at the turn of the century. Greater class conflict in Russia from 1917 and the success of the Bolshevik Revolution was proof of the effectiveness of this form of organisation, despite the odds stacked against it - the success of the Party being its ability to convert all decisions of its hierarchical bodies into action. The ensuing Civil War had meant that the Bolsheviks had an even stronger disciplined and centralised party that was subordinate to the authority and actions of the leadership. Its effectiveness in sustaining the government in power throughout hostilities and which ensured survival of the revolution gave it even more validity.

Although circumstances were different in more industrially advanced European countries, the argument for operating democratic centralism was a universal one. It disciplined members, once internal debate and votes had been taken, to unite behind the final policies of the Party and to go out and fight as a collective for them. It would be hard to imagine the CPGB having a similar impact than it did in British labour history (that is a noticeable if limited one) had it not operated this system and so one has to see why there was an attraction to it. Within the Party there was internal debate from the branches to the higher committees and then the final endorsement of Congress on national matters:

I was unaware that it was undemocratic, let's put it like that. I always thought that we discussed things and came to a majority decision and thrashed it out and that was it and I didn't have any inhibitions about that. Some individuals, their personality was such that they came down like [a] hammer, you had to take that along with other people who weren't of that temperament. But we had always the facility of discussing things openly and taking a decision and that was it, and

everybody was committed to that decision. If you made a decision you were committed to it whether you liked it or not, if it was democratically decided. That was my experience.¹²³

There was little dissension among those interviewed from this period about its necessity and indeed its effectiveness and importance for Party members. The opportunity for local debate and decision making must be seen as critical or else there would have been little attraction in participating in branch life and any open discussion strengthened the resolve of members:

...all the Comrades who were involved in all the various aspects of the movement, the Co-operative, the trade union, the local authority, they all brought to that meeting their experiences and their problems and they were discussed and argued out in the position, the line was decided. For instance, if there was a member of the County Council and the District Council, he would come and talk about what the problems were in the district and the branch would decide what his line would be. Now, he would have a lot of influence on the decision obviously, but it would be the branch who would decide how he should proceed in particular.¹²⁴

In many respects the way local branches operated and the intimacy and trust between members at that level contrasted with the 'top down' approach of the structure in which members might have felt they had little or no control. One aspect was when the leadership put requirements on the membership or demanded sacrifices that the individual member felt obliged, or even flattered to carry out:

...we always had Communists on the Council in those days. Johnny Kane was a very popular Councillor and when he fell ill and wasn't able to continue, my brother Duncan was more or less directed by the Party to give up his work in the Trade Union which was really what he enjoyed doing and he accepted the discipline...He got elected and was very well

respected. That was the kind of thing that the Party took decisions on and we as Members went along with the decision whether we liked it or not. That was only one classic example of it because I noticed how much Duncan enjoyed working in the Trade Union movement.¹²⁵

It is this aspect of democratic centralism that could be unattractive and appear non-democratic. There were fears about the possibly adverse nature of the system which some found hard to accept or could not agree with:

...I felt that decisions were being taken and you didnae really ha' a discussion about these things, there was nae real ongoing discussions. We should have been forming decisions at branch level and local level which, in the end, like a consensus before we arrived at a decision. No, I didna agree with it, there was a whole lot of things I didna agree wi' in the Party...¹²⁶

The ordered and effective nature of democratic centralism was evident in the manner that the leadership, especially the Scottish Secretary and the full-time organisers on a daily basis, could direct members, branches, factory cells, to carry out instructions. Often there was not time for debate on all issues and much instruction could only be contested retrospectively. It may well be apposite to consider the adverse and permanent effect that could incur when requests were performed such as having to chair a public meeting with no experience:

...never having ever done anything like that before I was terrified and I think that tied my tongue up for the rest of my life , that *horrible* experience because Aberdour at that time was full of Tories who were sitting there in a horrible bunch, it was a horrible experience which I blame the Party for...I could have said no couldn't I? Yes but I didn't. I wasn't ready to do anything like that. You have to have some sort of

either flair for it or you have to be trained or you have to keep your mouth shut and keep out the road.¹²⁷

Major decisions either came from the National Executive in London or were taken at Scottish level by the Secretariat and disseminated to the Scottish Committee downwards. It was these bodies that were, however formally it was done, elected at congress by branch delegates.

Congresses

Every two years the Party held its Scottish Congress and this occurred the alternate year to the bi-annual British Congress, although extraordinary congresses might be called. Each branch devoted time to pre-congress discussion and there were Aggregate meetings to discuss major policy documents. The delegate composition of the congresses was inevitably weighted towards male skilled industrial workers and the majority of women delegates were usually housewives. But even if women were working they could suffer the prioritising of what were deemed more important sections in representing the branch:

...I was elected to go as a delegate to go to a national congress and my husband was drafted from Dundee to be the Organiser , he wasnae my husband then, I didn't know him, in Dunbartonshire and he looked at the list of delegates and he says, 'what is this woman doing on the list?', see. And I was working in a hospital at the time but I was a very active member, and he says 'what we need is industrial comrades' , see , 'we need industrial comrades' and there was a good branch but none of them would go so he got the committee to elect Joe Brown to go as a delegate and I got scrubbed. And of course Joe Brown never went.¹²⁸

This did change over the years. By 1957 , although the largest single section of women delegates were still housewives, the majority were in paid employment and this reflected the importance paid work increasingly had on the position of women in

the Party though they were in a disparity of professions¹²⁹ and lacked concentrated strength. This was unlike the majority of male delegates in this era who were employed skilled workers, naturally concentrated in blue-collar trade unions, who could make a more noticeable impact in union structures (if they were not banned) and on the shop-floor. For anyone going to congress there was the intensity of political debate to look forward to and if a delegate were chosen there was the apprehension, if not the fear, of having to get up and address ones peers:

Arnold Henderson was the Organiser at that time and Arnold took us down, he was like a hen with his chickens you know, you got looked after, Arnold looked after you all the way and Arnold of course says to me 'you'll have to make a contribution. Get your name down' I said '*God, I would die*', he said, '*Come on, you'll get your name down and you'll make a contribution, that is what you are here for, to let them know about Clydebank*' and I did it. I sat up the whole night in sweat and blood and tears trying to make a statement which I eventually had to do, but Arnold was pretty good.¹³⁰

It cannot only have been women delegates who were petrified at having to go to the podium. But as so many of the female delegates were usually housewives, especially in the first three decades of the Party, and not used to addressing large meetings let alone the largest delegate body, it was particularly hard. The nature of the congress, its procedure - with a variant of committees- and the need to fight for ones right to follow through resolutions or bring up points of order could seem complicated. Yet delegates had to learn how to operate the system within a few days:

No, I don't think I ever thought it was too formal, I feel when I look back that you could go in and argue for your point of view in the Committees and so on, so I saw it as a democratic institution because you could go to Congress and every delegate had the right to go and argue for their point of view, and if you didn't win your point of view in the Committees, you were

entitled to go and argue for it in rostrum, so to me, it was absolutely fully democratic and everyone had the same rights.¹³¹

As the highest body and the one event where there was guaranteed intense and often emotional debate. Even with the Party machinery controlling events precisely, it was hard to equal Congress. There was also a good social life with the chance to meet national Party figures, members of communist parties from around the world and contacts in unions and British organisations which the Party operated in. There were also the natural attempts to influence delegates in voting for the Executive Committee and the anticipation of results to committees which were not always a foregone conclusion, especially as delegates were often entrusted to make a decision on the spot. Thus to enhance the democratic process delegates were not mandated as 'if the branch were to mandate its delegate, what would be the use of discussion at Congress?'¹³²

Influences

Despite all the logical and calculated steps one may be able to trace to identify the path to political involvement of women in the Communist Party, it would be wrong to dismiss or relegate the importance of inspiration from individuals or through propaganda at local, Scottish and British level. Meetings and rallies were always used to impress individuals and draw them into the Party and regular rallies in Aberdeen, Dundee, Fife, and especially at St. Andrews Hall in Glasgow during the 1940s and 1950s are testimony to this. The aim of public meetings was to explain and win support for Party policy, enlarge the membership and commit the audience to future events.¹³³ To advertise meetings streets were chalked, as they were on other occasions such as the visit of speakers or political opponents. The aim was to fill the hall and make an impressive impact, which the Party did especially when there was a Scottish District rally or the visit of the General Secretary. Meticulous in its preparation for such events, the sequence and time allocated to speeches was strictly adhered to and strong chairing of major meetings essential.¹³⁴

Women active in the period from 1940-1956 still experienced the influence of the three great figures of the Communist Party of Great Britain. Harry Pollitt , 'universally acknowledged as the Party's outstanding leader'¹³⁵, found that the Communist Party met the level of personal commitment that he believed was necessary to achieve anything and was a continuation of the commitment to socialism he had shown in the BSP. His theoretical level did not compare to his inspirational oratory. However his grounding in the trade union movement, as a boilermaker, gave him credentials beyond question and there would remain even in his Communism the unmistakable imprint of the skilled worker'.¹³⁶ It was a characteristic by no means unique in the British CP though the strong discipline of that union made the demands of political discipline more palatable. Pollitt's passion and , in Party members and admirers' eyes, his basic forthrightness and honesty won him great respect and admiration:

I remember my mother and father sending us to see a friend to see was there anything on tonight and that would be the beginning of the war would be starting and I remember somebody doing a freethinking thing and I didn't want to go to that. People were good speakers , Harry Pollitt was probably the best speaker I ever heard in my life. I don't think there ever was or ever will be a mass orator the way that Pollitt was.¹³⁷

Of the older Party members there seems a consensus on Pollitt's skill to communicate with the audience and he continued the tradition of strong and impressionable public speaking, most noticeably at large rallies that were held in by the Party at St. Andrew's Hall in Glasgow. Up until the late 1950s public meetings were still the main medium for hearing political views.

There were also two other leaders also had the ability to inspire members. Willie Gallacher and J.R.Campbell were the two who supported Pollitt when he argued against the Comintern's new line over the war in 1939. J. R. Campbell seems a slightly forgotten leader in British Communist history. No major biography has

been written about him but his diligent work , voracious reading and analytical ability are still remembered by those who worked with him in Scotland.¹³⁸ Gallacher's grassroots history of activity and involvement on Clydeside with the Clyde Workers Committee already afforded recognition and his approach to speaking at large meetings was like that of a pugilist going for the kill with direct, hard-hitting speeches peppered with an often sarcastic wit. Anxious to get on his feet he could be a bit insensitive in curtailing the contribution of his juniors so eager was he to get to the audience. But Gallacher had a quick wit and was humorous in company to those who got to know him. He also dabbled in poetry but was no lost bard although his verse could be amusing and facetious.¹³⁹ To members Gallacher and Campbell no doubt added authenticity to the Party's historical link with Lenin and the Russian Revolution by being involved from the birth of the Communist Party in Britain and having travelled to the Soviet Union and meeting its leaders in its first few years of existence. These leaders were the link to international communism as at this time it was still rare that many members would have heard or met any of the major communist figures unless they had been to the Soviet Union or a major festival abroad. This undoubtedly added an aura to their authority. The regular closeness of the Party leaders to families throughout the country inevitably influenced some children who later joined the Party and were active from the Sixties:

...one of them bought my first dancing shoes. Willie always stayed with us when he was in Fife , even more so than Harry and they were totally opposites in some respects. Harry liked a drink but Willie would often argue the rights and wrongs of drinking. Gallacher of course recognised the importance of the participation of women and his success in becoming an MP in West Fife was due to the fact that he attended and addressed meetings of the Women's Guild. He spoke to them and to other sections where women were involved and he encouraged women to play a bigger role in attempting to build a socialist Britain.¹⁴⁰

It would be interesting to reflect on how the Party would have fared had they not had Pollitt and Gallacher, both of whom were staunch socialists before the Russian Revolution but whose lives were forever changed by it. If R. Palme Dutt's theoretical contribution and quite measured approach is seen as contrasting with Pollitt's instincts in the Party hierarchy, then Gallacher complimented Pollitt's campaigning among the Party membership:

Well the very first one I heard speaking in Rutherglen was J.R. Campbell. That's when I was in the YCL. And Willie Gallacher, he was smashing. Actually I felt I wasnae right because when I started to speak myself I was going to branches and giving a wee talk and I had to go to Willie Gallacher's branch in Paisley and Willie and his wife sitting looking at me , I thought ' What can I tell Willie Gallacher? because he's such a good speaker'. I think Willie Gallacher would stand out really. I heard Harry Pollitt. In fact at that election in the Gorbals I spoke for five minutes and Harry Pollitt was one of the speakers and I was proud to be able to sit alongside him.¹⁴¹

Rather than being intimidated by great speakers it was important that there were women who did get beyond branch life and devoted their lives to developing themselves within the Party and becoming 'cadres'. Equally it was important that women could be seen in the leadership as this inevitably encouraged others. Of those who achieved this there was the continued influence and encouragement of Party figures who were established at Scottish District level:

Kerrigan was one of my heroes and I think he returned the affection. The Party had rooms in the High Street at that time, a shop, and the Party had it's room away beyond the front of the shop and that's where Peter did his work. It was after I'd been to the Soviet Union, I came back and my mother died and I was very upset and Peter consoled me. I always thought Peter was so sincere and a real leader, he was always

intent on giving leadership to the working class and I had that right up till he died, I had a high regard for Peter Kerrigan, yes I did.¹⁴²

The paternalism of tutors and Party leaders seems to have been greeted positively. Pollitt, Gallacher and Campbell's overwhelming influence during this period show how little noticeable opposition there was to their leadership and the inspiration that their speeches at Party rallies imbued. The forties was their last decade of complete supremacy before the events of 1956 changed perceptions of the invincibility of Party leaders (though age was also a factor), the fifties being the fourth decade of their contribution to the CP.

Internationally one of the most popular and celebrated figures of the communist movement was Paul Robeson, the black American singer and actor who declared his communist politics at a time when people were being persecuted in the United States at the height of McCarthyism. He first gave a concert in Glasgow at the City Halls in 1938 arranged by Glasgow Trades Council where he met those involved in campaigning for the Spanish Republican government and also some people who had lost relatives who had volunteered.¹⁴³ Having been denied the right to travel at the onset of the Cold War, the Glasgow Trades Council supported him in his campaign to get his passport returned when it was withdrawn in the early 1950s. In 1956 a Committee was formed in Britain and twenty other countries to campaign for its return.¹⁴⁴ Robeson was articulate and well educated with a beautiful voice and a wide repertoire covering gospel, classical and popular music. There was a great reception for him when he finally returned to Glasgow:

...The St Andrew's Hall was packed and we just wouldn't let him go, he was singing on and on and he said look because of his voice he would have to stop but he would come back and he didn't care how many concerts he did as long as it didn't cost anyone more than a shilling to get in. So the Communist Party organised a series of concerts and he came back and sang...It was exciting times, I must say. He was some character...He changed the words to *Old Man River* and St Andrew's Hall's roof nearly blew off with the cheers.¹⁴⁵

After the St. Andrew's Hall concert, which ran over time without any complaints from the audience, some of whom had travelled far and had to walk home, Robeson went to a restaurant just off Buchanan Street in Glasgow where other Party members got to meet him.¹⁴⁶ Robeson made a few visits to Scotland performing and speaking at demonstrations.¹⁴⁷ He sang at the Glasgow May day in 1960 purposefully marching with the Communist contingent that day. He told the crowd of 10,000 at Queen's Park: 'There can be no question that we, the people, in the deepest sense, create the wealth. We are building a world in which we can live a rich and decent life and our children should enjoy it'.¹⁴⁸ He led the crowd with a rendition of 'Loch Lomond'. His visits made an indelible impression:

He was such a big man. And in St Andrew's Halls we were all lined up waiting to go on the platform to sing and we'd been so disappointed because he wasn't going to be able to hear us and the male voices in the choir had been practising *Swing Low Sweet Chariot*, they had been practising to sing to him and he wasn't going to be able to hear them and someone had told him and he came into the dressing room and the whole choir as a body *backed* against the back wall because he was such a presence, he just seemed to *fill* the room. But we were on the platform one of the concerts he gave and we were able to hear what he was saying. He was able to trace Negro spirituals back to the Gaelic singing in the Western Isles.¹⁴⁹

One woman who was seen as exceptional in her campaigning vigour and worked at the heart of the Party's structure in Scotland and, later, in the London headquarters was Margaret Hunter. She was born in 1922 in Bridgeton, Glasgow. Her father was a foundation member of the Communist Party and was involved in tenant's struggles, suffered unemployment and was an obvious influence on Margaret who was involved with the Young Pioneers in the Gorbals and joined the Young Communist League at fourteen.¹⁵⁰ She worked at Barr and Stroud

engineering company becoming convenor for the women in the factory and spoke regularly at lunchtime factory meetings including those during the war calling for a Second Front. She became a full-time secretary for the Party and worked in the Glasgow Office and was on the Glasgow Committee and became its Secretary. For her the forties and fifties were a period of intense Party organising and campaigning a lot of which was done in the Glasgow Office alongside Gordon McLennan, a full-time Organiser and later Scottish Secretary of the Communist Party. In the 1950s she became a Scottish Organiser for the Party and sat on the Secretariat:

...in some ways it was pre the women's movement and so women functioned in the Communist Party not any different, you just went after it, you could have been a man or a woman and that's the way I remember Margaret. But she used to take the schools, she was very active she was very able she was very articulate and very determined I mean she and Gordon had tremendous application and tremendous drive and they really grafted they could work incredibly hard and they did a tremendous amount of work, tremendous application.¹⁵¹

Reversing the usual married couple's priorities, Margaret Hunter successfully applied for the post of National Women's Organiser in 1964 despite the great reluctance of her and her husband to leave Scotland. As well as the arguments of the Scottish Party leadership it was her sense of obligation and admiration for the General Secretary John Gollan who specifically wanted her for the job, that influenced her decision.¹⁵² Prior to this she had no specific interest in women's issues. Once down in London she still stood in Glasgow at general elections and influenced women well into the 1960s¹⁵³:

...We used to go out wi' her in Gorbals, that was her constituency when she stood in the parliamentary elections. Oh a whole crowd of women would go out with her on a Sunday morning, that was the old Gorbals I'm talking about where you would go up the closes and

everything and Margaret would stand in the street and speak through the loudspeaker and we would go around selling literature.¹⁵⁴

Although remaining an influence well into the late 1960s and an influence to women throughout Britain, Margaret Hunter's contribution ended prematurely. Extreme ill health curtailed the expectations of a greater legacy and a continuing role in the leadership at British level, yet her achievement in having held important positions and having reached national prominence in the Party was an inspiration for present and future generations. Unlike Helen Crawford who earlier had achieved the same, Hunter was of a rank of women 'born into' the Party and who had progressed through it from an early age.

The Labour Party.

Although the Labour and Communist parties could work with each other at times (and this had been the case with the ILP during the Thirties) there was also some contempt for the Labour Party. Their commitment to radical change was thought to be extremely limited and the Party was seen to be complacent and too right-wing, the proof being for communists the example of the 1930s and the Labour Party's indolence over the Spanish Civil War and in fighting fascism even in Britain. Yet the Communist Party knew it was in their interest to build up a working relationship and this could best be done at elections where the Labour Party was the dominant Party of the left. But there was never a strong and permanent working relationship in Scotland and certainly no official policy of the Labour Party to encourage one even when approached.

...the Communist Party wanted to be affiliated to the Labour Party so we were not enamoured with a lot of the leadership, certainly not, and certain individuals within the local party you didn't have a lot of respect for but there were others, yes, that were fine people and we would have been very very happy to work with them ...¹⁵⁵

At British level all attempts by the Communist Party to achieve affiliation to the Labour Party were always convincingly defeated. Although this objective was seen as essential for the advance of the CP's policies, failure to win affiliation was a good indication of how weak the CP and Labour Party left-wing were in the structures of the labour movement. There was little need for the Labour Party to make overtures as it never faced any serious challenge to its electoral dominance from the Communist Party. Yet not all Labour candidates were hostile and members of both parties found themselves working together on various bodies in their communities, though not always agreeing. Geographically the CP could maintain a strength in certain areas, such as pit villages where it had a strong core of members and some influence:

...we were the political force , very much so and also at the main place of work. You see the pit there , Douglas Colliery, was very much a focus point as well for politics and the Communist Party, people didn't talk much about the Labour Party , no. I mean [the] Communist Party at that time were in the forefront o' any political struggle. The national campaign at that time , as I remember it , and my involvement , was the peace movement and getting our literature across and having meetings and being there to help people with any personal problems , that was a very important role that the Communist Party played for many decades.¹⁵⁶

Thus there was the anomaly compared to the Labour Party which dominated electorally the very constituency that the Communist Party was based in. In those rare areas where the Party was successful locally there was mass campaigning and traditional ways of getting people interested and involved in local issues in order to sustain the Party's presence on the councils. Such was the situation in the Vale of Leven:

...there was Dan [O'Hare] , there was Davie Mckim and Geordie Halkett, Hugh Macintyre, they were all communist councillors and Sam

McDonald was a District councillor, it was all quite a number of them here. Somebody always took the meeting at the fountain on a Friday night and all the council business was discussed and it became a thing that everybody came if there was anyone interested at all, they came to the fountain to see what was being said. It really was quite something that happened here that didn't probably happen anywhere else and it was all spread out and everybody knew about it because that was why there was so much activity locally.¹⁵⁷

There was no lack of encouraging women to stand as candidates as the Party needed people who were known for doing work in their communities if they were to make any impact. Despite council seats in Fife and Dumbarton and a few successes dotted around Scotland at different times there was a cynicism towards the parliamentary system and the knowledge that most election campaigns were to advertise the Party as a local and national entity rather than enthusiastically expecting an electoral victory:

Now it seemed an utter contradiction, I could never agree with that , it just seemed silly to me and that was one of the things I took exception to very much because even if we only gained eighty votes or ninety votes, it might have been that number of votes that just would have put a Labour Party person in who could , even if we didna agree with their manner or method o' dain' it, at least they could achieve something or at least they were accountable.¹⁵⁸

Communist politics were long considered beyond the pale in electoral terms but it was a salutary lesson of the different areas of influence that the Party had that it could have the trust of people in work among communities and groups and as shop stewards in the factories to a much larger extent than it could win support for election to councils.

Again this might justify to an extent the importance on factory branch activity as here the Communist Party was far more effective and this led it as early as 1948 to state that 'The industrial base in all cases is out of all proportion to the general influence of the Party...'¹⁵⁹ . In the workplaces the CP was better organised to face any concerted opposition , there was less of the supremacy of the Labour Party here and more room for the CP to win over members on the shop-floor through strong organisation and militant shop stewards organisations. It also countered the apathy and conciliation that it associated with the right-wing of the labour movement.

Conclusion

The importance of branch activity and the centrality of its role in the lives of Party members cannot be underestimated. In the exceptional cases where the Party had councillors then there was the obvious strength of having an electoral base and more institutional influence. By 1958 this legacy was weakening , but of the thirty-six communist councillors in Britain sixteen of them were in Scotland so there was still a large Party influence in a few places.¹⁶⁰

The reason that some women stayed so long in the Party was often because of the close friendships that developed in the YCL and Party branches from the 1940s. That in adulthood there were problems for married women in attending meetings and prioritising the Party in their lives seems inevitable as the Party sharpened the emphasis upon its role industrially. Indeed it was from this period that its political influence depended on its industrial strength and this base gave it a strong presence well into the 1970s. Yet the role of the local activist was vital in sustaining the life of the Party and the experiences of women in the first half of the Party's existence shows that all levels of the Party's organisation were reached by them, even if only briefly or in limited numbers. They were making an impact. Limited indeed was the representation because , if there was still the role of domesticity that was expected , then this was more evident on the Scottish Committee where women's representation was lower than even its percentage of Scottish membership. The highest percentage of women delegates on the Scottish Committee during this period, was from 1950-3, and only accounted for 17% of that bodies total members.

This probably also suggests that if women were in work then they were not in the important industrial areas of employment that were concentrated on by the Party. Therefore there was an over representation of the traditional industrial sector which reflected the Party's strong position there.

There was not a deliberate discouragement of female members nor a noticeably hostile one, indeed many would stress their feeling totally equal to all Party members. But the restrictions that were dictated by capitalism and were reflected in trade union organisation were so much an integral part of British labour movement identity that it would have been unique had some problems not arisen. The only problem was that these were not recognised as endemic and integral problems. There was not a large critical body of opinion, as would develop in the 1970s in the Party, that believed there was need for major internal reform and a need to stress other areas or means of struggle seen as more relevant to women. One can see this period from 1945-60 as promising more than from 1920-39 when Sue Bruley states that women were still a small percentage of the membership and 'rarely held positions of power and influence'¹⁶¹. She also sees this as due to the weight of tradition and the CP being gender defined¹⁶². If this was still the case overall by the late 1950s, one could see that slowly things were changing. Women were an integral part of the Party's structure and were contributing a great deal to its fund raising and community activities.

Some husbands were accommodating and modern in their outlook and the Party hierarchy was by no means disinterested in women's participation especially once a firm policy and a Women's Department was established. One problem that was recognised was the inevitable hostility of women who were not in the Party but endured their partners selfless, and selfish, devotion to it. Although some may have been disappointed by the inflexibility to family difficulties and a women's domestic responsibility, this era also reflects the united stand behind Party policy and the common goal of socialism that came before all else. Therefore the response was one of positiveness towards the Party and the belief that problems could be sorted out within its structures. What was emphasised was that the degradation of women could only be ended with the achievement of socialism and that was the only true

form of emancipation¹⁶³ There was the recognition that men at the point of production were also exploited and this reflected itself in the family , and so , ways of working within its resultant restrictions were found.

What cannot be doubted though is the resilience and natural expectations of women to contribute and determinedly become an integral part of the Communist movement and to infuse it with their energy. Facing a loud, confident and expressive meeting comprising mostly of men could be daunting for some as could contributing and learning to address meetings though these aspects of initiation may also reflect the anxiety of any members irrespective of gender. Confidence usually lay with those experienced in industrial work and union activity or where there were everyday issues to discuss in a workplace organisation such as a shop stewards committee or a union branch. One must not forget the great advantages of these organisations and the confidence that they could give to their members at the workplace in fighting for basic employment rights and better wage rates. As union membership grew the emphasis was on the workplace and the absence of organised Labour Party workplace branches meant that the Communist Party inevitably developed a limited vision to strengthening its membership precisely because this was the one area where Communist influence could undoubtedly be greater than anywhere else, and with great effect. It was also often in the most stark and brutal of conditions at the point of production which offered the classic recruiting ground for class conscious workers who were presumed to be the vanguard of any communist movement.

None of the interviewees from this period believed that it was primarily the fault of men that women were restricted or that the Communist Party did not try and do things positively to alter the situation. What is criticised is the approach of some men and the limits of Party solutions to any inequalities , and there is a bit of frustration that the equality found in the YCL was not ongoing. The overwhelming reason for involvement in the structures of the Party was to organise and to gain greater influence for left-wing ideas in the Scottish Labour movement.

As an example of women's progress in the Party Margaret Hunter epitomised the modern communist woman leader. She was from the first generation of those from a Communist Party family and was committed to the Party as a whole ,

accepting its structures and working integrally within them. In this way she worked perfectly as part of the leadership and at the same time, in the context of the immediate post-war period, was a role-model for women¹⁶⁴ including those who wanted to advance within the Party and were primarily committed to its political work. In this sense one can see the way her contribution was an addition to the strong hierarchical nature of the Party structure with the authority and dominance of its leader's and its organising effectiveness.

¹ May Annan 22 April 1994 p.3

² Of the CPGB women interviewed 8 joined the YCL/CP before 1939. 7 joined from 1940-50. 5 from 1951-60 . 9 from 1961-70 and 2 from 1971.- The discrepancy is because one interviewee's membership lapsed for a period.

³ Willie Thompson *The Good Old Cause :British Communism 1920-91* (London 1992) Appendix on Communist Party membership 1921-1991 for the complete British figures. p.218

⁴ *Twentieth National Congress : Resolutions and Proceedings , February 21, 22, 23, 1948* , CPGB. (London 1948) p.16

⁵ *Twenty-first Congress of the CPGB* (London 1949) p.16

⁶ *Communist Party of Scotland, Report January 1945-June 1946 and Congress Report.* [WGML] p.12

⁷ *Ibid* p.12

⁸ I am referring to communist work in the factories during the war which was not always subservient to the needs of the Soviet Union as especially pronounced by Pollitt . Bob Horne 15/9/94 p.18

⁹ *Communist Party of Scotland Report* p.12 [as above]

¹⁰ *The British Road to Socialism* , CPGB, (London 1951) p.12 also the 1952 edition p.11, 15 and 16.

¹¹ J. Gollan *Peoples Democracy for Britain* (London 1952) p.7

¹² *Twenty Second National Congress of the Communist Party : Report of the Executive Committee covering the period November 1949 to December 1951* (London 1951) pp.5 and 18

¹³ J. Gollan, *Scotland Needs 150,000 Jobs : A Memorandum on Scotland's Reconversion Problem.* (Glasgow 1946) p.29

¹⁴ W. Lauchlan, *Scotland And The Crisis*, (Glasgow 1947) [WGML] states 'The mobilisation of women for work in the textiles , clothing, engineering and other Industries can be facilitated by operating the principle of Equal Pay for Equal Work. p.8

¹⁵ *Scotland and its Future : short term plan for Scotland adopted by the Scottish Congress of the Communist Party* (Glasgow 1947) [WGML], p.6

¹⁶ *The Socialist Road For Britain* , CPGB, (London 1949) pp 10 and 27

¹⁷ *Whither Scotland?* Pictorial published by the Scottish Committee of the Communist Party (Glasgow 1945) (?).p.1

¹⁸ *Ibid* pp.10-13

¹⁹ J. Gollan, *Scottish Prospect*, (Glasgow 1948)

²⁰ Gollan , *Scotland Needs 150,000 Jobs*, p.7

²¹ *Ibid* - 'Today, even with a Labour Government in power at Westminster , the problems remain unsolved because that Labour Government also is carrying through a general policy in the interests , not of the working class, but of monopoly capitalism' p.227

²² Gollan, *Scottish Prospect* p.212

²³ *Daily Worker* 16 December 1949

²⁴ *A Parliament for Scotland: The Communist View* . CPGB. Glasgow.

- ²⁵ *Scotland* by Aitken Ferguson , published by the Scottish District Committee of the CPGB , Glasgow, 1938. Though briefer, a forerunner to Gollans work a decade later.
- ²⁶ *Ibid* p.3
- ²⁷ *Ibid*
- ²⁸ 'But they shall be free' - *Communist Party Memorandum on Scotland's Future. Scottish Committee of the C.P. to the Royal Commission. 1st January 1953. [WGML] p.3*
- ²⁹ *Ibid* p.3
- ³⁰ *Ibid* p.8
- ³¹ W. Lauchlan 'A Future For Scotland And Her People': *Report to the Scottish Congress of the Communist Party 1953, [WGML], p.17*
- ³² *Communist Policy to Meet the Crisis ; Report of the 21st National Congress of the CPGB, opening remarks by A. Horner (London 1949) p4*
- ³³ *Twenty-third National Congress of the Communist Party: Report of the Executive Committee covering the period January 1952 to December 1953 p.5*
- ³⁴ Alice Milne 10 July 1994 p.12
- ³⁵ Letter to Jack Gaster from R. McIlhone 10 November 1949 . [WGML]
- ³⁶ *Daily Worker* 25 May 1949 , The deputation was R. McIlhone, Harry McShane and Margaret Hunter
- ³⁷ Ban on Communist Party Meetings : R. McIlhone's statement to magistrates Committee April 10th 1951 - the deputation was R. McIlhone, H. McShane and M. Robertson, [WGML], p.1
- ³⁸ *Glasgow Herald* 5 May 1949 - Progressives won 55 seats. The Labour Party 56.
- ³⁹ *Glasgow Herald* 7th May 1949 - This was Victor D. Warren , Assistant Regional Manager of I.C.I.
- ⁴⁰ *World News and Views* Vol. 30 No.30 July 29 1950 p.358 McGovern is not mentioned here but in the *Glasgow Herald* 8 July 1950
- ⁴¹ *Scottish Committee Organisation Report for April 1949 , [WGML] , p.6*
- ⁴² May Annan 22 April 1994 p.4
- ⁴³ *Glasgow Herald* 25 February 1950 - the result was W.W. Hamilton (Labour) 23,576, P.W. Nil Fraser (Conservative) 10,131, W.Gallacher (Communist) 9,363.
- ⁴⁴ Agenda for the National Covenant Committee Meeting 29th July 1950. [Bob Horne Collection] Also, see the *Daily Mail* 31 July 1950.
- ⁴⁵ *Organisation Report for June 1950 (Glasgow 1950), [WGML] p.1*
- ⁴⁶ *Ibid* comments '...where our propagandists go right into the attack. the opposition is silenced'.
- ⁴⁷ *Ibid* p.8
- ⁴⁸ *Glasgow Herald* August 2 1950
- ⁴⁹ W. Hamish Fraser *Glasgow Trades Council, Mitchell Library Glasgow Collection* 331 880941445:FRA pp.14-15
- ⁵⁰ *Twenty Second National Congress of the Communist Party : Report of the Executive Committee covering the period November 1949 to December 1951 (London 1951) p.6*
- ⁵¹ *Ibid* p.4 and p.11
- ⁵² H. Pollitt *Britain Arise* , (London 1952) p.13
- ⁵³ '...but I was more or less just an ordinary member and then women did more in the peace question, the Stockholm Appeal, we did a lot with that.' Isa Porte 23/3/94 + 12/12/96 p.2
- ⁵⁴ J. Gollan , *End the Bans* (London 1956) p.7
- ⁵⁵ *Draft Report to the Political Committee , Scottish District CPGB, 1948, [WGML] p.8*
- ⁵⁶ Jenny Richardson 31/3/94 p.7
- ⁵⁷ *Draft Report to Political Committee 1948* states - '...the excellent response to May day with the Party surpassing itself in the size, bearing and colour of its contingents' [WGML] p.7
- ⁵⁸ *Twentieth National Congress : Resolutions and Proceedings , February 21, 22, 23, 1948 , CPGB, (London 1948) p.24*
- ⁵⁹ *Twenty-first National Congress (London 1949) p.20*
- ⁶⁰ *Twentieth National Congress. (London 1948) p.56*
- ⁶¹ *Scottish Congress 1953- Report of the Scottish Committee covering the period January 1951- January 1953, [WGML] , p.15.* The Report also states that the YCL was 'extremely weak' in Greenock and Kilmarnock, Kirkcaldy, Perth, Paisley and Motherwell.

- ⁶² *Ibid* p.14
- ⁶³ Mary Park 13/11/96 p.53
- ⁶⁴ Irene Swan 23/9/95 p.6
- ⁶⁵ J Service 'The Party and YCL As a Cultural Force' in *Britain's Cultural Heritage* . (London 1952). p57
- ⁶⁶ Jenny Richardson 31/3/94 p.21
- ⁶⁷ Jenny Richardson 31/3/94 - 'In Fife villages the Communist Party was really something and the whole village would turn up for the concert that the YCL Choir were giving.' p.3
- ⁶⁸ *Scottish Committee 1948 Congress: Report of the Scottish Committee of the Communist Party covering the period October 1947-September 1948* ,[WGML] . p.8
- ⁶⁹ 'The B.B.C. has become the open propagandist of the "Cold War" , with progressives rigidly excluded from broadcasting' , *Marxist Study Themes no.9: The British State* . CPGB. (London 1954) p.21
- ⁷⁰ Jenny Richardson 31/3/94 p.3
- ⁷¹ , *Twenty-second Congress: Report of the EC* , The National Cultural Committee held a conference on 'The American threat to British Culture' in April 1951, p.7
- ⁷² Service 'The Party YCL As a Cultural Force' '...taking the message of Peace and our Scottish culture . together with the songs from the Soviet Union, Eastern Democracies and China . to the Scottish people.' p.12
- ⁷³ B. Simon 'The British Universities' in *Britain's Cultural Heritage* ,(London 1952) p.59
- ⁷⁴ *Scottish Congress 1953- Report of the Scottish Committee covering the period January 1951-January 1953* , [WGML] . p.15
- ⁷⁵ *Draft Report to the Political Committee , Scottish District CPGB, 1948*. [WGML] p.3
- ⁷⁶ Effie O'Hare 20/3/96 p.39
- ⁷⁷ Mary Docherty 14/5/94 and 14/3/95 - 'Well they had Marxist education, Willie Joss used to come often from Glasgow. Actually sometimes on an Area basis, a Fife basis, sometimes T.A Jackson came to classes on Marxism but Willie Joss was the main one that came to Cowdenbeath. came to Fife.' p.13
- ⁷⁸ *Twenty-first Congress of the CPGB 1949*, (London 1949) p.6
- ⁷⁹ Alice Milne 10/7/94 p.13
- ⁸⁰ Isa Porte 23/3/94 + 12/12/96 p.9
- ⁸¹ *How to Sell Literature* (London 1942) p.3
- ⁸² *Ibid* p.3
- ⁸³ *Ibid Marxist Study Themes no.9: The British State* . CPGB, (London 1954)
- ⁸⁴ Marion Robertson 19/4/94 [additions 20/10/95] p.12
- ⁸⁵ Cathy Brown 29/5/94 p.5
- ⁸⁶ Marion Easedale 23/3/94 - 'I found it fascinating and maybe in those days I did perhaps express my point of view a bit more in that kind of set up where it was education and you were encouraged then to participate in questioning and everything like that. I could do that. I learned a lot then, that was really my education in the Vale Branch of the Party.' p.6
- ⁸⁷ Mary Cowan 16/3/94 p.6
- ⁸⁸ Marion Robertson 19/4/94 [additions 20/10/95] p.20
- ⁸⁹ And all those women interviewed except two who were involved in workplace branches and that being in the last twenty years of the Party.
- ⁹⁰ *Twenty-fifth National Congress : Report on Inner Party Democracy* by J. Mahon p.51
- ⁹¹ May Annan 22/4/94 p.
- ⁹² Mary Docherty 14/5/94 and 14/3/95 p.12
- ⁹³ *Scottish Congress Report: covering the period January 1945-June 1946* , (Glasgow 1946) [WGML]. p.19
- ⁹⁴ *Scottish District Report June 1951*, [WGML], p.23
- ⁹⁵ *Scottish Congress: Report of the Scottish Committee covering the period April 1953-January 1955* , Glasgow 1955, [WGML], p.9
- ⁹⁶ *Report of the Scottish Committee of the Communist Party covering the period from January 1945 to June 1946* , [WGML], p.19

- ⁹⁷ Marion Robertson . 19 April 1994 [additions 20/10/95]. p.10
- ⁹⁸ Katherine Gallin 13/4/94 p.17 and Jessie Clark 4/4/94 p.15
- ⁹⁹ Alice Milne 10/7/94 p.19-20.
- ¹⁰⁰ Gordon McLennan 29/6/95 - 'On the contrary . these women were very political. *they knew what they were doing* . they were working for Bazaars for money for the Communist Party and for the daily paper of the left and the socialist movement. They were absolutely clear about that and for anyone to suggest . as was suggested at the time that this was kind of women's work, knitting and making toys and all that sort of thing.' p.3
- ¹⁰¹ Marion Henery 6/4/94 and 17/11/95 p.34
- ¹⁰² Alice Milne 10/7/94 p.14 referring to the Woodside Branch.
- ¹⁰³ Jenny Richardson 31/3/94 p.7 also ' Mary Docherty 14/5/94 and 14/3/95 -'Well there were some of the married women , if their man was in the Party and they were in the Party and they had children, it was the man who attended. p.12
- ¹⁰⁴ Cathy Brown 29/5/94 p.3
- ¹⁰⁵ Janey Buchan 4/10/94 p.17
- ¹⁰⁶ *Report of the work of the Scottish Committee 1944 covering the work of the Scottish Committee of the Communist Party January - December 1944*, [WGML]. p.12
- ¹⁰⁷ *Ibid* p.12
- ¹⁰⁸ *Ibid* p.13
- ¹⁰⁹ It would confirm its name as the Advisory Committee during this decade. Also see chapter specifically on this body.
- ¹¹⁰ *Report of the work of the Scottish Committee of the Communist Party covering the period October 1946 - August 1947* p.14
- ¹¹¹ *Ibid* p.15
- ¹¹² *Report of the Scottish Committee of the Communist Party covering the period October 1947-September 1948*. [WGML] p.11
- ¹¹³ *Ibid* p.11
- ¹¹⁴ *Ibid* p.12
- ¹¹⁵ Jessie Clark 4/4/94 p.8
- ¹¹⁶ Mabs Skinner 15/4/94 p.4
- ¹¹⁷ Marion Robertson 19/4/94 [additions 20/10/95] p.12
- ¹¹⁸ May Annan 22/4/94 p.6
- ¹¹⁹ C.M. Gabbidon 'Party Life: An Examination of the Branch Life of the CPGB Between the Wars.' , Sussex University D.Phil. thesis 1991, p.56
- ¹²⁰ Marion Robertson 19/4/94 [additions 20/10/95] p.13
- ¹²¹ Marion Robertson 19/4/94 [additions 20/10/95] p.14
- ¹²² Marion Henery 6/4/94 and 17/11/95 - '...I was on the Scottish Committee but the Secretariat met in Glasgow , I was on the Scottish Committee' p.8
- ¹²³ Marion Henery 6/4/94 and 17/11/95 p.9
- ¹²⁴ Marion Easedale p.4
- ¹²⁵ Marion Easedale 23/3/94 p.8
- ¹²⁶ Alice Milne 10/7/94 p.18
- ¹²⁷ Katherine Gallin 13/4/94 p.6-7
- ¹²⁸ May Annan 22 April 1994 p.10
- ¹²⁹ *Twenty-fifth National Congress of the Communist Party (Special Congress) April 1957*. there were 547 delegates of which 467 men and 80 women. For the first time there is a breakdown of the female delegates - 36 housewives, 10 teachers, 10 clerical workers, 4 Party full-time workers, 4 in engineering, 3 in clothing , 3 professional or technical workers, 2 in the distributive trade, 2 in hospitals and allied, 1 in textiles, 1 in printing and 4 miscellaneous. p.77
- ¹³⁰ May Annan 22/4/94 p.11
- ¹³¹ Marion Easedale 23/3/94 p.6-7
- ¹³² *Twenty-fifth National Congress : Report on Inner Party Democracy* by J. Mahon p.53
- ¹³³ *How to Organise Public Meetings*,(London 1942) p.3
- ¹³⁴ *Ibid* p.5

- ¹³⁵ J.R.Campbell, *Forty Fighting Years: The Communist Record*, (London 1960) p.8
- ¹³⁶ K. Morgan, *Harry Pollitt: Lives of the Left* (Manchester 1993) p.6
- ¹³⁷ Janey Buchan 4/10/94 pp.1-2
- ¹³⁸ Bob Horne interviews from 15/4/94 to 4/5/95 mentions Campbell several times and how he was strongly influenced by him as a young activist.
- ¹³⁹ W. Gallacher *Relaxation: A Collection of Satirical Political Verse* with a Foreword by R.Palme Dutt. Daily Worker Bazaar Committee (London 1950).
- ¹⁴⁰ Ella Egan, 17/11/96, p.1-2
- ¹⁴¹ Isa Porte 23/3/94 and 12/12/96 p.13
- ¹⁴² Marion Henery 6/4/94 and 17/11/95 p.34
- ¹⁴³ *Evening Citizen* 19 August 1938
- ¹⁴⁴ M. Seton 'About Paul Robeson', in *Paul Robeson Souvenir Programme 196?* [WGML].
- ¹⁴⁵ Jenny Richardson 31/3/94 p.22
- ¹⁴⁶ Marion Robertson 19/4/94 'Cranston's used to have a restaurant and they had a wee room up the stair and I went doon with another woman and we went in and I'll never forget the size of his hands, he was such a big man and when he stood up, they were massive and I thought he was just wonderful and my mother, I came back and told her all about it and she was quite tickled but that was another experience I can always remember, when I met Paul Robeson.' p.9
- ¹⁴⁷ *Twenty-first Congress of the Communist Party 1949: Report of the Executive Committee: covering the period February 1948 to July 1949* p.5
- ¹⁴⁸ *Glasgow Herald* 2 May 1960
- ¹⁴⁹ Jenny Richardson 31/3/94 p.22
- ¹⁵⁰ James Hunter 18/7/95 p.1-2
- ¹⁵¹ Irene Swan 23/9/95 p.10
- ¹⁵² James Hunter 18/7/95 p.2-3
- ¹⁵³ *Comment* 18 March 1967 Vol.5 .No.11 .p.166
- ¹⁵⁴ Cathy Brown 29/5/94 p.6
- ¹⁵⁵ Jessie Clark 4/4/94 p.3
- ¹⁵⁶ Jessie Clark 4/4/94 p.4
- ¹⁵⁷ Effie O'Hare 20/3/96 p.36
- ¹⁵⁸ Alice Milne 10/7/94 p.19
- ¹⁵⁹ *Draft Report to the Political Committee, 1948* (Glasgow 1948) p.12
- ¹⁶⁰ *Report of the Executive Committee to the 26th National Congress of the Communist Party: covering the period January 1956-December 1958* p.12
- ¹⁶¹ S. Bruley *Leninism, Stalinism and the Women's Movement in Britain 1920-39*, (New York 1986) p.2
- ¹⁶² *Ibid.* p.167
- ¹⁶³ E. Burns "Women's Fight for Liberation" in *Communist Review* November 1952 p.344
- ¹⁶⁴ Pat Milligan, 15/3/1994 and 11/5/1994 - 'She had a great way of speaking to women...I remember being with Margaret out at the Queenslie Estate and her speaking to women, I can't remember if it was the typewriter factory or something like that out there, and it was a nice summer's day and Margaret was really getting through to them. I can remember all the women standing. What sticks in my mind is that afterwards when she got into the car she just slumped and she just wasn't well at all.' p.14

Chapter Four

Sacrifice and Advance: The Scottish Women's Advisory Committee and Women's Sections 1947-69.

'We can produce women of the same calibre as our comrades in Europe and the Soviet Union'

*Scottish Committee of the Communist Party 1946*¹

'There is not the appreciation in the Party of the great value of the Women's Sections , and the contribution which the women can make'

*Communist Party Organisation Report(Scottish District) 1949*²

This chapter will address the role of the Scottish Women's Advisory Committee (SWAC) and what it meant to women in the Party. As will become clear, not all took a deep interest in its work. There is a distinct lack of printed material about the SWAC and no major sources lie in any public archive or collection. The oral testimony was central in putting together an accurate picture of the work of this advisory committee. Marion Henery's contribution was crucial to this part of the research as she had retained many items of correspondence and reports from her activity as secretary from 1956-68. This material was lying in folders in her house and its value was that it guided towards further areas of research and gave a graphic idea of the work of the organisation. This was an excellent example of the oral contributor having crucial primary material from their activity. From subsequent investigations I fear that much valuable material has been lost or will be discarded if it is not traced soon. In this instance the value of an oral history has been to unearth lost sources. This also applies to photographic material covering many aspects of Party activity.

Women's issues

The Women's Advisory Council (later Committee) came into existence at British level towards the end of the war in 1944 after an initial meeting of several women from the districts. After that there were meetings at least a few times a year in order to co-ordinate work throughout Britain.³ It is worth quoting at length an example of the dedication and effort which those women who started off the Advisory, under the leadership of Tamara Rust, put into that body when the war was still raging and women's organisation was still at a formative stage. Mabs Skinner, who later moved to Inverness, was a delegate from the Surrey District of the Party to the National Women's Advisory which met in London:

...they said they needed to have a wider voice of communist women up in London. So I was asked by Tamara Rust to come up and she would see me and we would see about me belonging to the Women's Advisory Committee of the Communist Party... So I went up then once a month to London to the Women's Advisory Council because this war was on and one of these times when I went up during the blitz, I got off at the underground and walked to King Street and, oh, it must have been about just a hundred yards in front of me, the whole flaming house collapsed onto the street, rubble and everything. I think it had been blitzed before you know and now it was crumbling. I thought to myself 'my golly, just look at that, I just missed that', then I was off 'I've got to get to my meeting'. So I skirted the rubble, (*laughs*) went to the meeting just the same. Then of course, when the meeting was over, I thought to myself 'oh lord, how am I going to get back, I've to get back to..', but they all had to go in their varying directions. We didn't all sort of cosset each other, you all did your own thing, so, right, I had to get back to Waterloo Station, which I managed. But when I got to Waterloo Station they said 'oh well, you've just missed the last train out, there's no more trains, you'll just have to wait, there's no more trains

leaving because the order has been given 'no more trains to leave'. So I stayed all night in Waterloo Station and I got the first train out to Surbiton in Surrey and I got out of there and I eventually got home on another train and walked from there , very late getting home I was and , oh of course, it was about half past seven in the morning before I got home, and got a row from Tom because I didn't come home that night. Then I heard that the train that I should have caught got bombed. So I missed two deaths in one night (*laughs*)... because he was a communist, he knew that we were dedicated to our work so it was no use him saying that 'you're not going up anymore' I still kept going.⁴

The growth of the Women's Advisory in Scotland corresponded with the Scottish District's elaboration of policies on various social issues. The expectation was that women members would promote those issues centred on education and health. During the war the Party raised the issue of health problems caused primarily by under nourishment and bad housing. The situation was noticeably worse than across the border , 22.6% of Scotland's housing was overcrowded compared to 3.8% in England and Wales.⁵ The infant mortality rate was comparably higher , 20% above those in England and Wales and was higher in Western and Central Scotland in comparison to the northern rural areas⁶. Not surprisingly the Party supported 'Assumption "B"' of the Beveridge Report which called for 'a unified , comprehensive free medical service'.⁷ The war also brought a leap in industrial confidence for women and this could be an avenue into the Party.

War work and Equal Pay

As in the First World War , war work was a liberating experience for many women, though not for others. The work done by women was also varied and it was an opportunity for women to benefit from a better regular income. It was also a politicising period for women. Agnes McLean more than proved her worth in the CP as one of the foremost women trade unionists in Scotland.⁸ Her unique role in this

study is that , unlike the women from the same generation in the Party, she had joined through shop-floor experience and the industrial work of the Communist Party. This was far less the case for women members than men and seems to have remained so. Despite recent attempts to paint a more cynical and derogatory view of CP activity during the war in Scotland⁹, Agnes McLean had no doubts as to why she came to join the Communist Party:

....I found that the people who were ready to support the women and back them and stand by them and never let them down were Communist Party members. There may have been Labour Party members there but they didn't identify themselves as such because the Labour Party didn't organise in the factories - the Communist Party did organise in the factories. So you had lads coming up saying 'if you're going to fight we'll support you, we'll be right behind you' and they were, they were great. The result was that when somebody came up to me and said 'will you join the Communist Party?' I wasn't for saying 'No'.¹⁰

McLean's education was nurtured in the Socialist Sunday School. She went to work at Rolls Royce in Hillington , Glasgow, starting on Christmas Day 1939 and initially joined the Transport and General Workers Union, later transferring to the Amalgamated Engineering Union. The A.E.U. had held a ballot in 1942 on the issue of admittance of women workers into the union. Female membership of the AEU proliferated from their admission in 1943. Within two months 914 branches had women members¹¹. During this period , with 750,000 members primarily because of female recruits, the AEU became the second largest union in Britain¹²:

Thousands of women flocked into industry and they were quite brilliant at engineering....And you've seen the skills developing and that's when the big battles started because as our skills developed, our labour power

became more valuable and we were getting paid less than the rate for the job¹³.

At that time there were three categories of engineer, the skilled or time-served, the semi-skilled machine workers and the unskilled. However: 'there was unskilled Men and others , and we were the others, and we were below even the unskilled'.¹⁴ On average women were getting 43s per week whilst men earned 73s. The hours even reached twelve hour shifts six days a week for six months. Any new man who set the machines automatically got a higher rate than the women , who were not allowed to set the machines. This included those women who had trained the men, a situation McLean saw as 'disgraceful'. Also , the young male workers did not have to go on courses as women did. In 1941 the women in each department joined in strike action but inexperience meant that they were 'chased back in'. Although the unions announced their intention to address the issue of equal pay, the women were dissatisfied with the slow progress being made throughout 1942-3, and so in December 1943 they walked out. They faced hostility from people who shouted abuse and pelted them with tomatoes and eggs , but this time they were organised more properly and their determination finally won over their fellow workers: 'Once the men realised, first of all it was an injustice being done to women, for cheap labour and therefore a danger to the men...the men were absolutely fantastic.'¹⁵

It was during this industrial action that Agnes and her colleagues received full support from communists and so, seeing the Labour Party doing nothing on the shop-floor, she quickly joined the CP. The strike furthered the cause of the women though Agnes knew there was still a long way to go: 'Not equal pay but nonetheless a good agreement. A lot of the women's wages were lifted right up and their skills recognised'¹⁶.

It is well to quantify the achievement of the industrial action by women during the war. The skilled unions felt employers were using the war to attack and undermine them. They were certainly vociferous in their denunciations of the engineering employers¹⁷ but despite union resolutions for equal pay¹⁸ at delegate

conferences there seems little doubt that it was the action by the women led by Agnes McLean which really pushed the issue to the fore. This would remain a central part of women's struggle in the labour market especially as they became more prominent in the labour force. Later, when women in the CP gathered at weekend schools, Agnes McLean, with her industrial experience and forthright open manner, often made a big impression though there were regional and cultural differences within the Scottish Party:

She was very typically a Glasgow comrade and the Aberdeen comrades didn't think much of the Glasgow comrades, we always thought they were very sure of themselves, and this would probably be because Glasgow was a great industrial city with shipbuilding and railway engine building and Agnes was in engineering whereas... most of the people in Aberdeen would be one generation removed from the countryside and it was very much based on just fishing and textiles, any industry there was. And so when we came to Glasgow, the people in Glasgow had that much more industrial experience, that much more trade union organisation and Agnes could talk with so much more know how and experience...¹⁹

McLean sat on the Scottish Executive of the CP and later on the (British) Executive Committee. This had much to do with her being a leader in industry and sharing the same important and respected position that was usually the preserve of men in the Party. Her role in the fight for equal pay and proper union representation for women continued until the late sixties, (when she left the Communist Party), and into the late 1970s when she retired from Rolls Royce.

Post war social issues

During the fifties, despite major social reforms from the Labour government, there were certain social issues that needed attention. Scottish education suffered from oversized classes. An additional 35,000 teachers were needed and many of those

working were poorly qualified (or 'uncertificated'). One reason for this was that wages for teachers at the time were under £11 per week gross.²⁰ The Party proposed the establishment of common secondary schools, the abandonment of the selection process and the introduction of advanced study courses to the age of eighteen, as well as a more common curriculum²¹ and the abolition of corporal punishment. A lot of these issues meant that women could work together on a broader basis:

Health was one of them. Child-care, nursery schools,²² nursery education for under fives, we used to do a lot of that with Labour Party women because the Labour Party women were interested in that sort of thing as well. Crèches at factories, that was something else people like Agnes McLean were involved in, crèches in factories. I don't remember anything about the war but women who had been in munitions factories and that, they used to say 'They gave us them then so we could work why don't they carry them on?' they stopped them immediately after the war. And secondary education for working-class young people, a college education and a university education should be for everyone and not just for the elite.²³

It was around such issues that women's activity was directed. Issues that were seen to affect women and the family. In Glasgow and other areas Budget leaflets were distributed each year, critical of changes affecting workers living standards, and it was on these issues that meetings were held.²⁴

If there were enough women in a Party branch, and the will, then a women's section was often set up to encourage women to meet and discuss amongst themselves. These bodies could be viewed in two ways, either as pushing women to the side in their own little clique, or as attempts to advance women within their own branch and the Party. Initially in mining villages they could be seen as a place to put the women, as they were often treated with disregard at branch meetings:

...I think if a woman came along to a branch meeting if she had anything to say , she said it, but then I have known of branches where they had a branch meeting once and they were discussing a fund-raising function and after they discussed that , the person in the chair who was a male, said that the women could go if they liked, and that was a branch in a mining village and it maybe happened in other branches but that's the forties I'm talking about , I'm sure things changed.²⁵

From the late 1940s, with a more focused approach from women leaders in London such as Tamara Rust and later Nora Jeffries, the sections were promoted more seriously. By 1946 twenty-five women's sections were operating in Scotland and the Scottish Committee could report that 'the developing political activity of women's sections of the Communist Party in Scotland is in tune with the rising role of the working class woman in the country as a whole'.²⁶ There was a concerted effort to get more policies concerning women adopted by the districts, and , as women were put in charge of the advisory work, it did not seem patronising or tokenistic.²⁷

Certainly the instincts of Party officials and those who took an interest in the sections were to try and recruit more women (as their numbers were so obviously lacking), and to integrate women into the women's sections and the Party using broad based issues which were seen as the primary concern of women. Yet a lot of women were concerned neither with what was termed 'women's issues' nor with the activities of the SWAC even though there had been a neglect of basic issues both structurally and in developed policy. If women had developed politically then there was a reluctance to get involved in separate sections, away from the main branches:

...I never saw any reason to become involved in women's politics, to me it was the political situation and what needed to be done and how we could advance to a better socialist system of society. I dare say it is not a good thing on my part, I probably should have been more

involved in the women's side of things but I just accepted that I was an equal part of the organisation and at that time I didn't have children and I wasn't tied down, I was free to do whatever I wanted to do so I mean I suppose it was different for people that maybe had conflict within the family , about who would be active and who wouldn't...²⁸

The problem was that some women who had found they were treated equally at branch level felt that it had taken them enough time to achieve this and saw it as a retrograde step to then concentrate on organising women separately. Also they may have been active in other areas and taken an interest in broader issues and saw emphasis on any one area as unattractive. Despite their intentions and results, women's sections and the Advisory were seen by some to do exactly what they were set up to oppose, namely pigeonholing women's issues as something that meant exclusion from 'real' politics - an area of work to shove women into:

It was never in a condescending way. *Never like that.* I mean people who say that arenae telling the truth. It was to try and win women to help them to understand what politics were and what the issues were and all the rest of it. I mean we were encouraged to do it by the Party branch because other than that women werenae out at all, werenae getting into the political scene.²⁹

On the other hand enthusiastic women activists could make the running in the sections and 'sometimes it would be too advanced for some women'.³⁰ Also there was the problem that some women quite simply were not interested so that for any areas of Party work, there was little one could do. But for those that were interested and were also heavily involved in other areas of Party work, the commitment to developing women's sections and giving their profile a much needed boost meant more work for those already committed to Party work elsewhere:

it was always being raised that they didn't give enough attention to women's issues...but really it was difficult for everybody, I wouldn't say they did it deliberately but we thought we had the cares of the whole world on our shoulders. Every issue, we had to have a line on, we had to have our ideas about it and try to get work done in every sphere and that, and 'women' was just one of them and unfortunately it was a weaker one...³¹

This may be one reason for the slow growth of separate women's groups/sections initially.³² However there was development and in 1950 there were 28 organised in the following eight Areas of the Scottish District: Glasgow (12) Dunbartonshire (3), Renfrewshire (1) Lanarkshire (5) Edinburgh (3) Fife (2) Dundee (1) and Ayrshire (1).³³ By 1952 there were thirty-five CP women's groups involving 560 of its 1,400 women members.³⁴ Still, not all women were interested or involved and Nora Jeffries pointed to the overall problem in Britain: 'we cannot shut our eyes to the fact that in spite of big changes in the Party there is still a widespread attitude among comrades that there is no need for special work among women'.³⁵

After a conference for Party women held in 1952, which stressed the growing independence of women's groups and the need for independent activity and education, the role of the Advisory was taken more seriously. By 1956 there were only 22 active groups with only one in Fife, one in the North-East and none in the South-East or West Lothian.³⁶ Yet this does not mean that female membership was not rising or that there was less activity in this sphere, what remained a problem was the number of women's sections and promoting their growth along with a higher profile for women's issues:

...I thought the Scottish Women's Advisory Committee was a great organisation because we dealt specifically with women, only with women, and we would try to work out what issues women could be active on. It was never an academic thing, you always felt a

tremendous responsibility when you went up and would be doing this and this and you felt you had to do it well. In Clydebank we had a women's group. See the branch decided to have a women's group because the women couldnae get out at the same time as the men. But there was always a controversy whether or not there should be separate, a separate meeting. Some women who became active in politics and that didnae want to attend a women's group, it was too, it wasnae advanced enough for them like.³⁷

The constitutional role of the Scottish Women's Advisory was to campaign among the women, organise and educate them through the sections and to put recommendations forward to the Scottish Committee. The Party's other advisory committees had the same constitutional role. The word 'Advisory' was well chosen as there was no statutory right that these committees' recommendations be accepted although their work was valued as it was central to generating responses of Party members to different areas of activity.

The first Scottish District women's conference under the Women's Advisory Council took place in February 1946, encouraged by the recently formed World Federation of Democratic Womanhood. The conference discussed ways of making a noticeable impact on International Women's Day, also the development of Marxist education and the new national syllabus for women.³⁸ The role of the SWAC was vital to developing the activity of women and, irrespective of which views dominated at certain times, was invaluable for widening the role and involvement of women in the Party.

When the Advisory was first set up women's activity seemed to be confined to certain areas more through the lack of expectations than by the design of the Party leadership. From the 1950's onwards the SWAC was run by women sent by their Party branch or encouraged by the Party leadership to attend. Essential to the running of the committee and its effectiveness was the Secretary and consecutive women who held this position showed a strong dedication and commitment to

ensuring that the SWAC made some impact in the Party , especially in encouraging women to be active in campaigns around women's issues. In this area one might expect to find a ghettoisation of policy , but on the contrary , it seems that the SWAC was given a free reign to formulate and initiate policies without obvious interference from the Party hierarchy. In the late forties and early fifties modern young women emerged who broke the traditional mould of being a Party member's wife or did not expect to play a secondary role. They were bold and confident:

...In the District there would be people like Gordon McLennan, Sarah Sheddon. Sarah Sheddon intimidated me a wee bit I think, she was , in today's parlance she would be a 'new woman'. I remember one instance where she was speaking as a YCL speaker at Clydebank, John Brown's, and Peter Kerrigan was the main speaker and Sarah turned up with her nail varnish on her fingers and on her *toes* and Peter got rather annoyed, I mean these were workmen: she was being '*frivolous*' in front of the workmen...³⁹

In 1944 Rhoda Fraser (nee Jupp) became the Scottish Women's Organiser and secretary of the SWAC. Always actively campaigning on issues, Fraser , with one hundred women from the West of Scotland, invaded the Board of Trade in February 1947 demanding price reductions and better quality goods.⁴⁰ In many ways she started to broaden the activity of Party women and campaigned on what were seen as women's issues - fighting for lower food prices (as in an open letter to John Strachey in 1947⁴¹) and rents and for crèches/nurseries. She organised women on demonstrations and pickets so as to get the maximum effect and publicity. Such action was also in opposition to the activities of the right-wing Housewives League. Fraser, who was from Edinburgh , proved a popular figure among the women as she had a great enthusiasm and concentrated a lot on social activities. She organised a peace bus which toured Scotland in June 1949 with Scotland's first communist women's leader:

Helen Crawford Anderson. I have a photograph in the house and I believe it was the last public appearance she made; she was a very old lady, I remember she had a long black cape on and a *huge* black hat which very nearly covered her face. It was a Peace Bus that the women in the Communist Party, Rhoda Jupp in particular, was organising and it was travelling all over Scotland bringing the message of peace to the people of Scotland and Helen Crawford Anderson was doing the sort of official send-off of the bus.⁴²

Broad based campaigns among women were at the heart of Fraser's perspective as to how the Party women's groups should grow. She also directed a lot of women's energy into new areas notably the Women's Assembly - a broad based national body to which Fraser specifically concentrated a lot of activity:

Well I was the Secretary for a while, Rhoda Fraser was the one behind it...Aye it was a separate organisation because we had women in it that werenae in the Party at all and we had wee groups here there and everywhere and we took people doon had a great time in London just going to the Women's Assembly, it was a great organisation at that, it was an organisation that served its purpose at that particular time...⁴³

In 1953 she organised the first Scottish National Assembly of Women and saw this as a move 'towards a united women's movement in Scotland, releasing as it did a flood of new ideas, enthusiasm and a sense of solidarity which inspired everyone taking part'.⁴⁴ By 1956 there were committees of the Women's Assembly in Glasgow, Aberdeen and Dundee but the Party was self-critical for not having valued the potential of this organisation from its inception.⁴⁵ This had been a major point of disagreement between Fraser and the Scottish Party and it appears, in 1955, she was

deliberately replaced as Secretary of the Scottish Women's Advisory Committee⁴⁶ and also came off of the Executive Committee which she had been on since 1947.

As well as seeing the need for supporting women in industry Fraser implied that a move to politicising the women's movement as a whole was needed. She saw that there was a need for greater attention from the branches, areas and district and 'from all our women cadres , more self-study , more self-confidence, more Communist perspective is needed'⁴⁷. In this respect she was at least a decade ahead of her time in having an outlook that sought to politicise Party women but at the same time develop the Party's influence in broad based bodies.

The Scottish Party reiterated the criticisms of the small size of women's groups and observed that 'outdoor work' was only carried out by a few activists.⁴⁸ Also a criticism was that 'political weaknesses resulted in the partial failure of our women's groups to fulfil their main functions of training our women members to lead others and strengthen and build the Party amongst the women'.⁴⁹ Women's groups were seen as being 'things in themselves' and were left to do their own work. A cold but honest assessment even though by 1953 there were now 44 women's groups and an optimistic belief that they could reach the fifty aimed for.⁵⁰

Marion Henery , who was an established and popular women's activist⁵¹ , took over from Rhoda Fraser in 1956. She also saw the value and strength of the Committee:

...Now I took over from Rhoda Fraser who was an up and coming communist and a very highly intelligent person. Rhoda was, I think, trying to find her way to a broader concept than the Communist Party and she got involved with the peace, with the Women's Assembly. They also had at that time women's groups of the Communist Party, but my opinion was, and I think the opinion of the comrades was that we should be strengthening and developing the women's groups of the Communist Party; but Rhoda, her line was rather different. She saw the movement progressing through the Women's Assembly, broader

groups, peace groups , all that. I gathered that the Party leadership felt this way...Now I don't know whether there was any pressure brought on Rhoda about this or not , but Rhoda, she either left or she was pushed and it wasn't until later on that I found out from Marion Robertson that she had actually been offered the job of Rhoda's and turned it down. I was unaware of this and I was offered [it] and I decided to do it.⁵²

The above quote suggests that the leadership sought primarily to strengthen the Party women's groups and certainly Marion Henery agreed with this strategy though she had always appreciated Fraser's role. Fraser phoned Marion Henery to tell her that the Secretariat had put her name forward.⁵³

Fraser's time in the Party was cut short by the events of 1956. Firstly there were some traumatic meetings and much soul-searching by Party members in Glasgow following the Khrushchev revelations. Then came the invasion of Hungary. All this proved too much for Rhoda Fraser and she decided to leave the Party. Her promising contribution to Communist politics was ended though her inspirational influence is still remembered among that generation who worked with her. She left the Party, as far as people were aware, primarily because of international events and not over her conflict with the Scottish Party leadership.⁵⁴

Although they were now going their separate ways through irreconcilable differences over the Soviet Union's actions, there was no animosity at all from any of the women towards Rhoda Fraser (and vice-versa) but a great regret that she, and her specific work with the Advisory, had now finished. Unfortunately there is a sadder postscript. Having moved back to Edinburgh , Fraser joined CND in the sixties and also campaigned vigorously against the Vietnam War. In Edinburgh in 1969 she interrupted a reception for the Ambassador for South Vietnam and denounced the actions of his government. However her personal circumstances were very unhappy and , after much depression, she took her own life in 1970. Although it was over a decade since she had left the Party, many members , especially the

women who had worked and been influenced by her, were shocked. Some wept at the news. Twenty-five years later many still spoke of her with great affection:

I didnae know her terribly well but she was very friendly with a friend of mine , a close friend of mine in Aberdeen called Dolly Shearer , she and Rhoda were very friendly, but I wasnae all that friendly with Rhoda but I knew her and she was a very capable person , very honest, sincere sort of person , possibly too sincere: well you cannae be too sincere but maybe she would feel that she would be easily knocked off balance , she felt she'd been let down, if she felt disillusioned about people or circumstances or politics, and it would be easy to get like that I think.⁵⁵

Her contribution to the Communist Party in Scotland was to get the Women's Advisory operating as an effective campaigning body and to open up new routes of campaigning among women. She was no less demanding of women comrades than the Party organisers and had many of them rushed off their feet , but it all contributed to a more integral role for women based around social issues. It was those specifically in women's sections who benefited from her enthusiasm and encouragement. They gained confidence in this environment rather than at the Party branch:

...she encouraged me too and during one period of election[s] when Peter Kerrigan was standing in the Gorbals and we were all helping there I was asked to go and speak to a Women's Group, you know they had a women's meeting in their rooms and I spoke to it. Then I had to go and speak in a school and I had my speech all written out. I had remembered somebody doing it on postcards but I started to speak, we were all sitting at school desks, and when I looked down I had mixed all my postcards up. However I managed my speech all right and from

that I spoke at meetings not as a big speaker but I was able to get up and say my piece when necessary.⁵⁶

The fact that women's work was still sectionalised may have been a fault but one must see this in the context of the SWAC being formed to raise the profile of women in the Party. What differs over the decades is the attitude of women to the Committee and the way it was utilised by women until the Party's demise.

Like any other body in the Communist Party in Scotland, the Scottish Women's Advisory Committee relied on those deeply committed to its specific remit and who realised that if it were to be successful, then most of their time would have to be devoted to its work in addition to that of the branch:

You went from *door to door*, it's a lot simpler in a small village going from door to door : you know people physically, it's not as hard as in the city running up and down tenements, and you could go down a street in no time unless you blethered of course! , which happened pretty often, and we used to sell about a hundred *Women Today* for instance which was the Party publication at that time.⁵⁷

Although it was targeted towards increasing women membership and broadening the Party's appeal, *Women Today*, edited by Tamara Rust, having been brought out in the late 1940s, did not last the Fifties. What the publication did do was to target women's issues and make them a primary concern for activity among Party women so establishing campaigns around issues of specific interest to them. *Women Today* was still very political and was not a condescending publication brought out to ease consciences among the leadership but it did seem imitative of fifties women's magazines in presentation and to some it may not have seemed too attractive. It lacked permanent sales, despite healthy Scottish ones initially⁵⁸, and it was cut back in regularity before being wound up. This points to a deficiency or a lack of emphasis on the organisation of women that was still prevalent in the Fifties. The CP

was unwilling to subsidise the journal for too long and members were obviously showing a preference for publications dealing with a breadth of issues generally. *Communist Review*, *Labour Monthly* and *World News* filled this niche and were still popular.

Working for the Party.

Such was the commitment of many members that they were more than willing to work in the Party offices, both at area and district level, if they got the chance. Usually it would be one of the Party cadre, the leading members, that would be chosen for a paid position in the Party structure. But any enthusiasm to become part of the leadership could turn to disillusionment if they were taken for granted or if they were not given the decent treatment they expected:

...there was a Party comrade in the Party office, I was the Propaganda Organiser and I needed a lot of help...I was like a fish out of water in the Glasgow Office because I never ever thought that I would, and it was this comrade who had sort of suggested that I should be the Organiser but when I went in there was this attitude, he had a bad attitude...and he'd a bad attitude toward a whole lot of other things but I felt myself that I was badly treated and I don't think I was helped very much by the people ⁵⁹

In this case fellow comrades had spoken out at the unfair treatment and the official concerned lost the respect of a few members who knew how he had mishandled the situation. There was the expectation from those who had often sacrificed the chance of better wages elsewhere, that the Communist Party would treat its employees well and there would be the camaraderie of the branches. This was often a mistaken assumption because , whatever the cause that united members ideologically, mundane administrative Party work still had to be done and Party organisers could be as demanding and , in a few cases, as insensitive as any employer:

Some of the Scottish Office people asked me, they were looking for an Organiser for Ayrshire and they were looking for an Organiser for Aberdeen and they came and asked me if I would do it and I said no I wouldnae work for the Party ever again , no' with the treatment I got and I told them and I says 'I don't think I got any great support from you people because you werenae prepared to stand up to the individual that was making my life a hell latterly' , I says 'I was doing my best for the Party'.⁶⁰

It would be inopportune not to point out the irony of this position and the seeming inconsistency of a Party committed to equality not treating its employees properly. This problem often came , not from the leadership at the top, but from those at district and area level who also suffered poor wages and worked long hours for the cause. The fact that Organisers were run off their feet and often were the most committed Party workers cannot disguise an ignorance to the deficiencies of some in their office skills. It would be unfair however to make a blanket judgement on all full-time officials. Many were considerate and did pay attention to women members needs in the Party. It is illuminating however to see how organisers, often the most articulate and bold of people publicly, were so badly disorganised behind the scenes.

Another sphere where the contribution of women in the Party seems to have been undervalued is as partners to Party Organisers who were often sent by the Scottish District or the Area Committee to try and build up Party membership in areas. This meant officials were often directed to various places for a period until the Party needed them elsewhere or enough Party activity was occurring so that work could be transferred to new activists. If a married couple were both Party members then there was a joint commitment to accepting the Party's priorities , often meaning low wages and poor conditions. But there was some assurance that there would be an income of sorts:

...the guarantors system where members would guarantee to give two bob a week or something above their dues and a lot of income came from that , well you had no guarantee, they had a set wage I think about four pounds a week or something at that time. I didn't have to pay any rent for instance , I cleaned out the Party premises, the offices and the function room and I got rent free for that and two or three times a week you would get a pound then ten bob as money was coming in, some weeks you would get full wages, other week's you wouldn't but I took charring jobs...⁶¹

But there were compensations. If the Party depended on a couple to carry out full time work then their most basic needs were prioritised - basic accommodation and amenities would be found through appealing to the membership and making known of the need for funds. This appeal often elicited the desired response because the membership were usually aware exactly how much the full-timers sacrificed the chance of a better wage to work for the Party:

I said 'No way can we go anywhere without a home for the kids, that is a must, you and I could always go into lodgings but you've got to have a home for the kids'. So what happened then? they put out a special appeal throughout the Party in Scotland for money to buy a flat for us to live in and that was four hundred and fifty pounds they paid for a top flat in Allison Street in Glasgow and the flat belonged to the Scottish Committee of the Communist Party...we'd good comrades , if I needed help , which fortunately we always managed , I knew it was there if I needed it. We had many offers of people wanting to help us out financially but it wasn't necessary.⁶²

That there were so few women full-time officers meant that the burden of the family often fell on women Party members. So it was their belief, their commitment to the

cause which was the binding factor in being able to carry on against the odds. Often there had to be that understanding for the marriage to survive as even the demands of ordinary Party members could cause family problems:

...Bill and I...we wouldn't let these things interfere, but I know a lot of comrades, *particularly* where the woman was not in the Party caused *a lot* of trouble. Where the man was expected to be out doing Party work night after night and his wife was left at home with the kids. No I don't think it was given enough...⁶³

Women's schools

One aspect of Party activity that contributed to a greater confidence in women members and their further commitment to communist politics was the introduction of weekend residential schools for women. The congenial atmosphere of a hotel or a large house, sometimes belonging to a Party member, and a more relaxed approach meant that more theory and discussion could be digested than in a two hour meeting. Women's schools had been run successfully but intermittently in the Party⁶⁴ and these had been on an area basis. District women cadres schools were organised but they were restricted as they were for those who were seen as the rising leaders amongst the women. Expecting the highest standards from those in attendance the sessions, spread over two days, concentrated on the rise of capitalism, the development of the labour movement, imperialism and the world transition to socialism.⁶⁵ This was a broad approach but one that covered domestic and international communist and social democratic ideas up until the present day. The cadre schools were for those who devoted more time to consciously trying to take a leadership role in the Party or in labour organisations and were prepared to tackle the harder and deeper theoretical issues.

There were also residential schools at British level for women cadres which were run by the Central Propaganda and Education Department in London. Cadres were told that 'the value you get from this school depends to no small extent on the

preparation which you make for it'.⁶⁶ There was essential reading prior to the school and further recommended reading to be done if possible- often during the school. For these schools there were lectures , discussions and then group discussions. The broad variety of British and international socialist history , especially discussion of the Soviet Union, went into more depth during the course of a week. The schools left no time for anything but reading and sleeping as they started properly on the Sunday morning and ended on the subsequent Saturday. Each days sessions lasted for twelve hours each day, starting from nine-thirty in the morning. The sacrifice and commitment needed from the women who managed to attend these schools is self-evident.

There was a need to bridge the gulf though between women who were in the cadre category and those women who wanted to advance their knowledge , and so discuss and understand the basic historical issues so important to the Party , but who did not have the opportunity due to practical Party work or family commitments. Fortunately there was a solution to this problem.

Following the example of the Yorkshire districts successful residential schools for women⁶⁷ , the first women's residential weekend school in Scotland took place in 1955 at the Bridge of Allan. Seventy-four women attended. Prepared well beforehand, all sections of the Party were asked to encourage women to attend and while women were expected to meet most of the costs, branches were encouraged to fund-raise and pay part of the cost for those who could not afford the two days. Although open to all they were geared more towards women who were '*already interested*' in Party policies.⁶⁸ The syllabus was sent out well in advance of the school and was discussed by women's groups. The school was an opportunity 'for a weekend without the boss'⁶⁹:

...the school showed an amazingly high level and proved how women . already under capitalism, are emancipating themselves from the soul-destroying dullness which accompanies the drudgery of the kitchen and the monotony of factory repetition work.⁷⁰

A second school took place the same year in Edinburgh with over a hundred delegates. Both were organised by Rhoda Fraser. They were considered very successful being well subscribed and received a positive response from participants. As well as hearing of contemporary events, such as a strike at Rolls Royce by 500 women engineers for higher pay, there were also classes on Scottish history⁷¹. The schools were open to non-Party members and the involvement of a few Labour Party women made the proceedings more optimistic - 'we were seeing our work *together*, in a simple but profound relationship of completely mutual confidence between tutor and students'⁷². After the first days work there was always a Party social to look forward to in the evening.

For women the effects were beneficial as in the educational and less urgent atmosphere of an informal classroom, they could express themselves and could feel more empathy with each other. This might be as much to do with the short, intense but usually enjoyable curriculum that filled the two days. Importantly it also gave women the chance to meet people from other areas in Scotland and to 'sus' them out in a jocular way. Women from the more rural areas came to the industrial west and Glasgow specifically where Party women had made an impact in the workplace as well:

...in Aberdeen we had a sort of peasant culture really, and we kent things like corn-kist, that sort of thing was very much the background to Aberdeen culture whereas in Glasgow it was the street culture. Agnes McLean would tell you about lying in the beid and being able to put out her hand and switch off the cooker and the switch off the light, you caud dae a' thing fae yer bed because the room was so sma' and about the people being raised in a room and a kitchen or was it, there's a term for it in Glasgow, just the one room and the kitchen, and the lavvy in the stairs, it was the cludgie!. So there was this Glasgow culture which gave them a sort of brotherhood and sisterhood which we

didnae have in a more rural area, so we might resent them and possibly they would see as well, we didnae have that industrial/trade union/political experience.⁷³

The school's success led to regular area schools and bi-annual district weekend schools. Additionally there were British women's schools which were held bi-annually in the fifties and then annually in the sixties and where one or two women were sent by the Scottish district.

The choice of tutor for the schools was every important because if people were bored or a tutor did not communicate well then there would be a lack of interest in future schools. Many tutors were able to relate the history and theory well to their students having done so at numerous Party meetings and in some cases as academics. So they were experienced at pitching their material at different audiences. James Klugmann, the Party historian, proved very popular and took two residential women's schools in Scotland.⁷⁴ The environment was so different from that of a Party branch meeting that there was enthusiasm from the outset. District schools for women increased in the sixties and there was one usually every two years (two in 1963). Ayr became the regular venue, Balloch and Glenshee having been used previously. At the Balloch school in 1963 the tutor, Jack Cohen, wrote in his report of the school, (after a collective report from nine of the women brought out some of the problems women there had in the Party): '...it was stated that one of the big problems that Party women face are the men - their husbands. "The men are not interested in women, in their wives working actively in the Party": "Some men don't want their wives in the Party", and this was echoed later in the class discussion.'⁷⁵ Raising the issue of women's organisation in the Party he continued that 'There seemed a danger to me that the Women's Groups were being counter-posed to the branches, as the place where women found their place in the Party'. Women had said that they preferred the women's groups and had felt freer to talk there, in Party branches 'they felt inhibited by the many contributions made by the men'.⁷⁶ Despite these problems surfacing at the school, Cohen was impressed by the level of debate

in the group's report back and following discussion. There was also a feeling that if a husband and wife were in the Party then the husband invariably attended meetings and there was 'more than a danger that the Women's Groups were being seen as the only place where women in the Party had their Party life , and not the branches'.⁷⁷ These were vitally important points that depicted the problems women faced and were now being aired openly, though only in the collective company of Party women.

In 1969 the district women's school discussed the latest revised edition of *The British Road to Socialism* with Joan Bellamy as the tutor. There was a slight criticism here of those attending for not having read up for the weekend.⁷⁸ The majority at the school were housewives , only two were students, and the others were in paid work. This possibly reflects the problems many had finding the time to read and prepare for the schools.⁷⁹ An encouraging aspect was that nearly half of the women at the school had been in the Party for less than five years and half were under the age of forty, a sign that there were younger women taking an interest in the Advisory's work. Deemed a success by the Women's Advisory and the district, the schools were only attended by a small percentage of Party women. The highest attendance during this period was fifty (1963) and the lowest fourteen (1964). Usually the average was around thirty.⁸⁰ Despite the effort and encouragement there was a certain degree of apathy , attendance from some of the areas being sparse or non-existent.⁸¹

The schools continued well into the 1970s and 1980s and it was one area where women were educated in more depth on Party policy and topical issues. In these later years schools were aimed more specifically at women's issues , which by now had changed markedly from the first two decades of the Advisory , and were trying to challenge the accepted view of women in society and even in the Party. They would become central to articulating the new approach to education, which was not just about the injustices of capitalism but also about the need to challenge previously accepted views of the women's organisational role in the Party and the neglect of gender and sexual issues in the movement. Even the original format of women's education and the schools would be altered to emphasise this new thinking.

The Scottish Co-operative Women's Guild

The Co-operative movement had a mass membership among working class communities. With 11 million members by 1954 it meant that 'half the families in Britain are connected with the Co-ops'.⁸² In Scotland membership was proportionately higher than in England. It was a way of working class life. Many families had grown up using the services of the Co-operative movement as it was purposefully created and developed in the nineteenth century towards looking after the basic needs of the working-class population. For many Communist Party women membership of the Co-operative Guild, split into gender, was even more natural than trade union membership with 1,108 of its 1,695 of Party female membership being Co-operators in the late 1940s.⁸³ There were 481 branches of the Scottish Co-operative Women's Guild with a membership of 38,426 in 1949.⁸⁴

The Communist Party saw the benefit of encouraging its members to be active in the Co-operative Women's Guild because Party members could influence the Guilds naturally through their local association and knowledge of its workings. It was also the one meeting women communists could attend if they were discouraged from going to the Party branch by their partners whose industrial position (and therefore gender) gave them priority:

Well I think the women themselves disagreed with the men, sometimes some of them I think said that they were wanting to go too and the women of course attended Women's Guilds, they attended the Co-operative Women's Guild mostly. I didnae with no' being married, I didnae like going because it was all married women that was there and I felt that I was an outsider.⁸⁵

The culture of the Co-operative Women's Guild belongs more to the pre-sixties generation of communist women and it is one that they utilised to promote themselves as capable individuals within their community as well as promoting the

interests and original ideals of the Co-operative movement. There was the inevitable benefit to the Communist Party as well. Realising it was a natural base and one where its hard-working members could be respected for their dedicated work, Party women were encouraged to try to affect the policy of the Co-operative movement as much as possible. There appear to be two obvious reasons for this. Firstly, there was the lethargy and complacency of the officials of the Co-operative movement which the Party continually pointed to. This may have been primary in the Party members concern. As ordinary members they thought more could be done to represent members' interests as they believed the inactivity of the Co-operative Guilds was a reason for its declining membership and loss of influence to new wholesale and retail competitors. Secondly there was the need to off-set the right wing of the labour movement who had continually denied the Communist Party affiliation to the Labour Party, had excluded its members in some unions and also supported policies the Communist Party saw as reactionary and anti-socialist, most notably their support for the Cold War and the ensuing hostility to the Soviet Union. At least Party members could work in the Co-ops and could be effective for the benefit of working class communities without their being discriminated against though even this area of work was not to remain unchallenged.

As a bedrock of the community the Guilds were a natural area for Party women's activity and many of them were supportive of their local Guild irrespective of whether the Party could influence them. It emphasises the commitment and integrity of Party women in their communities that they dedicated their time and effort to running the Guilds and trying to increase its activities. This was in the interests of women and the wider community and there was not necessarily a deliberate meeting of interests in the minds of those Party women who took up responsibilities.

In 1948 the Co-operative Women's Guild, and the Co-operative movement generally, brought in a new rule that became known as the Political Rule. Introduced as the Cold War was reaching its peak, this rule excluded communists from holding

certain office in the Guilds.⁸⁶ It was in common with the discrimination against CP members that occurred within other labour movement organisations:

...the same as the TGWU , they had an embargo on Communist Party women holding office but the unfortunate thing was , the Co-operative Women's Guild in some cases could not practice that, couldnae operate it because it was only some of our women that were prepared to take office and my very dear friend in the Townhead area, Margaret Reid, was the chairperson , the President of her Co-operative Guild and Margaret was a Communist but they couldnae do anything about it because it was naebody else would do it...in many cases I was denied the opportunity to do certain things because I was a Communist.⁸⁷

Potentially it was a severe setback and challenged the strength of Party women in the Guilds. It could also affect adversely the work of the Guilds locally as Party women were naturally active in them and had often played a useful and important role. Some Guilds protested against having to replace capable women who had to relinquish their positions because they were Communists and the measure seems to have elicited sympathy more than successfully isolating communist women:

Those who were members of the Co' Guild naturally discussed questions arising out of their membership of the Guild with the Communist Party and that was fine and everything was all right until we had this introduction of the political rule...and when this was introduced in Kirkintilloch, there was a deputation there and this woman from the Women's Section, a higher body than the local, came out and said that every Guild had to adhere to the political rule and therefore, if the branch was not going to adhere to the political rule then they would no longer be a branch. Of course there was an angry reaction to that because I had been the first secretary of the Co-op

Guild after the war when they built the organisation after the war and I enjoyed it very much....⁸⁸

This indicates the degree to which Party women were operating impartially in that they were 'naturally' members of the Co-operative movement often before coming into the Party. They were often closely involved with Co-operative work, so cutting out communist women was often recognised as affecting good Co-operators. Marion Henery was secretary of the Co-operative Women's Guild in Kirkintilloch for four years before having to relinquish the position. She was re-elected as secretary in 1955.⁸⁹ There were long involved Party members such as Nan Wallace in Clydebank who concentrated her work in the Women's Guild and was re-elected to the local Co-operative Board from which communists had not been excluded.⁹⁰

Nan Wallace was an outstanding member of the Co-operative movement and she was a member of the local Board of Management and that was not usual for our Party women to be as high as that in the Co-operative movement. But Nan had that status, so she was not only a member of the local Co' Guild but she was also an active member of the local society. There wasn't any organised direction that we gave to our members, to join the Co-operative Women's Guild because, already, a lot were members of the Co' Guild see.⁹¹

One can only see the attempts at exclusion as being partially successful at local level and of no benefit to anyone except those who wished inefficiency introduced. There had not been any large mandate from the membership for these measures and there was absolutely no proof that it was popular. The Party pointed to the fall in Guild membership of 4,936 within a year of the rule being introduced and cited the rule as a contributory factor. This might have been a reason, though it was also stretching the point a bit. Membership was in terminal decline and not surprisingly it was a contention denied by the leadership of the movement:⁹²

The political rule introduced divisions where there weren't any. This woman who I met at a meeting in Glasgow, sometime after that, she had come to operate this rule and she told me how troubled she was that she had done that. She was really upset that she had done that and from then on she began to take a different attitude towards the political rule. So that was very interesting...⁹³

When it came to Scottish Guild conferences the effect of Party women's status, organisation and influence is illustrated by the number and boldness of resolutions clearly countering the pro- Cold War line. What seems evident from the conference agendas of the Co-operative Women's Guild during the years 1948-52, the height of communist isolation, and thereafter during the 1950s is the effectiveness of communist women in getting their ideas over and winning through some of their policies against the right-wing establishment.⁹⁴

At the 1949 Women's Guild conference at Dunoon, Anniesland Branch managed to submit a resolution on International Co-operative Unity which called on the government to 'strengthen its relationship with the Soviet Union and the democratic countries in Eastern Europe and thus build up the peace front of working class men and women against the unbridled imperialism of America'.⁹⁵ The boldness and forthrightness of pushing Party policy through a Guild branch was not mere folly, it indicated the extent to which Party women had got their views over effectively in their localities. But in 1951 the National Committee of the Co-operative Party defended rearmament and, the CP felt, that 'the peace movement was treated as a Communist plot, and the witch-hunt was in full cry'.⁹⁶ The Co-operative movements in Poland, Hungary and the GDR were excluded from the International Co-operative Alliance mainly at the instigation of the British representatives, the reason given that these movements received help from their governments and were now integrated into the planned economies. In 1952 the central council's peace resolution supported Labour government policy but they

'deplored' the release of Nazi war criminals , opposed German re-armament, and supported efforts to bring about the unity of East and West Germany.⁹⁷

The following year the Anniesland and Kirkintilloch branches were at it again with resolutions to conference which were merged and then supported on the floor by CP women. These resolutions, passed at the International Guild conference at Copenhagen , called for a meeting of the 'Five Great Powers' in the pursuance of peace.⁹⁸ The Central Council of the Guild opposed the resolutions stating that work should be done through the United Nations. The resolutions were defeated but others were won on education and opposition to attacks on the health service. This was safer ground but again it was Party women who moved and supported these measures.

If they could not win the Guild conference for pro-Soviet positions or on peace then domestic militancy was safer ground. The congress pledged itself 'to actively continue the struggle for socialism to organise our women for mass demonstrations, and protest against those acts destined to destroy socialism and combat at all times those who would bring misery and suffering to the people of Britain'.⁹⁹ It ended with the call to 'rally the non-political and unorganised women' for future struggles. A lot was left to interpretation. Socialism could only be destroyed if it existed and if, for most Guildswomen, this meant the local 'Co' then for CP members it could also mean the rather large expanse of communist run countries in Eastern Europe which were in conflict with the Western powers. And while the intention to mobilise the non-political may have been seen as knocking on doors and informing housewives of prices, no doubt Party women could interpret it as a call to politicise the membership more towards a more militant approach.¹⁰⁰ Any Bevinite would have sighed resignedly at the irony of it all: victory against overt CP policies, defeat against semi-covert measures. And the conference also agreed to support unions in dispute against the non-union paper magnate D.C Thomson , in Dundee and Glasgow. All Guildswomen were asked to boycott the company's publications.¹⁰¹

By 1952 the Scottish Co-operative Women's Guild still had a large membership with 33,392 members in 498 branches.¹⁰² The Scottish Men's Guild had only a 1,100 membership¹⁰³ thus illustrating how much the local activity of the movement was dependent on the role of women. However Party criticisms over the failure to stop the continuous ebb of membership were evinced by the fall in membership the following year to 31,366 despite an increase in branches.¹⁰⁴ After sixty years the organisation was on the wane and from 1948 to 1954 it lost nearly a quarter of its members.¹⁰⁵ At the 1954 congress, the women supported resolutions condemning aggression against the People's Republic of China¹⁰⁶ as well as opposing the sending of boys to Korea.¹⁰⁷ Also, despite opposition from the president who opposed the measure, congress supported calls for the abolition of capital punishment.¹⁰⁸ Twelve resolutions sympathetic to CP policy were moved by the Scotstoun West, Anniesland and Whitehill branches of the Guild where CP women were well established. Given that there were only twenty-three resolutions altogether this shows both the dedication and success of Party women committed to the Guild. It is also illustrative of the effectiveness of the Party's method of organisation and its dedicated aim to formulate and change policies in comparison with Labour women in the Guild.

When the occasion arose for Scottish Guildswomen to visit the Eastern Bloc in 1955 they saw the horrors that war had wrought in Poland.¹⁰⁹ Visiting the Soviet Union they extolled the virtues of the Co-operative system where shop workers acted and reported on shop committees - on which 90% were women¹¹⁰. The delegation was clear that they had not been coerced in any way and, having also seen amenities such as crèches, kindergartens, schools, hospitals, a new university and housing estates concluded that 'one lasting impression of the visit was the equality afforded to woman in almost every walk of life'.¹¹¹ As even the Scottish-USSR Society was proscribed as a communist body by the Central Council¹¹², such a response could only strengthen the will and likewise the acceptance of Party women in the Guilds. There was a commonsensical and effective way of getting the socialist message across in the Co-operative movement:

...they weren't in there to dictate Communist Party policy but they obviously had to discuss issues that were coming up at the Co-operative Party congress, the Women's Guild congress and brought a lot of good stuff into the likes of us and it was the same with us in the trade union movement because there was women in the trade union movement who had to be developed to put forward the fight for women's rights in the trade union movement.¹¹³

By communists getting involved in the Women's Guild in their area, attending meetings, holding positions and doing the administrative work, they could make an impact and found doing so in this organisation both natural and easy. It would be hard to see it as overt infiltration as the Co-operative ethos was the basis of socialism. Party women geared their involvement to groups and organisations in their social sphere, assuming that most Party women were not involved industrially or in industrial unions.

It was Rhoda Fraser who, when asking 'Do you want a man's Party or a mass Party?'¹¹⁴, pointed to the 'largely buried treasure'¹¹⁵ of half a million women workers in Scotland. She believed there was a need to bring women in different organisations of the labour movement together: 'We can't transform the Scottish labour movement without also transforming the policy and outlook of the hundred women's sections of the Labour Party and the 400 branches of the Guilds with their 28,000 membership'.¹¹⁶

Had the Labour Party's membership been as ideologically committed to the Cold War cause as their leadership, or even if they had a more definitive belief in a form of socialism, there surely would be evidence of a greater political contribution from that quarter. This neglect and its resultant vacuum is testified to by both the ease and effectiveness with which the Communist Party could operate in such an organisation. More than that it shows the lack of hostility of ordinary Co-operative activists to these policies and certainly the lack of the alternative right-wing view

having any organised base among those women in the Guilds. The Labour Party had the allegiance of many working class communities votes but there is not a lot of proof that in Scotland, prior to 1956, this depended on its anti-Communist stance.

Once there was a thaw in the rigidity of the exclusions in the Co-op the CP developed an even greater critique of the movements lethargy and lack of drive of the Co-operative ideal. The communist critique of the Co-operative establishment was that it was not doing enough for the membership or utilising its resources to counter the competition of the private traders. Women in the Party who became specialists in this area co-ordinated work in the districts:

...nationally we had an outstanding married couple in the Communist Party, [who were] leaders nationally. I always remember she took this school on the Co-ops and she dealt with the Co-op movement in the sense of the Co-operative ...from the point of view of production. I kept thinking about her, Elinor Burns was her name and she came and she took the school on the Co-operative movement as such. Emile Burns was her husband.¹¹⁷

Burns stressed the very slow growth in the movement's share of retail trade, and the fact that such a low amount of goods sold in Co-op shops were products of the Co-operative factories and farms.¹¹⁸ In Scotland and North-east England, where Co-op trade was the highest, 80% of purchases of consumer goods went to private trade.¹¹⁹ There was great emphasis on encouraging activity among women Party members in the Guilds in order to explain the greater role that the Co-operative movement could play in countering the business community and offering lower prices and higher wages.

An independent Commission of Enquiry into the Co-operative Movement was appointed in 1958 and the CP attached great importance to its findings. In the Guilds the Party saw the Co-operative movement as having a 'priceless advantage which their monopoly competitors cannot share.'¹²⁰ With over thirty thousand

shops, two hundred and fifty factories and the largest wholesaling organisation in the country¹²¹, the Party felt that 'the wholesale societies should be serving the needs of the retails, and not dominate and control them'.¹²² There was a need for the Co-op to undersell the multiple stores and yet it was not doing this because of a lack of any organised and co-ordinated strategy throughout the whole movement, both wholesale and retail. The Party detailed plans for a more professional and elected management structure covering the Boards of Wholesalers.

The report of the Independent Commission was rejected by the wholesale societies but some democratic reforms in the composition of the Central Executive of the Co-operative Union were made.¹²³ By the early sixties the Party was critical that 'too many local societies have lost their identity and independence too by going into the Co-operative Retail Services - owned and controlled by the Co-operative Wholesale Society'.¹²⁴ There still remained recognition however that women easily constituted the majority of customers to the Co-op and that Party members were expected to be members of their local Co-op society 'as a movement to defend the working people from the robbery of capitalism'.¹²⁵

The Advisory and Social issues in the Sixties

By 1958 the Women's Advisory was meeting monthly and the Scottish District of the Communist Party recognised the need to improve its work amongst women.¹²⁶ The Party believed it had strengthened its influence in the Women's Assembly and the Co-operative Guilds despite political proscription.¹²⁷ The role of the Women's Advisory by the 1960s was firmly established and it was an integral campaigning body of the Party. It was also intrinsically part of the Party with its dual role both as an advisory body which formulated policies to the Scottish Executive and in organising women's sections. It was the most important advisory body because it had this important two fold role. The SWAC's work was co-ordinated from the Party office in the Scottish District but it was also linked with campaigns by the Advisory at British level and so it was more than just a consultative committee to the district.

There were some specific, and for women, extremely important campaigns that the Advisory engaged in during the 1960's. By 1964 with the expectation of a Labour government, a *Scottish Woman's Bulletin* was produced. This was an informal news sheet that carried information of the Advisory to members in Scotland and only lasted for a few issues. Again the emphasis was on the domestic topics that were seen to be in the women's sphere- 'high rents, bad housing, soaring prices, scandalous maternity services'.¹²⁸ It was in this context that it was said 'our Party is now leading a real fight in Britain for women's rights- as a citizen, mother and worker'¹²⁹, an example of the existing unitary approach in the Party as a whole to women's issues.

A lot of the activity round the branches involved fundraising and education as well as the occasional showing of a film about the Soviet Union. International Women's Day was celebrated and work continued with the Women's Assembly.¹³⁰ And, as if to stress the awareness of the need to politicise women, there was a quote in the *Woman's Bulletin* from Lenin's *Letters from Afar* which became commonly used in later years- 'If we do not draw women into public activity, into political life; if we do not tear women away from the deadening atmosphere of household and kitchen; then it is impossible to secure real freedom, it is impossible even to build democracy, let alone socialism!'. Unfortunately, with not even all women involved in the Advisory, it must be wondered as to how many other Party members knew of this quote.

There were issues on which the SWAC campaigned that were producing noticeable results. It was strongly supportive of the right to equal pay, a main concern of the advisory and women's groups. Regular district leaflets were produced on the issue and work in this area by women Party trade unionists was encouraged.¹³¹ The campaign was to reach its height at the end of the decade, prior to the introduction of legislation in the 1970s.

It was on the issue of the prevention of cervical cancer and the need for more screening facilities that the Women's Advisory and women's sections got heavily involved. Their involvement in a broad based campaign contributed to obtaining

important statements and results from the government and the health authorities. For the year 1964-5 it became the central concern of the Scottish Women's Advisory and much time was invested in developing a strategy to bring pressure on the authorities and the various administrative bodies concerned. Medical opinion was that women should be screened at five yearly intervals when over the age of thirty.¹³² The Co-operative Women's Guilds throughout Britain had already raised the issue and the need for immediate tests and treatment and 'the provision of mobile units'.¹³³ The Women's Liberal Federation had also been vociferous on the issue as had the Labour Party Women's conference meeting in April 1964. Women in trade unions soon got motions to conferences on the issue¹³⁴ and the TUC promptly supported the campaign. The NWAC wrote to the Minister of Health about the need for preventative measures stating that there were over four thousand deaths due to cervical cancer each year. The Minister called the figures inaccurate but said 'we accept that routine screening against cervical cancer should be available to all women at risk'.¹³⁵ In reply the NWAC was specific about the mortality rate from their previous letter. There were 2,511 deaths from cancer of the cervix of the uterus in 1963, additionally cancer of the body of the uterus killed 1,504 women, a total of 4,015 - accounting for ten per cent of the annual total of cancer deaths.¹³⁶ The possibility of mobile cytology units was also raised. The SWAC wrote to the Department of Health for Scotland urging more facilities and funding be made available.¹³⁷

Aware of the importance of the whole issue to women of health facilities and preventative measures for them, the Advisory encouraged women to campaign with other groups and guilds. Three and a half thousand women were dying each year from cervical cancer and it was regarded as preventable.¹³⁸ It also began to educate itself and the Party women's group about the intricacies of cervical cancer. Medical journals such as the *Nursing Times* were read and excerpts from a sympathetic editorial from it stated that: 'it is now possible to save an estimated 4,000 women every year from the mutilation of their bodies (and their minds) from the sickening misery of radium, from death'.¹³⁹ At British level the National Women's Advisory wrote to the

Ministry of Health. They received a reply which stated that Regional Boards decided on the priority given to cytology, that there was a shortage of pathologists and technicians and that five Hospital Boards were to run courses for training. There was now a strong angle for the Advisory to pursue in Scotland (and of course all districts). The Scottish Women's Advisory Committee learned from the Scottish Office that the Secretary of State was stressing the importance of the matter to the Regional Boards, but the Advisory was critical that the issue was not getting the attention it deserved from the government who could give it precedence. Women were urged to write to their MP's, local Medical Officers and to illustrate to women 'how very low our present Government places the health of the women on its list of priorities'.¹⁴⁰ The campaign, backed also by the British Medical Association, the Royal College of Nursing and the Socialist Medical Association, was firmly established and was gathering momentum by November 1964. The Women's Advisory called for a nationally sponsored government campaign to allocate funds to the Regional Hospital Boards¹⁴¹ and for a national campaign to convince women of the need to have a smear test. The Advisory urged its members 'All women amongst whom we live and work should be urged to go to their G.P.'s and ask for a smear test'. They believed that leaving the impetus to the Hospital Boards and limited funds would delay proper action.

By 1965 the Secretary of State was demanding more action from the Regional Boards with greater resources and training given to the more rapid screening of women. More facilities were forthcoming and 'a number of married women doctors'¹⁴² became involved in training staff. The campaign was now getting prominent coverage from the press. Notwithstanding the assurances of Judith Hart M.P., (Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Scottish Office), there was criticism that despite pronouncements that there was a generally available service, it was not being treated as a matter of urgency by the 'official bodies'. An intensive three month cytology course was needed.¹⁴³ The SWAC wrote to Judith Hart, always seen as a sympathetic left-wing Labour MP, and asked for an assurance that the Regional Boards would allocate the necessary funds and carry through

educational work amongst women. The Advisory pointed out that in 1962 the Scottish Health Services Council had asked the Regional Cancer Committees in five Hospital Regions for comprehensive cytological services.¹⁴⁴ In reply from the Scottish Office the Advisory was told that there was 'slow progress in extending facilities'¹⁴⁵ to cover all women at risk and that there was a need for 'an emergency provision of trained personnel, laboratories and clinics'¹⁴⁶ and that training of G.P.'s was also needed. There was to be a conference of all medical groups concerned.

The campaign had highlighted the scant attention paid to the availability of facilities for screening cervical cancer and had put pressure on the appropriate authorities. Elizabeth Bowman, a Party women in Dundee involved in the campaign reported how she was screened by a women doctor running the Cytology Clinic in Maryfield Hospital (and who tested women by going around the hospital wards and telling them about its availability) , and was found to be positive: 'I got such a shock because I had no symptoms which would even raise doubts'.¹⁴⁷ Here was a most graphic example to Party women of the relevance of the campaign and its importance, she continued 'This situation where it is left to the woman to go and seek the test , should really rouse us to anger and action'.¹⁴⁸ There had been an increase in provision because of the effectiveness of the broad based campaign. That Party women so effectively engaged themselves in it and strongly prioritised the issue shows how effective the advisory could be in mobilising its small , active membership.

It might be pertinent to see this as a moral issue for many women in the Party as there were still old fashioned views as to what was seen as acceptable behaviour. The advisory tackled the issue of cervical cancer from a standpoint of being highly critical of the lack of concern about female mortality rates and what were inadmissible deaths. On other health issues concerning women there could be a conservative response. In the late sixties legislation was introduced that dramatically affected women's reproductive rights:

...you do make the mistake in believing that because you think something about women's issues that all the other women are thinking the same. I got quite a big surprise when we were all talking, women, about abortion and I took it for granted in my mind that although it's horrible and I've seen it in 'Gyny' wards where there's a woman desperate to have a baby and can't have it, in one bed, and next to her is a school kid who's had an abortion and no way it's nice, you can't say it's nice anyway but it's a woman's right to choose whether she has a baby or not. And I thought *stupidly enough* that all Party women would think that but of course they don't.¹⁴⁹

The provision of nursery education was an issue that was raised in many areas and was still seen as the specific work of women's groups. Although pre-dating the sixties it also developed in this decade. There was a National Campaign Committee for nursery education that co-ordinated the work of local organisations trying to pressurise the government to provide nursery schools and crèches.¹⁵⁰ The Advisory could report that the fight had been successful in Paisley and Glenrothes. Allied to these issues was the question of school meals and milk. Deputations were requested with the Scottish Office but were rejected. As the Advisory argued 'in all parts of Scotland there is some concern about our children's welfare'.¹⁵¹ There was an attempt to link the issue of school meals and milk to wider issues including unemployment, the wage freeze and price rises.

Prior to the election of the Labour government in 1964 the SWAC was campaigning for the few CP candidates who stood. Emphasis was put on the small things that affected people a lot, such as the cost of a loaf. The profits of the largest food companies were displayed and there was a call for greater support of Co-ops and for limiting price rises and the profits of big monopolies.¹⁵² This topic had seen women in the Party lobbying their M.P.'s and calling for price restraints against profiteering companies. Party women had led delegations of women from areas throughout Britain and also presented petitions. The lobbying, apart from some anti-

Communist rhetoric from Willie Hamilton M.P.¹⁵³, was successful in getting the sympathy of most M.P.'s and raising the profile of the Party women. It was believed there could be more unity between the Labour and Communist Parties if more Labour women joined the protests in joint action.

On local issues the Party highlighted the annual rates increases, and although there were some ameliorative measures by the Labour Government, they were still criticised for not granting enough relief to poorer households.¹⁵⁴ The Party's call was for a local income tax. It was around these social issues that the Advisory, with Margaret Hunter as National Women's Officer, concerned itself.¹⁵⁵ The work of the women's advisory committees was vital and there were around fifty in Britain altogether. The aim was one in each town and, if possible, one in every branch with an increasing array of topics being discussed at them. When the delegates to the National Women's Conference met in London in October 1966, just after the return of the Labour Government, Hunter was still prioritising the problems of the wages freeze, price rises and the need for the government to fulfil its aim of building 400,000 council homes.¹⁵⁶ Also there was the importance of international issues such as Vietnam, Zimbabwe and South Africa. There was now a greater emphasis on solidarity work in the Party generally and this continued through to the 1980s.¹⁵⁷

Conclusion

There seem to be three discernible periods in the evolution of the SWAC. Firstly, an innovative stage in the late 1940s and 1950s when it was built up methodically branch by branch with the enthusiasm of the secretary Rhoda Fraser. Secondly as an established and publicly campaigning body under the diligence of Marion Henery up to the late 1960s. Finally, with Pat Milligan as Secretary, as a structurally reforming and more noticeably feminist orientated body in the 1970s and 1980s. This latter period also saw it merge more in aims and work with Party members who supported some of the new ideas. There was a determined effort, which was successful, not to separate the actions of the SWAC from the rest of the Party or see it as on its own i.e. as so definitely separate as had been the case before, much by intention and

design. Here there was a noticeable change from the late sixties when, with Margaret Hunter still active at British level, there was still an emphasis on issues seen to affect women in the domestic sphere. For instance the Advisory attacked the Wilson Government for not dealing with housewives fairly over nursery provision and its campaigning role was still primarily on social issues such as rents, rates and price rises.¹⁵⁸

There was not thought to be an underlying problem in the Party's approach to women that more attention and better organising could not solve. In women's sections, discussing the Advisory education syllabus such as *Advances of Women under Socialism* and the work in the Co-ops were still being given a high priority.¹⁵⁹ From the mid-sixties, on international issues the main protests were against the war in Vietnam.¹⁶⁰ Certainly there was criticism of apathy or indifference from Party members but not of the Advisory's activity, or its overall historical interpretation of events and definition of a women's role as a part of the class struggle. Any conflict of ideas within the Women's Advisory was not about its existence but what it existed for. There was disagreement over the direction but not the need to organise women and encourage the section's growth.

In 1968 the women's school in Ayr discussed the women's movement¹⁶¹ and the place of women in past societies. For younger women there was a relevance to the form oppression took in the past and the way it had evolved to the present:

...I can remember Marion Henery...organising weekend schools down to Ayr¹⁶² with really good speakers and talking about the origins of women's oppression through a feudal society and also making points that it wasn't always like that. That originally women actually used to be more senior in certain societies because of their ability to give birth and so on, and in primitive societies when men left the territory to fish or hunt for food or whatever, women were in charge. We used to always say it wasn't always so, that it was about the development of property and so that men would know in dying that their property was going to the seed of their loins sort of

thing , that women had to be seen as theirs and their property along with whatever wealth they had amassed.¹⁶³

At the end of the sixties there was a new generation coming into the Advisory and into the women's sections who would highlight the extent of women's oppression in contemporary society and promote the need for more attention and appreciation of gender inequality. This came too late for those who had left the Party a decade before and had not been impressed by women's sections and saw little progress in their role:

I wouldn't say they did any better than when I joined the Labour Party and there were still Women's Sections from the same period. They were stuck I think in the Thirties which had been a decade of real antagonism to women's separate demands or women expressing their own demands , there'd been a real hiatus in the women's movement and I think the Communist Party was in that sense like all other parties so I don't think they were any better about women but I don't think they were any worse than the Labour Party or the Co-op movement which had the Women's Co-operative Guild which actively organised working class women...¹⁶⁴

Yet it was the development of the women's schools from the mid-fifties and their intense two-day programmes that developed members understanding and boosted their confidence. There were more schools in the sixties and they were more theoretically based. Yet if the Advisory was responsible for a high level of education there was still the issue of its relevance in the Party structure, especially as the younger generation were more inclined to question traditional methods. Party members were now being asked 'are women's groups out of date?'¹⁶⁵ and the criticism was that they were , being solely concerned with domestic issues. By this time aspects of the Advisory's role, even though it was barely twenty years old,

could inevitably be seen as slightly outdated or even archaic to younger women of the sixties generation. There was discussion about strengthening the work of the Advisory¹⁶⁶ although it was nowhere near folding and still had a very active body of younger women involved. There were regular monthly meetings and two Scottish district meetings a year for the branches.¹⁶⁷

However much it seems that women were only becoming aware of the extent of their exploitation in the late sixties and that those previously involved in the Advisory had been ignorant or did not care about the role of women in society, this was not the case. It would be wrong to underestimate how aware and self-critical the first generation of activists in the Women's Advisory and the sections were as to their limited role or indeed to believe that the Party did not engage in recognising the specific problems that women faced. But there was only one answer to these problems. As early as 1952 Elinor Burns wrote that:

the least glance below the surface shows that the degraded position of the women still remains , and until women themselves understand *why this degradation will end only with the change to socialism* they are held back from using their full strength in the struggle for emancipation.¹⁶⁸

Of course from the developing feminist viewpoint the argument fifteen years later was exactly the other way round: there could be no change to socialism until all communists recognised the need to end a lot of the existing discrimination and practices in the Party and the movement. But that was not the predominant view in the Advisory until that time. Burns stressed the need for a united movement of which the women's movement must be a part.¹⁶⁹ There was unequivocal recognition that women were more unequal than men¹⁷⁰ but what was still paramount was the class struggle and accepting 'the real enemy of the women is capitalism, we have to be clear about this ourselves in order to help other women'.¹⁷¹

From the late fifties the Scottish District declared that they had made a more serious effort to address the problems affecting women and were trying to increase women's involvement in Party campaigns.¹⁷² The National Women's Advisory Committee adopted the statement *On Work Among Women* in October 1958¹⁷³ and by 1959, as if to prove the success of giving due recognition to the issue, one third of all recruits to the Party were women and thousands of leaflets on women's issues had been distributed.¹⁷⁴ By the 1960's greater attention was being paid to the role of women and the SWAC was given a lot of encouragement by the Party leadership.

Because its membership was specifically gender based the SWAC transcended the usual role of an advisory committee. It had a swathe of members for which it was responsible and so it had an important role to fulfil sustaining and increasing membership. It is well to remember that it was a new body and , with new women coming into the Party, its development also necessitated its change. That it had encouraged so many women and had politicised them more than the Party branches appeared to do is testament to the need for a structure specifically for women to organise in. As early as 1955 it was observed that for Party women 'most of them have not been able to take part in branch life.'¹⁷⁵

One should not forget those women who did not take any interest in women's issues at any time. This accounted for half the female membership and also contained those who were very much against separate organisations for women or specifically women's issues:

There was always this discussion about whether or not to have a Women's Section , *not* among the male comrades but among the women. Some agreed with it and some didnae agree with it. It always went on. I was always for it.¹⁷⁶

There was little actual criticism until the late sixties that the Party was going the wrong way about tackling women's issues or indeed that its definition of women's issues was limiting and not extending the role of women.¹⁷⁷ There had

been the criticism related to Jack Cohen in 1963 and these problems were turned round only by the new politics of the 1970s. One reason was because there was little interest in separate women's activity and in attending women's sections from those who might do battle with these new ideas at branch level. A conflict between the two would not occur in the Advisory or women's sections as the traditional 'vanguard' element did not consciously operate in them. By the end of the sixties there was not the automatic acceptance of the Communist Party as it had always operated. There was now a look inwards at Party structure and Party theories. This momentum gathered pace with the women's conference in October 1970 criticising past practice and recognising the impact of the Women's Liberation Movement. Finally in 1968, as if to illustrate the success that persistence sometimes brought, the Scottish Women's Advisory proudly reported the election in Inverness of Mabs Skinner to the local council. It was nearly a quarter of a century since she had manoeuvred through war torn streets to help in the formative stages of the National Women's Advisory in London. That a woman, who was a communist, who lived in the Highlands, who was English, could win an election in this area of Scotland was quite astounding. Some things had changed.

¹ *Scottish Communist Party Congress Report September 21-22 1946*, (Glasgow, 1946) William Gallacher Memorial Library [henceforth [WGML]] P.14

² *Communist Party Organisation Report for April 1949: Report to Political Committee 1950* [WGML], p.7

³ Mabs Skinner 15/4/94 - 'Oh the Women's Advisory Committee was very important because it meant there were women comrades from all the areas and they all came in and we had discussions and what conclusions we came to, that went on as information to the London/Scottish Executives. They got to now all what was being done in the areas, that was the important part about the Communist Party...' p.3

⁴ Mabs Skinner 15/4/94 p.1-2

⁵ *Health for the People: Memorandum on Scotland's Health Services* published by the Scottish Committee of the Communist Party 194? (after 1943) p.7

⁶ *Ibid* p.14

⁷ *Ibid* p.24

⁸ N. Branson *History of the Communist Party of Great Britain 1941-51* (London 1997) p.44

⁹ P. Bain 'Is You Is Or Is You Ain't My Baby?' in *Scottish Labour History Society Journal* No.30 1995 p. 52

- ¹⁰ *Duffy Meets* - Radio Clyde interview Agnes McLean with Sheila Duffy first broadcast on 4 April 1989
- ¹¹ *Glasgow Herald* 13 April 1943
- ¹² J. Eaton and C. Gill *The Trade Union Directory*, (London 1983) p.85
- ¹³ Radio Clyde interview - *Duffy Meets* April 1989
- ¹⁴ G. Brayton and P. Summerfield *Out of the Cage: Women's Experience's In Two World Wars*. (London ,1987). p.176
- ¹⁵ *Ibid* p.176
- ¹⁶ *Duffy Meets*, Radio Clyde interview
- ¹⁷ *Glasgow Herald* June 17 1941
- ¹⁸ *Glasgow Herald* June 20 1941 p.6
- ¹⁹ Alice Milne 10/7/94 p.15
- ²⁰ *Children First: a Discussion of Scottish Schools issued by the Scottish Committee of the Communist Party* (Glasgow 1956) p.4
- ²¹ *Ibid* p.10
- ²² *Ibid* p.11
- ²³ Cathy Brown p.31
- ²⁴ *The Party's Work Amongst Women in Scotland* Marion Henery Collection, (henceforth MHC) CP ,(Glasgow 1956) In 1956 in Glasgow, 800 folders on the Budget were given out prior to a meeting by Harry Pollitt and one thousand leaflets on the women engineers claim were distributed. p.1
- ²⁵ Jessie Clark 4/4/94 p.6
- ²⁶ *Report of the Scottish Committee of the Communist Party covering the period from January 1945 to June 1946* (Glasgow 1946) [WGML] p.31. There was also a full-time woman organiser in Fife. Jenny Dand. Also the composition of the 235 delegates at the Congress on 21-22 September 1946. only 39 were women and only 1 was a factory delegate. 26 were housewives. p.16.
- ²⁷ Isa Porte 16/2/94 and 12/12/96 'We did all sorts of things. Peace petitions, collecting at works for helping strikers and things but we also - then we formed a Women's Group and we met separately from the Branch in a small local hall and we had speakers - on one occasion we had Tamara Rust and we got two new members that day. We had old Bill Joss, people like that at meetings. just for a period.' p.1
- ²⁸ Mary Park 13/12/94 and 13/11/96 p.8
- ²⁹ May Annan 22/4/94 p.16
- ³⁰ May Annan 22/4/94 p.18
- ³¹ May Annan 22/4/94 p.16-17
- ³² Isa Porte 23/3/94 and 12/12/96 -'Well it was difficult to keep it going. You would get people coming for a wee while and then they would have other commitments but they stayed in the Party but the Women's Group sort of fizzled out.' p.1
- ³³ *Communist Party Organisation Report for April 1949 ' Report to the Political Committee 1950,* [WGML] p.7.
- ³⁴ *Report of the Scottish Committee covering the period January 1951 to January 1953* [[WGML]] , p.12
- ³⁵ *Communist Review* April 1951 , p.108
- ³⁶ *The Party's Work Amongst Women In Scotland* , (MHC) p.2
- ³⁷ May Annan 22/4/94 p.15
- ³⁸ *Scottish Bulletin*, February 2 1946
- ³⁹ Jenny Richardson 31/3/94 p.10
- ⁴⁰ *Scottish Congress Report 1948* [[WGML]] p.11
- ⁴¹ *Scotland Demands* , Scottish District Special, 1947
- ⁴² Jenny Richardson 31/3/94 p.10
- ⁴³ Marion Robertson 19/4/94 p.22
- ⁴⁴ *World News and Views* , November 1953 Vol.33 No.47 ,p.561

- ⁴⁵ *The Party's Work Amongst Women In Scotland* (MHC) - 'There has been a tendency in the Party, however, not to appreciate the role of the Assembly as a progressive organisation, which, with all our problems, we should do our utmost to encourage' p.4
- ⁴⁶ C.Thornton and W.Thompson 'Scottish Communists, 1956-7' in *Science and Society* Vol 61 No.1 Spring 1997 p.89
- ⁴⁷ *World News and Views* November 1953
- ⁴⁸ *Scottish District Report November 1953* [WGML] p.17
- ⁴⁹ *Ibid*
- ⁵⁰ *Ibid*
- ⁵¹ May Annan 22/4/94 - 'I must say Marion Henery was a tremendous example to me, yes she really was. Of course Marion had been in the Soviet Union and I thought she was experienced, but terrific feeling...' p.13
- ⁵² Marion Henery 6/4/94 and 17/11/95 p.10
- ⁵³ Marion Henery, authors notes from meeting 10/11/95
- ⁵⁴ C.Thornton and W.Thompson 'Scottish Communists, 1956-7' in *Science and Society*-importantly the authors state that Fraser was censured by the Scottish leadership, with no right, for submitting a document to the Commission on Inner Party Democracy that year. There seems little doubt that the reason for leaving was Hungary.
- ⁵⁵ Alice Milne 10/7/94 p.16-17
- ⁵⁶ Isa Porte 16/2/94 and 12/12/96 p.9
- ⁵⁷ Jessie Clark 4/4/94 p.4
- ⁵⁸ *Scottish Bulletin* February 2 1946 'It is interesting to note that Scotland is the only district to increase its January sales of *Women To-day* - these having leapt from 700 in October to 1,100 in January'. However sales were only 600 per issue by 1956. - *Party Work Amongst Women in Scotland* (MHC) p.4
- ⁵⁹ Marion Robertson 19/4/94 p.23
- ⁶⁰ Marion Robertson 19/4/94 p.24
- ⁶¹ Jessie Clark 4/4/94 p.17
- ⁶² Jessie Clark 4/4/94 p.19
- ⁶³ Jenny Richardson 31/3/94 p.7
- ⁶⁴ *Draft Report to Political Committee* 1948 [WGML] - 'two successful' women's schools were run in Glasgow - with an average of 22 women. There were six lessons, three on Political Economy and three on Dialectical Materialism. p.4
- ⁶⁵ District Women Cadres School 26/27th June 1954, Kenilworth Hotel, Queen Street, Glasgow-(MHC), there were three sessions, one on Saturday afternoon and two on the Sunday.
- ⁶⁶ National Residential School for Women Cadres on 'The Road to Socialism', November 3-10th 1956 (?), Copy of syllabus (MHC).
- ⁶⁷ Letter from Rhoda Fraser, CP Women's Department of the Scottish District Committee to Area Organisers, Branch Secretaries and Secretaries of Women's Groups, November 1954 (MHC)
- ⁶⁸ *Ibid*
- ⁶⁹ *Ibid*
- ⁷⁰ *World News* Vol.2 No.13, March 26 1955, p.254
- ⁷¹ *World News* Vol.3 No.1, 7 January 1956, p.14
- ⁷² *Ibid*.
- ⁷³ Alice Milne 10/7/94 p.16
- ⁷⁴ The first one being at the Shelbourne Hotel, Edinburgh, 5-6th November 1955. Application form (MHC).
- ⁷⁵ J. Cohen *Report of Scottish District Women's School June 8th-9th 1963, Balloch 13th June 1963* (MHC) p.2 also reproduced in *Party Life* Vol.1 No.7 October-November 1963 as *A Women's School in Scotland* pp 8-9
- ⁷⁶ *Ibid*
- ⁷⁷ *Ibid* p.3

⁷⁸ 'Participation by the students in the groups and in general class discussion was very good indeed . very lively at times, but one got the impression that there had not been a great deal of preparatory reading of the recommended material'. Report of Ayr School (MHC).

⁷⁹ *Ibid* - the breakdown, not always given, was housewives-12, clerical workers-4, industrial workers-6, services-2, students-2.

⁸⁰ There were six district women's residential schools in the 1960's -

1963 - Balloch - 50 students tutor: Jack Cohen and Glasgow - 17 students- , tutor: Jim Hill.

1964 - Glenshee - 14 students: tutor Margaret Hunter.

1966 - Ayr - 20 students, tutor: Finlay Hart

1968 - Ayr - 36 students, tutor: James Klugmann

1969 - Ayr - 26 students, tutor: Joan Bellamy

typewritten list (MHC).

⁸¹ The attendance from areas to the 1963 school in Balloch was - Glasgow-25, Lanarkshire-5, Dunbartonshire and Renfrewshire-7, Edinburgh-2 , Aberdeen-4, Fife -1, West Lothian -5. For the Ayr school in 1968 -Glasgow- 19, Lanarkshire-3, Dunbartonshire-11, Stirlingshire-1, Edinburgh-2, West Lothian-1. The slight discrepancy in numbers may be due to non-Party people. List of schools (MHC).

⁸² E. Burns , *A Call to Co-operators* .CPGB, (London 1954) p.8

⁸³ *Draft Report to Political Committee 1948*[?] [WGML], p2

⁸⁴ *Scottish Co-operator* 21 May 1949 (MHC)

⁸⁵ Mary Docherty 14/5/94 and 14/3/95 p.12

⁸⁶ *Scottish Co-operative Women's Guild: Rules of the Guild and the Branches and Standing Orders* (Glasgow 1948) Strathclyde Regional Archive/Glasgow City Archive (henceforth SRA/GCA) TD1206/1/2 part vii reads 'while persons of any political persuasion are welcomed as members of the Guild , only those who are prepared to become individual members of the Co-operative Party, work for, and support Co-operative and Labour candidates at both Parliamentary and municipal elections are eligible to hold office.' All nominees had to accept a political questionnaire.

⁸⁷ Marion Robertson 19/4/94 p.19

⁸⁸ Marion Henery 6/4/94 and 17/11/95 p.29-30

⁸⁹ CP/CENT/PERS/3/03/ [CPA] Hand-written submission by Marion Henery dated 31st March 1955.

⁹⁰ *The Party's Work Amongst Women in Scotland* (MHC) p.3

⁹¹ Marion Henery ,6/4/94 and 17/11/95 p.29

⁹² *Scottish Co-operator* May 21 1949 - 'It has been stated that the political rule passed last Congress has been responsible for a large number leaving our ranks. We do not accept this'.

⁹³ Marion Henery 6/4/94 and 17/11/95 p.30

⁹⁴ *Report of the Scottish Congress March 26-27th 1955*- Rhoda Fraser states 'Is it the policy of the Guild which needs changed? No! As a matter of fact , magnificent agenda for the May Congress - 14 resolutions on Peace, 10 on Social Advance. What needs changed is the way in which the Guilds work

⁹⁵ *57th Annual Congress of the Scottish Co-operative Women's Guild , Dunoon Pavilion 19-20 May 1949* (MHC) p.1-2

⁹⁶ Burns, *A Call to Co-operators*, p.6

⁹⁷ *Scottish Co-operative Women's Guild: Sixtieth Annual Report and Balance Sheet for the year ending march 1952*. SCWS Ltd. (MHC) p.27

⁹⁸ *Scottish Co-operative Women's Guild: Sixty-first Annual Report and Balance Sheet for year ending March 1953* (MHC) p.15

⁹⁹ *Ibid* p.18

¹⁰⁰ When educating children for instance, something that the Women's Co-operative Guild had always looked down on or ignored compared to the Socialist Sunday School - Andrew Jackson Archive, TD1206/1/4 (SRA/GCA) Paper on the Training of Co-operators by Miss Llewelyn Davies (General Secretary of the Women's Co-operative Guild) (Glasgow 1902) though calling for equality between men and women in the Co-ops stated 'Children's classes and examinations as part of

educational work; but answers got out of children of ten and eleven to questions about "surplus capital" and "depreciation" are of doubtful value' p.10.

¹⁰¹ *Scottish Co-operative Women's Guild: Sixty-first Annual Report* (MHC) p.23

¹⁰² *Scottish Co-operative Women's Guild: Sixtieth Annual Report* (MHC) p.4

¹⁰³ *Ibid* p.10

¹⁰⁴ *Scottish Co-operative Women's Guild: Sixty-first Annual Report* (MHC) p.3

¹⁰⁵ *Scottish Co-operative Women's Guild: Sixty-second Annual Report and Balance Sheet for Year Ending March 1954* (MHC)- the fall is from 43,182 members in 1948 to 32,000 in 1954. p.20

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid*. p.21

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid* p.23

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid* p.24

¹⁰⁹ Andrew Jackson Archive, TD1206/1/4 (SRA/GCA) , copy of the *Scottish Co-operator* January 22 1955 p.7

¹¹⁰ Andrew Jackson Archive, TD1206/1/4 (SRA/GCA) , copy of the *Scottish Co-operator* January 8 1955 p.12

¹¹¹ *Ibid*

¹¹² *Ibid* Andrew Jackson Archive. (SRA/GCA) *Scottish Co-operator* November 19 1955 p.21

¹¹³ Marion Robertson 19/4/94 p.18

¹¹⁴ *The People Will Triumph : Report of the Scottish Congress of the Communist Party March 26th and 27th 1955* [WGML] p.4

¹¹⁵ *Ibid*

¹¹⁶ *Ibid*

¹¹⁷ Marion Henery 6/4/94 and 17/11/95 p.31

¹¹⁸ Burns, *A Call to Co-operators* ,(London 1954) p.9

¹¹⁹ Burns, *A Call to Co-operators* ,(London 1954) p.13

¹²⁰ *Speakers notes on the Independent Commission of Enquiry into the Co-operative Movement*, (MHC) (London 1958).p.1

¹²¹ *Ibid* p.2

¹²² *Ibid* p.1

¹²³ D. Ainley, *Co-ops: The Way Ahead*, CPGB, (London 1962) p.5

¹²⁴ *Ibid* p.11

¹²⁵ *Ibid* p.14

¹²⁶ *Report of the Scottish Committee of the Communist Party covering the period April 1955 to January 1958* ([WGML]), (Glasgow 1958) p.11

¹²⁷ *Ibid*

¹²⁸ *Scottish Women's Bulletin* , No.1 April 1964, (MHC) p.1. The Bulletin was mainly the work of Isa Porte - Isa Porte 16/2/94 and 12/12/96 - 'Yes well I was in that for a wee while in Glasgow and helped to put out a women's paper, a wee monthly duplicated paper. I helped with that for a period. but I was more or less just an ordinary member...' p.2

¹²⁹ *Ibid*

¹³⁰ *Ibid* p.4

¹³¹ Women's Advisory Committee, Scottish Women's Conference Sunday (MHC) 8th October 1967 - 'To bring more women into the struggle against low wages and for equal pay. To ask the Party to carry through the widest discussion in the Party, and for more public campaigning on the issue.' p.1

¹³² *Scottish Women's Bulletin* No.2 May 1964, (MHC) p.3

¹³³ *Ibid*

¹³⁴ *Scottish Woman's Bulletin* No.3 June 1964 (MHC) p.4

¹³⁵ *Scottish Women's Advisory Committee: Detection and Prevention of Cervical Cancer . Campaign Notes April 24 1964* (MHC).

¹³⁶ *Ibid*

¹³⁷ Letter from Marion Henery to the Department of Health for Scotland , 20 April 1964 (MHC)

¹³⁸ *Scottish Women's Bulletin* May 1964 p.4

- ¹³⁹ Quoted in the *Scottish Woman's Bulletin* No.4 September 1964 (MHC) p.3
- ¹⁴⁰ *Ibid*
- ¹⁴¹ Campaign Notes on the Cervical Cancer Issue (MHC) p.2
- ¹⁴² April 1964-March 1965, typewritten notes on the issue (one page) (MHC)
- ¹⁴³ *Glasgow Herald* 3rd March 1965
- ¹⁴⁴ Letter from Marion Henery to Judith Hart 17th March 1965 (MHC)
- ¹⁴⁵ Letter from Scottish Office to Marion Henery 4th June 1965 (MHC)
- ¹⁴⁶ *Ibid* Letter from Scottish Office to Marion Henery
- ¹⁴⁷ SWAC Scottish Women's meeting 4 April 1964 (MHC)
- ¹⁴⁸ *Ibid*
- ¹⁴⁹ Katherine Gallin 13/4/94 p.8-9
- ¹⁵⁰ Scottish Women's Advisory Committee meeting 9 April 1967 (MHC)
- ¹⁵¹ Letter to Scottish Office from women's deputation signed Mabs Skinner (Inverness) Margaret Rose (Aberdeen), Margaret McGill (Glasgow) Nan Wilson (Kirkintilloch) and Mary Healy (Greenock). (MHC) 29 June 1967.
- ¹⁵² *Scottish Woman's Bulletin* No.4 September 1964 (MHC) p.2
- ¹⁵³ *Comment* Vol.3 No.10 March 6 1965 p.155
- ¹⁵⁴ *Comment* Vol.4 No.10 , March 5 1966
- ¹⁵⁵ Letter from Margaret Hunter to Marion Henery 30 January 1967
- ¹⁵⁶ *Comment* Vol.4 No.42 15 October 1966 p.667
- ¹⁵⁷ *Ibid*
- ¹⁵⁸ *Comment* Vol.6 No.12 23 March 1968 p.181-2
- ¹⁵⁹ Minutes of the Scottish Women's Advisory Committee 12/11/67 (MHC) p.1
- ¹⁶⁰ Scottish Women's Conference Sunday (MHC) 8th October 1967 p.1
- ¹⁶¹ Minutes of the Scottish Women's Advisory Committee 12/11/67
- ¹⁶² As 1968 was the year Pat Milligan took over from Marion Henery as Secretary of the SWAC it is well to look at the composition of this School held on 24/25th February 1968. There were 36 in attendance with the following occupations: Clerical 12, Industry 4, Shop Assistants 3, Services (School meals) 5, Housewives 7, Students 2, Nurses 1, Lecturer(s) 1.. 7 had TU responsibilities , 12 had Party positions from the Scottish Committee to the branches. Scottish Women's School Ayr 1968 (MHC)
- ¹⁶³ Pat Milligan 15/3/94 and 11/5/94 p.8
- ¹⁶⁴ Jean McCrindle 28/6/95 p.8-9
- ¹⁶⁵ *Comment* Vol.6 No.51 21 December 1968 p.818
- ¹⁶⁶ Minutes of the Scottish Women's Advisory Committee 22/1/68 (MHC) p.1
- ¹⁶⁷ *Ibid* - Pat Milligan took over from Marion Henery in this year and was a younger secretary , she had joined the Party in 1961.
- ¹⁶⁸ *Communist Review* November 1952 p.344
- ¹⁶⁹ *Ibid*- 'The further advance of the women's movement in Britain must depend upon the organised strength of the working people and their determination to move forward along the road to socialism. It cannot be a separate movement, nor have a different direction' p.348
- ¹⁷⁰ 'Women in Capitalist Britain' , CP Central Education Department November 1955 [WGML] - 'Although women suffer more from the sort of society we live in, they don't have the same rights as men. This is true in spite of all the advances that have been made in Britain. They still have an inferior position'.
- ¹⁷¹ *Ibid*
- ¹⁷² *Report of the Scottish Committee of the Communist Party covering the period January 1958-January 1960* [WGML] p.5
- ¹⁷³ *World News* Vol.5 No.43 October 25th 1958 p.633
- ¹⁷⁴ *Report of the Scottish Committee 1958-60*
- ¹⁷⁵ *World News* Vol.2 No.36 September 3 1955 p.690
- ¹⁷⁶ *May Annan* 22/4/94 p.18

177 Cathy Brown - 29/5/94 'Oh no, no. They were expected to play exactly the same role as the men unless, it was understandable, somebody had family and they couldn't always be out and about selling literature and knocking on doors. They were never expected to be subordinate in any way'
p 12 - a woman who was critical of any need for the Advisory and women's sections.

Chapter Five

Solidarity with the Socialist World: 1917-64

The Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc

I thought we all looked up to the Soviet Union. It was the first country in the world that threw the capitalists off their backs, so we had to look up to it. It was important¹

...it was an example, it was something that we looked upon and looked up to, their society after all, I mean there may have been abuses, there may well have been all sorts of things going wrong but when you went to the Soviet Union, as a lot of us did, most of us I think one way or another got to the Soviet Union, *you felt it was a workers country.*²

‘You see it was stupid but we really thought that in the Communist Party we had people who were incorruptible and that was the biggest shock. Here we found one away at the top who was corruptible. I don't think the Party ever recovered from that. I don't think so.’³

‘I think Hungary was the big moment when someone like me felt that was it really.’⁴

The USSR 1917-45

The Russian Revolution and the fight to retain the new republic in the first few years shaped the consciousness of many Party members and determined at times a fiercely loyal, interpreted as being uncritical, attitude to future events. After the ‘war on twenty-three fronts’⁵ from countries hostile to the Soviet Republic came the years of famine and the economic restraints on trade which made it seem doubtful if the revolution could survive. That the Soviet Union did survive from such open hostility no doubt coloured Party members in supporting measures whose legitimacy were later questioned. This chapter attempts to set out and explain the attitude of women

Party members in Scotland to the Soviet Union and their experiences and perceptions including the dramatic ,and for some traumatic, events of 1956.

Over three-quarters of those women interviewed visited one or more of the socialist countries and , more often than not, the Soviet Union was prioritised. The history of the USSR was tied up with its affiliated parties. Few did not give unquestioning allegiance to the CPSU through the Communist International. The legacy of Lenin and, from the mid twenties, the dominance of Stalin were seen as central to living socialism in the world. Many workers had acted in international solidarity before the appearance of Communist Parties:

It was the first country that had been taken over by the workers and everybody looked towards the Soviet Union for leadership because it was the first workers republic. In this area there were 'Hands Off Russia' committees set up so that Russia wouldn't be defeated because there was intervention and famine taking place in Russia at that time, munitions being sent and the 'Jolly George' was stopped in London . We had the 'Hands Off Russia' committee in Cowdenbeath , my Daddy organised concerts for getting money for it.⁶

These early acts and the overt nature of the intervention against the new republic were etched on the minds of many future CP members. This would be important in for continued support for the Soviet Union in the future. The deprivation under the period of War Communism and the economic retreat from immediate socialist policies that was seen to be necessary under the New Economic Policy did not spell the end for the new republic. Also the appeal of Lenin's arguments , his supremacy in the Russian Communist Party and the dissemination of his works among Party members and in the Communist International laid the foundation amongst members that Soviet leadership would always be of the same calibre.

The first opportunity for ordinary members to get to the Soviet Union was either to be sent to the Lenin School in Moscow or to go as part of an official delegation. The late 1920s and the Five Year Plan were the first major attempt to

expand the industrial sector rapidly and increasingly subordinated the agricultural territory to this process. Even at this early stage there were noticeable advances. Mary Docherty from Fife visited a Soviet motor vehicle factory in 1929 at the beginning of the first Five Year Plan:

When we were getting introduced , interviewing some of the committee and the fact that we were in the Party, we seen young fellas passing and we asked 'what are all the young fellas passing for?' and they said 'The night school are starting and they're all going to sign on for night school' and that was 1929, they were that interested...it impressed me because they were all keen to get themselves better than what they were and it wasnae for their sel' , it was for everybody because everything belonged to them and you felt that when you were in it, that everything belonged to you. Even when I was there I used to walk up and think 'fancy, this belongs to me too, I'm here , I'm a worker '. Everybody was working for one another as it were...⁷

And it was this sort of experience that convinced people that the road to socialism was being built. After Lenin's death in 1924 Stalin was quick in eclipsing his rivals for the leadership but at this stage the long drawn out battles between the various opposition were not self evident to ordinary Party members abroad. There had been strong disagreements in the Central Committee of the CPSU but there was also the impression of continuity , of strong leadership. Soon Stalin was seen to embody Soviet socialism:

...When you were there you looked up to Stalin. In fact I could hardly believe the things that they told us years after that had been taking place, there was never any sense of that when I was there , never got any inclination that that was going on. In fact the meeting that I was going to , for the anniversary of the revolution at that time... It was Stalin was to be at that meeting but he had something on and couldnae come and Budenny that come to the meeting.⁸

Budenny was no minor replacement. He had been a commander in the Civil War and was one of its heroes. He was a founder and later Inspector of the Red Cavalry in the 1920s. In 1935, firmly a part of the hierarchy, he became one of the five Marshals of the Soviet Union.⁹

Industrially there were already notable advances. There was an increase in the total volume of investments from 1926-7 by 31.7%, in construction it nearly doubled.¹⁰ The Five Year Plans, the first of which started in 1928, sought to rapidly industrialise the economy and so catch up with the output levels of advanced capitalist countries. It was seen as the only way the Soviet Union could progress. In the treatment and upheaval of people from the countryside and the shortages that were incurred the effects of the first plan were horrendous¹¹, though perhaps inevitably so:

Obviously you saw a lot of evidence of privation. I mean the footwear, there was so many people going about with felt boots on, they didn't have money to buy leather shoes. Also, as far as food was concerned, it was basic, very very basic but one thing of course was that there was a tremendous activity by the Communist Party who held themselves responsible for the line that the country was operating on. The main thing was to get the country in such a position industrially that they would be able to move from there, so they had the various Plans. At the end of this Five-Year Plan [there was] the possibility of seeing an opening up of an easier life for the ordinary people. But there was a lot of privation leading up to the end of the Five Year Plan at that time.¹²

At this stage one must recognise the physical attachment to the Soviet Union for communists in Scotland (and elsewhere). The economic depression that cast its shadow over the major industrialised nations at this time showed a staggering reversal in fortunes for even that most dynamic of economies, the United States of America. In Britain unemployment reached epic proportions at a time when there

was not the automatic safety net of a welfare state. Worse, a Labour Government and then the National Government penalised those out of work. In Scotland there was mass unemployment and deprivation which wiped out many workers living standards, especially once the Means Test was applied and the plight of one member affected whole families.¹³

It looked as if the Soviet Union, despite its backwardness and its primitive industrial stage, was making headway and was employing its people to advance the living standards of the majority. This was most certainly at the expense of those peasants who had benefited from the New Economic Policy and who were seen as a nascent bourgeoisie. The offensive against the Kulaks was brutal but , it was argued, here were profiteers who did not deserve the sympathy of communists and who were seen as being detrimental to the revolution and its purpose:

And you had sabotage from the rich Kulaks and all that was very worrying. In the countryside there was a special class war going on and I think this was a very difficult thing, it was difficult for me as a young person to know it all but that was the position when we were there. Then there was also a lot of fear, apprehension, about the imperialist powers working against the Soviet Union. I think that was a big factor and a big factor that encouraged them to clamp down on free expressions of opinion.¹⁴

There were of course different views as to the speed, time and necessity of the policies implemented during this period. Industry was central to an advance in living standards in either economy and the industrial working class was pivotal for furthering the advance to socialism in the USSR. For women advances in social relations were announced in official statements proclaiming equality in law of men and women and the right of one partner to dissolve a marriage.¹⁵ In employment there was a large increase in female unskilled labour, though medicine and teaching were seen as the almost exclusive preserve of women.¹⁶

In the run up to the congress of the Communist International in 1935 Peter Kerrigan had been sent by the CPGB to work in the Soviet Union and with the influx of visitors and delegates this presented family problems. Rose Kerrigan found she could not get facilities for her youngest child Rose:

...I had nobody to take her and look after her so I just had to stay home and we went out a lot together , tried to learn some of the language but even then things were against me because that was the year of the Seventh World Congress and all the interpreters for English , schoolteachers and interpreters and all that kind of people were all occupied and I couldn't get anybody to teach me!... [Peter] was the one that had to organise a delegation from Britain and everything because we were living there and he was supposed to stay there a year and if he had I would have learned the language but everything was against me , and Rose went to Kindergarten...and I went to work at the place where they produced statistics and the English paper and so on, Pat Sloan worked there at the time.¹⁷

The Kerrigans returned to Scotland so that Peter , at the behest of the British Party, could help Willie Gallacher in his campaign for the West Fife parliamentary seat which was won in the same year.

The mid-thirties was also the time of the great purges and the elimination of opponents by Stalin. D.N. Pritt , a Labour MP and Pat Sloan¹⁸ , who worked for five years as a lecturer in the Soviet Union , were eyewitnesses who defended what they saw as the fairness of the 1936 trials.¹⁹ Party members were being told of the success of the Soviet Party leadership and that: 'Socialism has been built in the Soviet Union precisely because Trotsky's wrong policies have been defeated'.²⁰ Some members developed doubts about Stalin but by no means was there any universal questioning:

He seemed to me all right except I kept wondering why so many people seemed to be discovered to be unreliable and losing any power that they had. Myself in my own mind I thought, 'there's something wrong here' and I couldn't put my finger on it...

The 1936 'Stalin Constitution' was hailed as making '...the Soviet Union the fullest and most complete democracy which the world has ever seen'.²¹ Few people in the CP at this time in Scotland appear to have had any criticisms. The Soviet Union was a source of great inspiration because it seemed to contrast full employment and progress with stagnation and depression in the West.

The dramatic change in Soviet foreign policy in 1939 resulting in the Nazi-Soviet Pact caused ructions in Communist Parties. It precipitated a crisis in the CPGB. Harry Pollitt, J.R. Campbell and Willie Gallacher strongly opposed the Comintern's change of line.²² This was from having had an anti-fascist stance in supporting a war effort against Germany to then being told such a conflict was now an imperialist war. In Scotland Party members knew about Pollitt and Campbell's stand (Gallacher's vote being recorded as for the change) as the matter was discussed at meetings. May Annan, who had joined in 1938, remembered: 'That was the first controversy that I met in the Communist Party'.²³ Alice Milne who had joined the YCL the same year was slightly bewildered by the arguments:

...I couldna understand it. I couldna understand why one minute we were for the war, the next minute, well maybe I've got this wrong but it seemed to me a remarkable turnaround in a very short space of time and I couldna understand it, it seemed to me it was very much internal Party politics and I just really could not understand that, I think probably I was too young and also I didna understand the ramifications at that time and the Party's adherence to Soviet Party policy, I didna understand that.

Pollitt was consistent in having always argued for opposition to fascism, as had J.R.Campbell. The imminence of war may suggest a reason for the lack of resignations over this issue. There was a massive vote of Scottish members supporting the new Party line.²⁴ The testimony of women Party members shows that the issue was by no means quietly accepted by a compliant membership and that as well as among the leadership, much soul searching went on in many Scottish branches. Having heard the facts at a meeting, Effie O'Hare and her husband Dan discussed the issue:

...when I came home I started to talk to Dan and we argued and argued until four o'clock in the morning and Dan said 'Oh to hell with this, I'm going to bed'...I supported them instinctively, I wasn't very good at explaining why, but just instinctively that's all I can say...I thought it was wrong because you don't fight for years up to Nineteen thirty-nine against fascism and suddenly turn. To me that was wrong..²⁵

The confusion and a dramatic change of policy was evident at Scottish District level with one of the Party's Organisers, Bill Cowe, writing *Scotland and the War* in opposition to the war in 1940²⁶ and then a year later stating the urgency in supporting the war effort in *Scotland for the offensive: A call for a fighting lead*.²⁷

Once Hitler turned his forces on the Soviet Union and swept across its eastern front there was wholesale destruction of villages, towns, and the annihilation of vast numbers of people. Isolated, faced with devastation, and in need of help, the defeat of the Soviet Union seemed a distinct possibility from 1941-2. Whole factories and resources were removed. From July to November 1941 1,523 industrial enterprises were evacuated of which 1,360 were said to be large-scale. Ten million Soviet citizens were moved eastwards.²⁸ Also more labour was mobilised (in millions), work hours were increased and food was strictly rationed.

In Scotland a perception of the stark conditions in the Soviet Union encouraged a response from women in various organisations in Coatbridge and Airdrie (it had started from the actions of women in the Airdrie *Russia Today*

Society)²⁹. The Airdrie CP women's section, the Co-operative Women's Guild, churches, political parties and youth associations showed their solidarity with the women of Leningrad during the siege of the city from 1941-3. Led by Agnes Maxwell of the local Communist Party branch along with a concerted effort by other Party members, such as Minnie Aitken³⁰ and many sympathetic people in the community, women in Lanarkshire compiled an album of their locality for the women of Leningrad as a gesture of solidarity. It told of their history, how they lived and what they were doing for the war effort. Signatures and messages of support were obtained from women in workplaces, women's organisations, churches and youth groups.³¹ It was an initiative that was enthusiastically taken up and was reciprocated by a similar album being sent from Leningrad (the Scottish album, presented to the Soviet embassy in London, finally reached there by an arduous journey) where women had compiled a history of the city and described what they were now going through. Each organisation received a brief message of thanks with the longest one for the CP Women's Section in Airdrie. The album was presented in Glasgow to Madame Maisky of the Soviet embassy in February 1943 at a reception of 500 people.³² Having learned of the dreadful conditions that the people in Leningrad were facing, the starvation that had ensued by being cut off by the German invasion and the lack of established and reliable supply routes into the city, one might presume that Scottish people were made well aware of the tragic state of affairs in the Soviet Union by this well publicised act. The final death tally for Leningrad was 830,000 including combatants.³³ The solidarity in this one instance had a lasting effect for those involved and possibly countered some of the de-humanising images that developed with the Cold War.

Visiting the USSR and the Popular Democracies.

The call for a 'Second Front Now' had been evident on many demonstrations from 1942 and keeping up with news from the Eastern front and the intense fighting brought greater attachment to the cause: '...Stalingrad was a terrific epic o' gigantic world proportions and that affected me very deeply and in that sense the war did affect me very deeply and the tremendous loss of life that there was all over.'³⁴

Whatever the role of Stalin , he reaped the benefits of the Red Army's success and his reputation among communists was enhanced during this period. As Deutscher so accurately states: 'The nation was willing to forgive Stalin even his misdeeds and to retain in its memory only his better efforts'.³⁵ From 1945, there had been a marked increase in the number of countries that now had socialist economies and internationally , for the Soviet Union , there was a reversal from the physical isolation of the 1930s. Seemingly Stalin represented the invincibility of socialism in contrast to the demise of Hitler and his transient rule. The Soviet economy appeared to be strengthened , with as much capital invested from 1946-50 as there had been in the thirteen years preceding the war.³⁶ From 1947 with credit agreements and in some cases the writing off of reparations, there was a greater economic link with the new socialist economies and this was confirmed through the Council of Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON) set up in 1949.

Opportunities to visit the Soviet Union increased after the war and in Scotland there were regular tours and visits , often arranged through the Scottish-USSR Friendship Society which was based in Glasgow. In order to combat the Cold War and consolidate support for the international communist movement and its drive for peace, more international gatherings were encouraged and delegations were regularly welcomed. The Women's International Democratic Federation, to which the Women's Assembly in Britain was affiliated, held conferences. One was held in Rumania in 1950:

...some of the women who were organising the women's conference were women who had suffered very severely under the Nazis during the period of the war and you could see it, they were very stoic women , there was no getting away from it, none more than Anna Pauker. I was absolutely delighted to meet Anna Pauker and then they asked us to speak at a big rally and this was a rally of about two hundred thousand people I think, [they] had all turned up and I had to shout my odds at it but I did it. All along the road , when we were going to the congress, going to Bucharest first, every station we stopped at there was women

there to meet us and to get to know us and give us wee posies of flowers and wee knick-knacks...³⁷

Pauker , from a Jewish family, had been arrested and imprisoned in 1936 and was exchanged for Rumanian detainees after the Soviet invasion of Bessarabia in 1940. She was welcomed to Moscow by Stalin and stayed there until 1944. After the war she was Secretary of the Rumanian Communist Party and in government Minister of Foreign Affairs and Deputy Prime Minister.³⁸ The conference brought delegates together from European countries and was given great importance by the Rumanian authorities who feted their guests and took them round the various collective farms and factories. Although conditions were primitive, one could not, at this time, blame failed socialist policies as the country was only just recovering from the war. An element of doubt as to the level of socialist democracy in operation could come through the often quick and inexplicable political changes that occurred, especially in the early fifties:

We came back and I was raving about Anna Pauker because she'd done time and everything for the worker's movement...when we werenae hearing about her, and somebody says 'Well you know what happens in these countries?'...Oh I thought it was terrible , I says 'Well I cannae understand it', because *I could not see* Anna Pauker betraying the worker's cause because she spoke that day and she was very broad faced and stocky built, fairly tall but full of conviction and I couldnae believe that woman would betray her country.³⁹

The press had carried reports from Rumania of a purge of '192,000 members of the Rumanian Worker's Party'⁴⁰ in July 1950. As it turned out Pauker , a couple of years after the above WIDF conference, was purged politically and ostracised to the wilderness. She was expelled from the Rumanian Workers' Party and lost her government post. She died in 1960.⁴¹

Some of the biggest international gatherings were the World Youth Festivals that were held bi-annually and usually in one of the socialist countries. These festivals promoted national independence from colonialism and peace measures supported by the Soviet Union. The first festival was held in Prague in 1948 and the second in Budapest in August 1949 with students from 63 countries representing 57 million youth.⁴² Visitors were provided with nursery schools if needed and subsidised meals paid from factory profits. After the establishment of socialism the mines were nationalised in 1946 as were, by 1948, all industrial plants which employed over one hundred people.⁴³ At the end of the festival 250,000 Hungarian youths from various organisations took part in the closing ceremony.⁴⁴

The international bodies which organised the festivals were the World Federation of Democratic Youth and the International Union of Students. Although obviously activity for the festivals was encouraged by the CP's in all countries, these were purposefully not just for YCL members. The British Youth Peace Committee was a separate body (though its activities were supported by the CP) which organised the British contingent. The intention was to get youths from varied backgrounds to meet, and to encourage them to promote peace in their respective countries thereby lessening tensions between the governments of east and west.

There is hardly a better example of trying to disrupt the gathering for a festival, and the attitude of the Western authorities to these events, than the incident that occurred to youths travelling to the World Youth Festival in Berlin in 1951. The slogan for the coming festival was 'Youth Unite in the Fight for Peace Against the Danger of the New War'. The *Glasgow Herald* poured cynicism over the spontaneity of the event: 'It is a foregone conclusion that they will return with glowing accounts of lavish hospitality, stirring demonstrations, and magnificent artistic and athletic achievements'.⁴⁵ This reporter obviously had no knowledge of the Western authorities proposed tactics. The West German government had banned delegates from flying over their territory and so the only route was by sea or across Europe by ferry and road. It was only two years since the 'Berlin Airlift' which occurred amid Soviet calls for the prevention of a West German state.⁴⁶ Half of the

British delegation went on the Polish ship *Batory* and got to the festival in time, but the other half suffered from the time they arrived in France:

The first sign we got of there being trouble was that the week before we were due to leave, the Festival office was broken into, there was nothing taken and nobody knew what had happened, just that it had been broken into but when we crossed the Channel and landed at Calais, the police on the French side had all our names. They let us all through except the leadership of the delegation and they were all sent back, they were eventually flown to Berlin but they were turned back at the Channel. So we then got onto a train which took us through France and Switzerland into Austria and when we got to Innsbruck, again we got word through the grapevine that there was trouble ahead.

Overall one hundred people were turned back from French and Belgian ports. This echoed similar treatment of hundreds of foreign delegates the previous year travelling to the International Peace Conference in England.⁴⁷ At Austria the American army deliberately intervened to stop the train carrying the youth delegation from going to the Festival. With rifles and fixed bayonets at Saalfelden they ejected those going to the Festival. They demanded that the youth have 'grey passes' which they had been told previously they did not need to obtain. Firstly stopped from leaving the train, the youths were then transported between Innsbruck and Saalfelden. Having been taken back and forth between stations some of the youth wandered off when they got the chance, near Saalfelden:

We had walked up just passed this farm when lorries that were in fields switched on all their headlamps and blinded us and they came down, in fact, there was a lorry parked on the road and it had a machine gun trained on us and the first thing that happened that one of our people who were with us was knocked over by an American jeep, in fact, if they had known, he was an American who was with us and he was bruised from head to foot.

Another chap was butted in the head with a rifle butt and was taken into the station at Saalfelden and stitched up without any anaesthetic. He was later diagnosed as having concussion... his name was Colin Sweet and we had to nurse him when we eventually got back on the train.⁴⁸

A young woman had been hit by a train and was badly injured. Colin Sweet and the other youths were forced back on the train. The harassment continued and it was clear that the authorities, with the excuse of the need for a grey pass, were intent on stopping the young people from getting to Berlin and wanted them to accept a train that would take them back from where they had come. Stranded at a woods yard and without basic facilities, women had to get fellow youths to stand round and make a 'screen' whilst they took turns to relieve themselves. They were humiliated in front of the American soldiers who stood by and made lewd comments:

By this time we were all a bit desperate to go to the toilet, the chaps with us could go behind a hut or whatever but the girls couldn't very well do this, so some of the boys had found some breeze blocks and they built a shelter for us but the Americans wouldn't let us go on our own so we always went in pairs and the American soldiers went with us and stood watching whatever we were doing, it was most embarrassing if nothing else.⁴⁹

On a train to Innsbruck, having been told by railway workers they were to be taken to a Displaced Persons Camp, the students pulled the communication cords and after a scuffle with police they stayed there. A delegation, headed by a Scottish pipe band playing (rather bizarrely) 'Rule Britannia' and 'Jerusalem' went to see the British Consulate there who proved unhelpful.⁵⁰ The Austrian Youth Movement helped the delegates avoid the Western troops at Bruck who were detailed to stop them. Trade unionists helped them with money and food:

Bruck-ad-Mur reminded me very much of our border towns, and we walked down and through the square and out one of the side streets and

disappeared. We had been taken into a communal hall and from there groups of us were taken to public baths, and for a meal; they really looked after us very well and we discovered it was the Communist Party of this particular town that had come to look after us and that was the first time I *felt* confident we would see Berlin.⁵¹

Sympathy from some of the Austrian population who fed them and helped find a way round the cordon meant that most of those who had been harassed and stopped managed to reach East Berlin and the Russian zone. They had missed most of the festival and a National Scottish Performance had been cancelled as not enough delegates had reached Berlin in time.⁵² Needless to say, any illusions young communists may have had about the nature of the American presence in Europe was shattered when experiencing such treatment. The perception of an over indulged consumer culture was only reinforced:

...I felt sorry for these young conscripts, I mean they were standing at night and all they could read were *stupid comics* and I thought, 'God what kind of mentality have these men', and I mean they were *men* not boys, and they were reading comics that said *Pow!*, *Wow!* that sort of thing. I just felt sorry for them that they hadn't seen the light; that they were still believing that their system was better than any other... That was what they had been taught, that we were dirty reds and this was all we deserved. There was a coloured chap with us, he got extra abuse and we were asked, we were white girls 'why did we allow these coloured b---s to be with us. But it was all very disturbing altogether and it has taken me a long, long time to forgive them for what they did to us...⁵³

The delegation had been at the centre of an international incident that typified relations between East and West at that time. When nine hundred delegates returned to Britain on the *Batory* they made it plain that they would be complaining about their treatment.⁵⁴

Questions were raised in the House of Commons and there was an inquiry conducted by the National Council of Civil Liberties into the whole affair. Despite the authorities

belief that the youth were brainwashed and used by the Russian authorities, (one reason for Herbert Morrison influencing the Bonn government to stop the youth)⁵⁵ not all who attended were enamoured by real socialism: 'our Party had many differing impressions of what they saw...'.⁵⁶ This was because getting youth from all backgrounds was the main aim and was usually at least partially successful. Those who did not sympathise with what they saw said so. It was the obvious cost of having a genuine delegation and not one full of sympathisers. Among those on the trip to Berlin were Young Conservatives, two schoolmasters and a grammar school group. They had been thrown off the train with the rest.⁵⁷ Fortunately this incident did not discourage female Party members from experiencing future Youth Festivals. After Berlin the next festival was in Rumania in 1953:

You didn't meet ordinary people. You saw them about their daily business shopping and that sort of thing. This is Rumania and the World Youth Festival in Bucharest. I met a lot of young people but really it was like a big jamboree, it wasn't really a political event. It was a political event, there was politics behind it but when you went there you met delegations from different countries and you had chats. There was theatre shows and that sort of thing and sport and things of that kind. So although it was a very enjoyable thing to do I don't think I could say I learned very much politically.⁵⁸

The first perception that authorities wanted to dispel was that which gave the impression that communist countries were the aggressor and intent on international domination. Peace was always a part of the theme. Young communists may have expected to see positive aspects to these new societies but at such an early stage there was also an understanding that some of the economies were still dependent on agricultural production and even sympathetic visitors were not going to witness a wealthy socialism:

...They weren't as well dressed as people in this country but I don't think you would expect that anyway. There seemed to be a lot of sports facilities for young people, behind buildings and places where there was just a small piece of area. If it wasn't a wee garden then it would maybe be a wee volleyball court or something of that kind which was very impressive really. You felt that people were doing things towards social things like sport and things of that kind. The public parks in Bucharest were beautiful as well, the public transport seemed to be good and very cheap and very frequent because we used public transport...⁵⁹

That there appeared to be public ownership of the utilities was most important. Women could compare the advances recently made in Britain, small but limited nationalisation with noticeable results, and see this as a partial advance to what was really needed - full public ownership. It was not the standard of living - rising in Western Europe - which was compared but who actually controlled the economy.

To communists visiting the Eastern Bloc it seemed that the Communist or Workers' Parties, and therefore the leadership of the working class, were in this position of control. Festivals were there to win over the youth to peace and so encourage a more sympathetic response ; ultimately their purpose was to be inspirational. Willie Gallacher , visiting the 1953 festival marvelled at the palace in Bucharest and that 'Instead of a family of parasites occupying that great building it has now become a special kind of cultural and educational institution for the children of the workers'.⁶⁰ This was an obvious comparison with the Russian Revolution and a reason to believe that socialism was advancing in the same way in these countries. The Popular Democracies , as they were called , were seemingly making headway - Rumania could boast that by 1955 it had made 3.5 million people literate of the 4 million illiterate after the war⁶¹. This was further proof of the CPSU's beneficial influence since 1945.

1956

In his New Year's message Harry Pollitt declared that '1956 will be a Great Year of Action'.⁶² He could hardly have been aware of how true these words would prove both nationally and internationally for the communist movement.

When the CPSU met for its Twentieth Congress in February, Khrushchev, giving the report of the Central Committee, was confident for the future and this was reflected in the reports of the Congress to British Party members who were told that 'by 1960 the Soviet Union will produce more steel, power, cement and fuel than is now produced by Britain, France and West Germany put together.'⁶³ The CPSU was more of a mass party than ever with 7,215,505 members, three times that at the eighteenth congress⁶⁴, and its leading role was deeply embedded within Soviet society. Lenin was given continual recognition for his great political leadership as was his principle of 'collective leadership'.⁶⁵ There was criticism of where Party members were failing and the Report also contained many recommendations for changes to the Party structure and on the whole was constructive in its reform proposals.⁶⁶ One name was noticeable by its brief mention rather than the usual omnipresence: Stalin. Some delegates had learned of Khrushchev's criticisms of Stalin's rule at a closed session of the congress and from there it leaked out into the world's press. In May the British Party expressed its shock⁶⁷ and the speech was fully published in *The Observer* in June. In Poland, where Party reformers had waged a successful struggle for some autonomy, fifteen thousand copies of the speech were unofficially printed and distributed.⁶⁸ Until the revelations in 1956 there does not appear to have been any deep and meaningful questioning of Stalin's rule from those interviewed who were active at the time. For instance none thought there was validity to the criticisms they heard about his authority:

Well of course, during the war, Joe was a great man and it wasn't until the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party that it all came out. Up until then, Joe Stalin was a great person. When people talked about the Gulag's and all the terrible things that were happening, you thought it was just

capitalist propaganda, you didn't believe it. It was pretty devastating to find out later on that it was all true.⁶⁹

At his death there was grief felt by many Party members and a loyal tribute paid by Harry Pollitt to Stalin. Articles had consistently emphasised economic achievements since the end of the war , e.g. by 1949 industrial production was at twice its pre-war level.⁷⁰ Progress was compared favourably to the countries under the Marshall Plan whose industrial production was said to have exceeded their 1937 rate by 4 per cent compared to 44% for the Popular Democracies and 100% for the Soviet Union.⁷¹ There was admiration for the achievements in the Soviet Union since the revolution and the spectacular industrial advances made under Stalin's rule were attributed to him:

I thought Stalin , at the time, because he had led the Soviet Union during the war and provided that stability and that leadership , it seemed to me that he was a hero of the Soviet Union and a hero of socialism and when he died I felt very sad , as though I'd lost a dear relative, and when Khrushchev revealed a' the things that had gone on during Stalin's time and the crimes Stalin had committed, I found it very hard to believe...the evidence seemed to be so overwhelming and there was so many people who could testify to it , eventually I believed it.⁷²

It is difficult to convey the utter shock and astonishment that greeted Khrushchev's secret speech , and the subsequent confirmation by the CP leadership in Britain that mistakes had been made and that this was due to Stalin's personality. Dissenters demanding fundamental changes were greater in numbers than ever before:

There had been a period when people within the Communist Party in Scotland had raised things at Aggregate Meetings. I thought they were just being purist and things couldn't always be a hundred per cent as we

would choose them to be, as we would like them to be and that there would be errors.⁷³

Despite the expectation that there would be problems and mistakes, once it was accepted by members that the accusations against Stalin had substance there was criticism levelled at those who had been involved at the highest level with him and had apparently done nothing nor admitted the mistakes earlier. Indeed there was a certain amount of anger at the Party leaders in the Soviet Union who had witnessed the degeneration occurring:

And then you came to know that there were others in the Party who *had* known that this was happening and I had no doubt that they felt it was for the good of the international movement to keep it quiet but that isn't how I felt about it. I felt very angry, very upset as well but very angry that it had all been hidden because had it not been hidden it might not have happened to the extent that it did happen. And as we know, there was thousands of good communists and communist families that were just eliminated and that , as well, was very upsetting.⁷⁴

Dissent and unease had been fermenting with the revelation that there had been persecution of Jews in the Soviet Union. Jews had a radical theatrical and strong musical tradition which could be found throughout Eastern Europe, and since the Revolution were a recognised nationality in the Soviet Union. The CPGB had many members of Jewish background and Glasgow had a strong Jewish community , mainly in the Gorbals area, of whom many had been left-wing refugees fleeing persecution in Europe at the start of the century.⁷⁵ There was a Jewish Cultural Committee of the CP in Britain and in Scotland the Party had a Jewish Advisory Committee. In 1956 a meeting of Party Jews took place in Manchester. At this meeting Hyman Levy, a prominent scientist and CP member originally from Edinburgh, raised crucial issues concerning the purges. Some Party members soon heard of this:

...in Manchester he addressed the conference and he said 'we were asking questions' he said 'Ilya Erenberg came to my house in London , and comrade to comrade , of many many years, speaking Yiddish. I said to him 'Ilya whatever happened to Mikhoels and Izik Feffer?'. They came to Britain during the war to appeal for money , they came to Glasgow, there were huge meetings we had here for them , and he [Levy] said 'we never hear of them'. And to the conference Levy turns and says that 'Erenberg said to me "they are very well, I saw Izik in his Dachau outside Moscow only a fortnight ago", when he said that to me comrades Izik Feffer was five years in his grave' he said 'who the hell am I to be lied to about the Soviet Union?!'... apparently at that point friends of mine who were there said 'Jesus Christ, to think that they could have done that'.⁷⁶

The implications here were enormous. Erenberg was a respected writer and was active in the peace movement having been an inaugural Bureau member of the World Peace Council in 1950-1.⁷⁷ Ironically he was credited with helping to bring in a more liberal climate after Stalin's death and for reviving an interest in aspects of culture which had been neglected.⁷⁸ Mikhoels and Feffer had come to the West at the behest of Stalin during the war as part of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Front to raise money for the Soviet war effort. They travelled to Canada , the USA and Mexico and also came to Britain, holding the said meeting in Glasgow. The National Jewish Committee of the Party had only recently been formed and helped organise their visit.⁷⁹ Feffer was a respected playwright. Mikhoels was considered the greatest Yiddish actor of his day and helped preserve the Jewish theatrical tradition. He was artistic head of the Moscow Jewish Theatre from 1928 and in 1939 was granted the title of People's Artist of the Soviet Union. He was also awarded the Order of Lenin.⁸⁰ The late 1940s saw a dramatic change in the official attitude towards Jewish culture and anti-Semitic persecution occurred on such a scale that it was only relinquished with Stalin's death and later admitted to by the Party. It was during this

period that both Feffer and Mikhoels perished. For those who believed the allegations at the time, such base prejudices were repulsive coming from the Bolshevik tradition as since the revolution: 'Yiddish literature , theatre, schools and press blossomed in a land where Jews had been ghettoised and oppressed for centuries'.⁸¹ Hyman Levy came to Scotland to discuss matters with others deeply worried about what they had heard:

...And Levy came to Glasgow to give a report back and I'll never forget it, it was in a small hall in St. Andrews Halls.⁸² At one point one of the women just had to get up and go out. And I said to him 'Hyman , you're saying to me that things like the savagery of the army, the savagery of the secret police , the brutality to people, you mean that?' he said 'Look I'm not going to go into it Janey for God's sake, let me just say this to you' he said that 'the Soviet Secret Police had nothing to learn from the fascists'⁸³

Having heard these accounts some people left the Party. In the CPGB there developed an opposition of members who now wanted more open debate and a full discussion of past failures and they launched a magazine for Party members to air their grievances and comment on the points raised in the articles:

...I supported the *New Reasoner*⁸⁴ group who were this group, Edward Thompson and John Saville who were producing this little journal which I thought was wonderful and we all agreed, me and Raphael [Samuel] and all rest, that we weren't going to leave the Party until we could see whether we could change it so that's what I mean by being a dissident , that we were part of a group that was demanding that the Party *change* that year. I had big rows with my family that year, *big* rows.⁸⁵

The Reasoner was highly critical of the Party, it stated that political controversy was 'barely discernible at most times and that unrelieved dullness has repelled many who are otherwise sympathetic to Marxism.'⁸⁶ It does not seem that the majority of the Party in Scotland agreed with the extent of this fault finding.. The yearning for a new style of politics and call for fundamental changes to the Party's structure made some uneasy or just overwhelmed with the implications. For others it was the only way to develop the CP into a mass party similar to some of its sister parties in Europe:

... We stopped off in Paris to go to the *L'Humanite* Festival which was amazing and then we went all the way down to Rome and there was *Unita* festivals going on there and we heard Togliatti speak and I was so impressed, he had a wonderful speaking style and the Party in Italy seemed to be , in September Nineteen Fifty-six just after the Khrushchev revelations of Easter and just before Hungary , it seemed to me both that Christmas and that Summer I was definitely feeling ill at ease with this wooden jargon which no longer seemed to me to be able to express socialism in a way in which people who weren't communists and in this little inside Party could possibly understand.⁸⁷

There could not have been a better time to contrast the indecisiveness of the CPGB with that of the Italian Communist Party which was a mass party and had developed new strategies and programmes to take them, as they believed, towards elected power and eventually a transition to socialism. With a membership of two and a half million in 1955 and with 9,586 sections and 1,578 Party groups⁸⁸ it was the strongest communist party in the Western world and had an influence amongst its working class base that was unmatched by any other CP. Developing a strategy that took it away from the orthodox line of the Soviet Union, the PCI saw advance being made by progressive elements in all organisations:

The move to the left cannot today be the aim of the struggle of Socialists or Communists alone, or even of the Socialists and

Communists together. It is the aim of all forces of the people: Communist and Socialist, Social democrat and Republican, Christian democrat and Catholic, each of which must work in its own sphere forces together in the general situation.⁸⁹

Togliatti believed that with such a strategy socialism could be won through parliament in Italy: 'Today the situation is that socialist ideas have deeply penetrated the minds of the people'.⁹⁰ Here, for those with growing criticisms of the British Party, was an alternative that seemed to be heading in a direction opposite to that of the leading role of the Party and more towards alliances of various groups and interests in order to influence greater numbers of people. It was a strategy that was to develop through the sixties and seventies and would find both enthusiastic support, and equal hostility, in the CPGB.

One should not underestimate the sympathy there still was for Stalin. If there had been major faults then others were thought complicit as well: 'If he did what they said he did, what did they let him do it for?. They were equally guilty if that was the case.'⁹¹ It was the extremes that Stalin went to that were criticised and not the general policies the Party had applied. This was a pivotal issue in that members could still believe that socialism had been retained and that the faults were attributable to personal failings rather than any structural degeneration. That *The Reasoner* also attacked the CPGB for seeing the interests of the working class being tied up with the foreign policy of the Soviet Union⁹² could not be better illustrated by a major international event.

Hungary

In late October 1956 in Hungary there were large demonstrations against the government. These were put down with the help of Soviet troops who then withdrew. It was then that a greater wave of opposition occurred in Budapest and the city was in revolt. Soviet troops re-entered the city and there was heavy fighting with the uprising finally crushed. Many Party members saw it as a counter-revolution and the evidence was the killing of communist officials and party members

on the streets of the capital. Graphic details were published relating such crimes⁹³ and Party members were reminded of the Hungarian Horthy state before the war and the menace of fascism.. Added to this the last ten years had seen relentless opposition to the international communist movement, with the hounding of communists in western countries and this made many CP members doubt the validity of nearly everything supported by the press against the Soviet Union. It was barely seven years since the arrest⁹⁴, trial and imprisonment of Cardinal Mindszenty who, for communists especially, symbolised the reactionary nature of the opposition that the new Popular Democracies faced. He was charged with trying to overthrow the republic and treason.⁹⁵ That the capitalist countries continually called for his release and touted him as a potential leader in Hungary⁹⁶ was seen as proof of their duplicity with right-wing elements who were said to have taken the 1956 revolt further:

...we lost quite a number of our comrades then, they just couldn't agree. My brother is very friendly with Charlie Coutts who was actually there, on the streets of Hungary when it was going on. He was originally Aberdonian but now lives in one of the Eastern countries and he saw the Party members being butchered in the street, it wasn't all one sided...I just thought that the counter-revolutionaries were at work and they were destroying Hungary and that the Soviet tanks were quite right to be there and as I say when you saw Hungarian Communists hanging from lampposts it was a fellow-feeling, that these were your comrades that they were doing this to.⁹⁷

Peter Fryer was the *Daily Worker* correspondent in Hungary. Having had his reports censured (two were not even published) he left the CP. Fryer, also admitting that counter-revolutionaries did exist,⁹⁸ believed that this was a genuine workers revolt against an oppressive and corrupt Communist Party. Proof of socialist and communist elements in the uprising were evident in *The Observers* extensive coverage⁹⁹ though this did not necessarily mean that such people led, or that the uprising was leading to, a consciously directed and more democratic form of socialism. For communists loyal to the Soviet

Union it was quite the opposite. Coutts' *Eye Witness in Hungary* published in 1957 tried to balance criticism of the Hungarian Workers' Party , who were the target of 'the greatest upsurge of national feeling in Hungarian history'¹⁰⁰ and had operated a repressive socialist model, with arguing the eventual necessity of the Soviet troop intervention. Future publications justified the fate of Imre Nagy¹⁰¹ , who had been replaced by Janos Kadar , claiming Nagy and his supporters had 'degenerated from opportunists to revisionists , to renegades, to traitors and then to counter-revolutionaries'.¹⁰² There were many members who thought an invasion was all the Soviet Union could do to save socialism.

At this point in Scotland many notable people left the Communist Party. Rhoda Fraser , having been deeply distressed by the Khrushchev revelations, decided to leave (as did her husband). Some branches in Glasgow , Pollokshaws and Central branches for example, lost members as did some in Edinburgh along with an Area official and International Brigader, Donald Renton.¹⁰³ Jack Ashton was brought in as an Area official to try and hold the Party together.¹⁰⁴ Renton recommended Ashton who had been working , formally , for the Soviet Press Department whose primary concern was the distribution of *Soviet Weekly* and *Soviet News*.¹⁰⁵ In Fife, where the CP had such a strong influence, the split went right into the most dedicated communist families like the Moffats. While a senior family member Alex Moffat, an area official of the Scottish NUM and on the EC,¹⁰⁶ left the Party a junior family member joined the Party in solidarity:

...I also remember the situation arising from Hungary when my Uncle Alex left the Party and that was a shock to me as I think it was to my father who believed that if you had concerns or doubts about anything that went on in the Party or in the socialist world you should stay in the Party and fight for what you believed in - you should wait on a full report about what was taking place in Hungary - and I thought Uncle Alex should have done that. But he left the Party, he joined the Labour Party but he re-joined the Communist Party at a later stage.¹⁰⁷

Another example of someone who joined the Party over the issue of Hungary was the greatest living Scots poet, Hugh MacDiarmid. Always politically sympathetic to the Communist Party and to Scottish nationalism he was later a General Election candidate for the Party in 1964 against the then Prime Minister Alec-Douglas-Home.

To those who supported *The Reasoner* group Hungary was a further reason for greater transformation of the CPGB through internal changes. It had also occurred at a time when the British Prime Minister Anthony Eden had shown his contempt for Nasser and Egyptian sovereignty, by concocting a plan with France and Israel to invade Egypt and take control of the Suez Canal. But for the events in Budapest it was felt that the left in Britain, with active groups like the (CP supported) Movement for Colonial Freedom,¹⁰⁸ might have been able to have had a greater impact against the Eden government. Those around *The Reasoner* whilst strongly condemning the British government's attack on Egypt, blamed events in Hungary on the Communist authorities.¹⁰⁹

...I was back in St. Andrew's in the October, I think the Hungarian Revolution happened in October Nineteen Fifty-six. I think Suez was just before so I can remember having those big demonstrations and then Hungary happened and I remember going home and saying to my stepmother and father 'I just can't bear this, this is obscene how the Party's behaving over Hungary. Why can't we just cut our connections with the Soviet Union and Moscow who obviously don't have the interests of any other working class at heart except their own and maybe not even that and have an independent Party that can come out with its own analysis and won't be so isolated from the rest of the British political public?'. And we just fell out, they said 'You are betraying the class if you do that'.¹¹⁰

The Suez debacle highlighted the traditional approach of the colonial powers to the developing countries and in opposition to this Khrushchev had voiced his support for the Egyptian people. With condemnation from the USA it was also the most graphic

illustration of the end of British imperial strength and after 1956 British ruled colonies raced towards independence. What was seen as the hypocrisy of the establishment made an indelible impression on young people who did not identify with Britain's past role in the world and identified with the arguments of the left:

I remember going down the High Street and some guy was collecting money for Hungary , they were sending ambulances. I've got no particular quarrel with that but I remember turning on him and saying 'What are you doing about the Egyptians?' and he just about dropped his collecting box. It was things like that , I mean you couldn't help but see and then you come back, I don't mean the Party line, but you say 'Christ , these guys have actually got a lot to complain about' when you see all the shit that's dished out in the press and all the official hypocrisy and it becomes even worse when you read about Suez diaries...they didn't even believe what they were doing, they didn't have that as a justification.¹¹¹

There was obvious frustration that more could have been done if there had not been a need to defend the actions of the socialist bloc at the same time. Alex Clark , a miner in Lanarkshire, held pit head meetings to explain his position as a communist while people called to 'fling the bastard in the pond'.¹¹²

Those Party members who supported the actions of the Soviet Union did so believing that socialism was being preserved and the invasion had been essential and had the support of a large section of the Hungarian population. The duplicity of Britain, France and Israel in their planned invasion of Egypt and the secret protocols show that they had no support at all for their actions. For many Communists it was proof that they were right to condemn the three governments for imperialist intervention and right to defend actions that would preserve socialism from the same elements in Hungary:

...I still *believed* in communism and , okay, I personally thought there was a need for the Hungarian Government , as they did , to invite their

allies the soviets to support them against all the subversive stuff that was going on and it was going on , there was no question about it. I mean this was a period of what was going on in the whole world in relation to the USA , McCarthyism and the CIA and so on and so forth and I honestly believed it was the West , mainly the USA , that was doing their damndest to undermine any progress that was going on in the socialist countries and I was prepared to defend socialism and our comrades in Eastern Europe.¹¹³

The events of 1956 affected members of the British Communist Party dramatically both in any automatic belief in the absolute invincibility of the Soviet Union's political leadership and any unswerving acceptance of the dictates of the Party leadership in Britain. The Scottish District of the Party exemplified this as the Party had always acted as a unified and solid political force. It still did, but a precedent had been set by a very articulate and respected array of people who were a properly organised opposition in the CPGB. This precedent would make it easier for people to criticise the actions of the Soviet Union in the future allowing them room to develop alternative political theories. Even from those who had been active in the thirties and had been in the Party for nearly twenty years , there was more open criticism:

I never was terribly happy, I think after the Stalin thing, the Stalin revelations, one was a bit careful in accepting just willy-nilly anything that was done and I think I , myself, at the Khrushchev period, started to question anything, myself ,even within my own mind and did it in meetings, in fact I think I was kind of ostracised for a wee while , another comrade and myself had the same opinion but I didnae care , people thought we had no right to be talking like that but I didnae care. We were at a Women's Advisory and I'd got up and spoke about something and I said that I thought it was rather sad that this sort of

thing should happen and especially then the Hungarian intervention and people argued wi' me but I didnae agree wi' it at all.¹¹⁴

The Reasoner opposition were seen, denounced even, as intellectuals. Although in composition this was not true it posed a problem in Scotland. Party membership was so working class based that those who did act on Khrushchev's speech and were against the Hungarian invasion were often worker-intellectuals, the type of member that the Scottish Party had nurtured. Lawrence Daly was one such figure although he denied the tag of intellectual. Highly intelligent and articulate, he was seen by the Party leadership as a future leader. He had left before the invasion of Hungary. Those that fought the leadership sought to try and change things round at the special conference that took place in April 1957. They felt the Commission on Inner Party Democracy was the opportunity to change the whole nature of how the Party was run, especially democratic centralism. When they lost out on this they published a Minority Report which was rejected and this is when many left. Some that left the Communist Party set up a network of the left and for a time there were national conferences and discussions about re-grouping and presenting a socialist alternative:

...so there was a New Left Club in Aberdeen, Dundee, St. Andrew's, there was one in Edinburgh by an ex-Communist, Rob Hunter and then a big one in Glasgow and Neil Carmichael was part of that, Ron and Dorley Meek an ex-Party economist, Norman and Janey Buchan who came out of the Party at the same time. So that was a combination of left Labour and ex-Communists and new students and things. Very quickly we had this network going of New Left Club's plus the Fife Socialist League.¹¹⁵

Ron Meek had written in two of the issues of the *Reasoner* though his letters show him not to be wholly enthusiastic about its direction - a sign that the dissidents were not united in their alternative route. The Fife Socialist League was led by Lawrence

Daly and initially it was successful in winning some council seats and existing as a new political entity. In the 1959 General Election the FSL beat the CP into fourth place in West Fife though the Party still had five of its councillors in the constituency.¹¹⁶ Clearly the Marxist tradition lived on in that there was not an automatic rush to the Labour Party but an attempt to build something that was more radical. That, for all its initial success, this did not work and Daly and the League dissolved into the Labour Party illustrates the problem that the CP dissidents had.

Those who left were doing so because of the revelations of what had happened in the Soviet Union until 1953 and what had been done in 1956. But there was no room in the British political scene for an organised political alternative to fit in between the Labour Party's social democracy or the Communist Party's radical Marxist based programme. In Scotland the loss in membership volume did not alter the character of the Party. As we shall see in the sixties, no area of the Scottish District was irreparably damaged by the events of 1956, (two of the interviewees left at this time, one in Glasgow the other at St. Andrew's,) and no alternative grew outside of the CP for a number of years. Still there were the beginnings of new movements and ideas that would grow and were later recognised by the Party:

...there's a brilliant article in *Writing by Candlelight* [Doris Lessing] and it was just really exciting and I brought over and lent Lawrence's wife Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*, I was just beginning to be a feminist as well, and she read it and we had big discussions about it and she said on the whole it made her feel that being a woman was very miserable (*laughs*) but she was very interested in it and we had good arguments, good debates amongst the other miners wives about it, this is Nineteen fifty-nine-sixty.¹¹⁷

Simone de Beauvoir's book had first been published in 1949 and , like Betty Friedan's later work first published in 1963 , it would be a little while longer before more feminist orientated ideas began to take root in the Communist Party.

Those that left the CP, especially the younger members, may have felt that they had much more political life ahead of them, and many did. People such as John Saville and Edward Thompson, Doris Lessing and Raphael Samuel in England and in Scotland Lawrence Daly, Janey and Norman Buchan, a teenage Jean McCrindle who was the sole Party member at St. Andrew's University, all proved their worth in different fields. Yet the experience of life in the Communist Party, of its demands, its level of debate and ones absolute commitment to its cause was seldom equalled or exceeded:

I think a lot of people left in disgust and just didn't want to even have anything to do with it really. We were exceptional I suspect in thinking it was worth going on trying because the Party was *our life*, it really was, I've never experienced politics like that ever ever again except the Women's Movement actually, when it becomes your life again. But as a political party I've never had that again.¹¹⁸

New Left Review distribution was not extensive in Scotland and at the *NLR* conference the Fife Socialist League had been the only Scottish organisation present.¹¹⁹ Leaving the CP had only strengthened the resolve of those that remained and after 1957 there was less obvious criticism of the Soviet Union, certainly not from within the Scottish District, although there were changes which Pollitt could not have envisaged. He relinquished the post of General Secretary in 1956 and was replaced by John Gollan. Of the 42 people on the Executive Committee of the Party ten were Scottish and had been brought up in Scottish branches, although some were now national officials. Agnes McLean was one of only five women on the EC. For more than twenty years the CP would now have a Scottish leader and this was important in keeping the continued strong level of loyalty to the policy direction of the (British) Executive Committee from the Scottish District in the future.

The USSR in the early 1960s

By the turn of the decade there was a more optimistic air prevailing in the Soviet Union and for communists elsewhere a strong belief that socialism had renewed itself. The launch of sputnik in 1957, which the British Party saw as a 'great inspiration to the Party and the working class'¹²⁰, and Khrushchev's confident manner, evident in his speeches of the time, mirrored the new found conviction of the leadership. The liberalisation that occurred after 1956 allowed for greater artistic expression and there was less arbitrary punishment of political opponents. If there was great economic growth and advance in the socialist countries they were still behind in living standards compared with Western Europe which was now entering its most prosperous post-war phase, and there were cultural differences that illustrated this in the early Sixties:

...we went for a sail one night from Moscow down the river to woods famous for picnics and that, and here there was a works outing there at the same time and they had an accordion with them and they had plenty of bottles with them and they were dancing and they were getting us up to dance and that. Everything was okay, but I says to the women, I says 'it's like turning the clock back fifty years from the level we're at and the level they were at'. So it was...And then it was the factories. It was a big engineering factory we were taken and they were very proud of the fact that some of the women were turners. I thought the conditions were awful.¹²¹

There was also the problem (criticism often pointing to it being an endemic fault) of the quality of consumer goods for the Soviet people. Because there was a greater emphasis on industrial production the needs of the population were catered for in all basic ways but there was not the choice or quality that existed in the West. This was recognised as a problem though it was not successfully remedied. Demand often outstripped the supply of consumer goods and there were regular shortages:

mind I was shocked at the poor quality of their goods when I went there. I remember one day I said to the person who was in charge of our Party, could I see a typical Moscow store, so he took me to a Moscow Co-op and first of all it was very poor, the building itself was very un-prepossessing and there was great queues for things, and when I saw what they were queuing for , it was so shoddy and the goods were so awful, I wouldn't have thanked you if you'd given me them for nothing ,let alone queue for them! and that really shocked me because I thought they ought to have been much ,much beyond that stage and nae producing shoddy goods for the people.¹²²

One might see these faults as either economic incompetence or the result of having to concentrate more strongly on labour intensive and skilled factory work such as machine tool production. That there were communally owned facilities for all workers such as , in some factories , a meals service for the end of the day's shift, and crèche facilities, perhaps meant that the priority consumer goods were attributed was inevitably lower. Communist women visiting saw that there were good social services available for all and this was seen as essential. It was important in influencing how they saw this form of socialism:

I would say it was positive. Because of their attitude to women and children , their education system , when I was in the Donbass we seen the Donbass miners home it was *beautiful* and the crèches for children and all the schools, the education the schoolchildren got and we met children from away up in Vladivostock. There were so many different languages in a vast country like the Soviet Union but they spoke their own mother tongue but they had to learn Russian as a second language and everyone of them spoke Russian and almost everyone of them, wee things this size , could speak English or French ,their education system was great...¹²³

This was by no means an exceptional view amongst the women interviewed , either up to or after 1964, and it is an area where Khrushchev's reforms were in part successful. Pupils in higher and secondary technical education had increased noticeably from the late 1950s so that from 1940 to 1964 numbers had quadrupled.¹²⁴ Women were used to a poor level of social provision for children and women workers in Britain and many working class people felt the tiered welfare state system worked against them. The high standard of education and the priority it was given in the Soviet Union was one they could relate to. That the schools seemed well run and ordered suggested that there was little alienation overall:

The English speaking school in Leningrad...The courier had to go in and ask if they would let us in and we went in and the headmistress gave us a little talk and we were handed over to two children , two of their elder pupils to take us round and show us the classrooms. And I remember going into one classroom and they could speak to us, I said 'Little girl what are you studying?' and she said 'We are doing a study on Robin Hood just now' and I mind that , I remember that. Then they put on impromptu concerts for us, a little boy recited Burns and they sang songs and gave one act of *Pygmalion*, it was on the spur of the moment, arranged in their concert hall for us...¹²⁵

Visitors were still seeing advances in socialism and there were many who went out to the socialist countries during this decade who were pleased by what they saw. If they were lucky as were some Scottish Party women¹²⁶ , they might meet internationally known figures such as Yuri Gagarin and Valentina Tereshokova, the first man and woman in space. Tereshokova embodied the possibilities for women under socialism as she had come from a working class family, became the first ever woman astronaut and was politically active and increasingly more important in the CPSU becoming Chairman (as it was called then) of the Soviet Committee on Women in 1968 and later a member of the Central Committee of the Party.¹²⁷ The space programme was also seen at the time as an extension of superpower conflict in that the two opposing political systems were determined to outdo, and not to be

outdone by, their opponents. However the cost , along with that of the arms race , and the technology demanded a lot from the Soviet economy's resources. Few had criticism of this because pressure to maintain a high level of expenditure in advanced technological areas was seen to come from the danger of the United States gaining an advantage, but some saw waste:

The most serious [criticism] that I had was the most unpopular. All that money had been spent on the space programme when they were supposed to be working towards a socialist society where people would have enough consumer goods. Of course they had been working for ages on the bare necessities or less than the bare necessities and they were spending all of that money going up into space for whatever, that money could have been spent on consumer goods for people.¹²⁸

Those on special delegations , a British level Party delegation or a trade union delegation, also got the chance to meet high ranking Party officials and were accorded the best hospitality which meant guided tours and official gatherings:

...we met Khrushchev and his wife, we were introduced to them at this glittering reception. It was glittering in the fact that the surroundings were glittering. It was the Kremlin and the chandeliers and everything but the people that were there were just ordinary, they werenae all dressed up or anything like that, nobody was dressed up. And we were introduced to Khrushchev and one of the members of our delegation was quite a good looking woman and she had lovely red hair and , oh, Khrushchev bowed over her hand and gave her a kiss and we were saying 'oh that's what comes of having lovely red hair'...¹²⁹

A pointed contrast to the reverence with which Stalin had been used to. Up until 1968 there does not seem to have been any overall disillusionment about the Soviet Union during the decade and there were few interviewed who believed that it was

not basically socialist. One may conclude that it would be unlikely that many recruits would come into the CP if they were hostile to the Eastern Bloc and unless they were willing to see some positive aspects there such as full employment. Some younger women who came into the Party were more than aware of conditions in parts of Britain which they could contrast with the socialist countries:

For example there wasnae any unemployment at that time and I had been living in Manchester in the early Sixties at a time of very very high youth unemployment and I just remembered all the young lads coming into the jail on remand , picked up 'loitering with intent' and I remember thinking the fact that everybody was given the dignity of having a job was very important. Also that there was health care and there was care for the aged , that there was never any insecurity and you werenae really aware of dire poverty and that could have been because you were passing through an essentially rural community...¹³⁰

The events of 1956 could hardly be swept away and there was less likelihood that those in the YCL or new to the Party would believe as fervently as the generation before them in the integrity and political invincibility of the leadership in the Soviet Union. However one must not underestimate the level of loyalty and genuine confidence that the Soviet system would continue its economic growth and eventually catch up technologically with the West. Khrushchev as a leader was more human in his persona and had shown that, despite the admittance of horrendous crimes, the CPSU had regenerated under his rule. Communists still saw it as a progressive socialist force in the world:

The dissidents, there was always the problem of was it true or was it capitalist propoganda? And you always hoped it was capitalist propoganda and I think that we always kidded ourselves on it was capitalist propoganda because it was easier for us but then we realised it wasn't the case. I will say that there were ways of rationalising it , in

that the Soviet Union had developed its Communism in a very unsympathetic environment and it was under threatthere were these defamations of socialism and I think we went through a phase of making excuses for it because of its difficult birth.¹³¹

Cuba

If there was limited inspiration to be had from socialism as applied in Eastern Europe there was much to be had from the Cuban Revolution of 1959. This inspired communists because it obviously had mass popular support and was so near to the centre of the world's strongest capitalist economy. The USA under Kennedy failed , in April 1961 in the Bay of Pigs invasion , to overthrow the new government in Cuba and the administration under Fidel Castro strengthened its support:

Cuba meant an example of a country , and a less developed country, trying to be free to develop in its own way and the US had been so vile there. Everything you read about Cuba and of Batista was just disgusting. And when you're young I guess you over-simplify as well and it was very romantic all of this, the liberation of Cuba from Santiago northwards and all and it was important. And then Fidel's speech from the dock , you know 'History will absolve me'. That was published as a pamphlet and that was one of the first pamphlets I ever read.

Save an incident that seemed to threaten *any* future political permutation , communists could feel optimistic about the sixties if this, along with the burgeoning anti-colonial movements, was to be the trend. The moment where the Cold War seemed to be near to reaching an apocalyptic conclusion was the Cuban Missile Crisis. President Kennedy announced on 22 October 1962¹³² that the United States was ready to stop at all costs the delivery of nuclear warheads to Cuba where nuclear bases had been built and which was only ninety miles from its shores. The US Navy

implemented a blockade of the island. It is hard to convey the feeling of gloom and real fear that a nuclear war seemed very likely:

Yes well one thing I remember about it is how close we were to a third world war and how you felt about that and as I say I had a young family at the time so I was concerned we were going to be thrown into this holocaust. I also remember that it was American imperialism that was threatening the independence of Cuba...there was a lot of discussion going on about what was taking place and obviously in the NUM, where I worked, not only the officials - some of the officials were Party members - but there were two or three of us who were also on the staff who were in the Party and we discussed it fully.¹³³

As usual Party members felt that they should do something. A 'Hands Off Cuba' campaign in Edinburgh existed already and during the crisis supporters organised a poster parade and marched up the Bridges in single file. They also organised petitions in Princes Street. Because there was so little real effective action anyone could do, Party members, such as in Cambuslang, felt impelled to do what they could just to show solidarity when the worst seemed imminent:

...when it came over the television about *the* crisis day when it looked as if nothing could stop it being a war, we hadn't seen anybody else in the local Communist Party, my husband and I made a poster, went down to the local shops and stood there for a few hours and all it said was '*No War Over Cuba*'. Just to let the people think about it. And the next night there were big meetings in Glasgow about it which all the local people joined in.¹³⁴

The United States was seen as the prime imperialist country and the main enemy of socialism. Solidarity with Vietnam against the policies of the United States government would be the centre of so much energy and emotion in the sixties and

early seventies. As detailed in the next chapter it was the first major international issue for many young women members which increased in its importance and , unlike the Missile Crisis, was not a brief incident but became an integral part of their lives and political commitment. Khrushchev went in 1964. His agricultural policies being heavily criticised. Yet it seems as if the idealism of previous generations towards world socialism returned and regenerated in the sixties. One may attribute this to the change in climate of the Khrushchev years and to the fact that for remaining communists, however traumatised, belief in the Soviet Union was not altogether shattered. Trips to the socialist countries were still enthusiastically undertaken:

I went to East Germany just after I had joined the YCL , I went on a ditch-digging working party which was great fun, just 'cos you were there with a crowd , and I was making a lot of new friends. The food was terrible, it was hard work but what was entertaining about it was just meeting people...I do remember some of the fun being sat on by Mick Costello who was the group leader and he ended up being one of the leading 'Tankies' and he was just a young guy and he was such a blooming stick in the mud and pompous...but I suppose a lot of the time in the Party and in the YCL you saw yourself as being a bit of a rebel and kicking over the traces a bit and that there were these people that were conservatives and were over controlling.¹³⁵

This attitude was typical of the new wave of YCL'ers that came into the Party and in the next chapter there will be an attempt to convey the views and influences of this new generation and contrast them with those covered in the preceding chapters.

Conclusion

What this chapter has attempted to elucidate are the reasons why Party members believed in the Soviet Union , believed that Stalin's policies were helping build socialism and why , amongst many, there was support for the intervention of 1956. It is impossible to ignore how past occurrences inevitably influenced

contemporary outlook. Having the luxury of hindsight it is easy to condemn CP members.

The clear hostility of the capitalist world was proof for communists of the socialist character of the Soviet Union. That , from 1917, there had been so much suffering and resultant starvation meant that from early on Party members had a strong affinity with the Russian Republic and had seen its leaders tactics ensure survival. Above all there was undying admiration. The actions against the Kulaks and the coercion of the peasantry was seen as an offensive against exploiters. Unfortunately so was the treatment meted out to a genuine left opposition, Party loyalists and anyone else suspected of dissent. It was thought this was socialism handing out punishment that reactionary elements deserved. Party members were getting at the ruling class by believing that they were being comprehensively defeated and taught a lesson in the Soviet Union.

Stalin was believed, and he seems to have believed himself, to have been the inheritor of Lenin's qualities. Only those deep in the knowledge of party infighting and tactics against the opposition knew better. For obvious reasons now, there seemed little creditable opposition to Stalin and this only confirmed that his rule was genuine , democratic and popular. After all communists might well ask, who were the capitalist class to preach about democracy? They offered nothing but mass unemployment and reactionary regimes in countries where labour movements had been well organised and were now disabled or smashed. Also these countries' imperial power was physically putting down independence movements. Surely the Soviet Union personified the opposite of all this?. It was seen to be the friend of workers through Communist Parties and to have been the only real opponent of fascism. To criticise the socialist countries was to crack the surface and consequently things would disintegrate.

That there was criticism of the CPSU and more importantly Stalin's policies from the British leadership is more than evident in the change of line in 1939. Rather than meekly accepting the new theory from Moscow three of the principle CP leaders questioned it in a stunning series of meetings of the Central Committee. Recent evidence has shown the 'give and take' between the Soviet and British Party

leaderships in the early stages of the war after the displacement of Pollitt.¹³⁶ Undoubtedly few, if any, ordinary Party members knew of these discreet contacts but it is obvious that on the matter of the new line it was discussed and members most certainly expressed their views. Most importantly, there has been the breaking of a myth. We now know, from what members *did know*, that they aired unease. Crucially, before we get to Hungary, here is an example of dissent in the Party which counters the often perpetrated picture of an obsequious membership.

After the war CP members would be able to look at the various ultra-left groups who seemed eternally anti-Soviet; their undistinguished impact suggested that the CP must be doing *something* right as they remained the largest party left of the Labour Party. That most Party members did not go into the minutiae of detail to find out what was going on in the Soviet Union is not surprising as it was enough being active in the Party. Reports were received in glowing terms about the progress being made. Most members, men or women, did not desire to delve further than what they were told. And who could believe that at its first historical test, after having been the aim of so many workers since the nineteenth century, and that with such a momentous revolution, things could go so drastically wrong as was being suggested? The CP, especially in Scotland, was a Party of action and if matters seemed all right in the USSR then there was practical work to get on with. This was a trait, perhaps a crucial fault, of the Scottish District but it also explains a cohesiveness that gave the Party a vigorous campaigning character second to none.

What of women's experiences of the USSR and allied countries? As we have seen many Party members thought it was a healthy socialism and there are obvious reasons for this. Firstly there was the collective ownership of property which meant that people Party members met seemed to have some say in the running of their lives. Also social provision was given high priority and women found this aspect one that they could identify with. This was not only because in Britain they were repressed economically and socially (as indeed they were), left so often to deal with child rearing and schooling that they accepted this role, but because in the Soviet Union they could see a way out. They could recognise the freedom and benefits that greater resources brought in reducing the traditional domestic burden that women

had. That women still played a subordinate role is not disputed but there seems to have been progress. For members there appeared to be the rudiments of socialism and in this period (1929-64) none of the interviewees was disillusioned by visits to the Soviet Union. Far from it, they were enthused and excited by what they saw. Further, they were not uncritical and the interviews clearly show a more balanced assessment of conditions in the socialist countries than Party reporting of visits which seem wholly eulogistic and non-critical even up to and including the Sixties.¹³⁷

The crucial period for many of the women were the events of 1956. There was great shock that accusations which had been excused as a distortion of the truth now had to be reassessed. Stalin had supposedly embodied living socialism (he may well have been idolised more than was revealed by interviewees) but now the new authoritative voice of the CPSU was stating that he had in fact endangered many aspects of it though his legacy was still seen as positive in many areas. One great irony is that *The Reasoner* opposition in the British Party was given birth by the very body it now wanted to reject, that of the CPSU whose actions had determined the release of wide dissent in the CPGB. Impressive and articulate though its publication was, it is difficult to believe that those around *The Reasoner* did not realise that their actions would lead to expulsion or resignation. They wanted to replace Marxism-Leninism with a Marxist-Humanism and blamed democratic centralism for everything. And here is a crucial difference between its adherents and why some opponents saw them as intellectuals. In the first issue of *The Reasoner* it was stated that:

A political movement which places stress on authority and in which political argument and decision are circumscribed lacks appeal to a working class which is amongst the most politically conscious, and experienced in the capitalist world.¹³⁸

Far from British workers having a natural tendency to socialism, as this suggests, any Party loyalist might posit that the same working class had right-wing labour leaders who had contributed continually, and in the case of Ernest Bevin, decisively

to the Cold War. They were far from being active anti-imperialists. Contrary to the Russian workers British , and especially English , workers had centuries experience of working in industry but that by no means had made them politically conscious, just better organised at the workplace. It is not hard not to see an inherent romanticism that was strongly nurtured by the growing economic power of trade unionism at this time and led to an idealism of a class-conscious peoples who were innately socialist. Yet this was not only the view of some intellectuals. That trade unionists and workers in the Party were also part of this field of dissent is proven¹³⁹ and no one doubted the ability of the dissenters that left.

Come the Report of the Commission on Inner Party Democracy the differences were not repairable. There does however seem to be a lack of appreciation as to the sudden adaptability of the leadership. For the Majority Report was critical¹⁴⁰ as were the individual submissions of its signatories such as Bourne, Cheek and Halpin.¹⁴¹ Also, quoting the experience of the left in the early part of the century, there was a justification for democratic centralism as it had been 'adopted by our Party as a result of our experience' citing the problems of left-wing parties in Britain.¹⁴² It was thought that if centralism was not retained the Party would disintegrate, especially if factions were allowed.¹⁴³ The mistakes of the past were not attributed to the method of organisation but its interpretation , and this was the problem. Also recognised was the way District secretariats 'often made decisions' that should have been the remit of the district committee.¹⁴⁴ There were further points made about the domination of the many by the few in the Party. That such criticisms were forwarded shows that it was not only the CPSU that was attempting self reform. The CPGB was by no means finished, certainly not in Scotland where women were to continually increase their influence in the coming decades.

Women who supported the Soviet intervention in Hungary did so because of reactionary elements involved in the uprising and the execution of people associated in any way with the government. Later admittance about the degenerate state of the Hungarian Workers' Party to Scottish members showed a reaction against the regime was inevitable. These events did not signal the end of the CPGB or Communist Parties elsewhere. Khrushchev's reforms and the confident tone of the world's

communist parties was evident at the start of the nineteen sixties. Commenting on developments since 1957 a meeting of the representatives of Communist and Workers' Parties in Moscow in 1960 declared:

The chief result is the rapid growth of the might and international influence of the world socialist system, the vigorous process of disintegration of the colonial system under the impact of the national liberation movement , the intensification of class struggles in the capitalist world , and the continued decline and decay of the world capitalist system. The superiority of the forces of socialism over those of imperialism , of the forces of peace over those of war , is becoming ever more marked in the world arena¹⁴⁵ [Their italics]

A new rank of women now entered the Communist Party in Scotland in the early sixties believing that they could contribute to this changing of the future. Party membership had not declined irreversibly after Hungary, despite 7,000 members lost in Britain. In Scotland the next decade appeared to offer greater opportunities than ever before and a new generation fully believed that they could transform the world they lived in.

¹ Jean Mackay 25/2/94 p.11

² Mary Cowan 16/3/94 p.13

³ Marion Henery 6/4/94 and 17/11/95 p.18

⁴ Jean McCrindle 28/6/95 p.22

⁵ R. Palme Dutt , *World Politics 1918-1936* (London 1936) p.275

⁶ Mary Docherty 14/5/94 and 14/3/95 p.27-8 , this is in Cowdenbeath, Fife.

⁷ Mary Docherty 14/5/94 and 14/3/95 p.27

⁸ Mary Docherty 14/5/94 and 14/3/95 p.28

⁹ A. Brown (Ed) *The Soviet Union: A Biographical Dictionary* (London 1990) pp54-5

¹⁰ A. Nove , *An Economic History of the U.S.S.R.* (London 1982) p.144

¹¹ R. Palme Dutt , *World Politics* p.275 -Dutt admits there were 'great sacrifices'.

¹² Marion Henery 6/4/94 and 17/11/95 p.16 she continues 'I was able to go to a few of the big concerts and the ballets that were there and in spite of all the privation that was there, these were an inspiration and the thing about it was that the seats for this were given through the factories so there was a certain preferential treatment for the people who were working in industry to get the opportunity of seeing the very best in the culture that was available at that time.'

- ¹³ W. Hannington *Unemployed Struggles 1918-36* (London 1936) 1977 edition p.230
- ¹⁴ Marion Henery 6/4/94 and 17/11/95 p17
- ¹⁵ F. Nutina *The Soviet Law on Marriage* (New York 1933) p.4
- ¹⁶ Nove, *An Economic History of the U.S.S.R.* p.199
- ¹⁷ Rose Kerrigan 9/7/95 p.9
- ¹⁸ See P. Sloan, *Russia Without Illusions*: with a Preface by B. Webb (Manchester 1938) about her time there from 1931. pp 9-11 as to how she first went.
- ¹⁹ *Our History Journal* No.12, January 1988 p.21
- ²⁰ M. Pollitt *Defeat of Trotskyism* (London 1937) p.7
- ²¹ *ibid* p.20
- ²² F.King and G. Matthews, *About Turn: The British Communist Party and the Outbreak of the Second World War: The Verbatim Record of the Central Committee Meetings of 25 September and 2-3 October 1939* With an Introduction by Monty Johnstone (London 1990)
- ²³ May Annan 22/4/94 p.3 though she gets the facts about Pollitt the wrong way round.
- ²⁴ J. Attfield and S. Williams *1939: The Communist Party of Great Britain and the War. Proceedings of a Conference held on 21 April 1979 organised by the Communist Party History Group* (London 1984) p.107
- ²⁵ Effie O'Hare 23/3/94 and 20/3/96 p.16
- ²⁶ W. Cowe, *Scotland and the War*, CPGB, (Glasgow 1940) William Gallacher Memorial Library [henceforth WGML]
- ²⁷ W. Cowe *Scotland for the Offensive: A call for a fighting lead*, CPGB, (Glasgow,1941) (?) [WGML]
- ²⁸ Nove, *An Economic History of the U.S.S.R.* p.271
- ²⁹ M. Henderson *Dear Allies: A Story of Women in Monklands and Besieged Leningrad* (Monklands District Libraries 1988) p.18.
- ³⁰ 'Aye, Minnie Aitken,...She worked in industry and she had no spare time because it was all devoted to the Party, she organised schools and everything in Lanarkshire and meetings. The local organiser, Davey Reid, she worked with him a lot and if you read the history of this event that took place in the Soviet Union, they had this book of remembrance, she was involved with that' Marion Henery 6/4/94 and 17/11/95 p.31
- ³¹ Henderson, *Dear Allies* p.31
- ³² *Glasgow Herald* 6 February 1943
- ³³ Henderson, *Dear Allies* p.120
- ³⁴ Alice Milne 10/7/94 p.10
- ³⁵ I. Deutscher, *Stalin*, (Oxford 1966) 1986 edition p.534
- ³⁶ *ibid* p.558
- ³⁷ Marion Robertson 19/4/94 p.35
- ³⁸ G. Wigoder (Ed) *Dictionary of Jewish Biography* (Tel Aviv 1990) p.391
- ³⁹ Marion Robertson 19/4/94 p.35-6
- ⁴⁰ *Glasgow Herald* 21 July 1950
- ⁴¹ Wigoder (Ed) *Dictionary of Jewish Biography*
- ⁴² *Festival of Youth: Budapest 1949* [WGML] (London 1949) p.3
- ⁴³ *ibid* p.17
- ⁴⁴ *ibid* p.15
- ⁴⁵ *Glasgow Herald* 1 August 1951
- ⁴⁶ *Glasgow Herald* 6 May 1949
- ⁴⁷ *The Journey to Berlin ; Report of a Commission of Inquiry into certain events at Brussels, The Channel Ports, Innsbruck and Saalfelden in August 1951*, National Council for Civil Liberties [WGML] (London 1952) p.3
- ⁴⁸ Jenny Richardson 31/3/94 p.4
- ⁴⁹ Jenny Richardson 31/3/94 p.5
- ⁵⁰ *The Innsbruck Story*, published by the British Youth Festival Preparatory Committee. Bob Horne Collection [henceforth BHC] (London 1951) p.6
- ⁵¹ Jenny Richardson 31/3/94 p.5

- ⁵² *Glasgow Herald* 9 August 1951
- ⁵³ Jenny Richardson 31/3/94 p.6
- ⁵⁴ *Glasgow Herald* 22 August 1951
- ⁵⁵ *The Innsbruck Story* p.3
- ⁵⁶ *ibid* p.24
- ⁵⁷ *The Guardian* 17 August 1951
- ⁵⁸ Mary Park 13/12/94 and 13/11/96 p.30
- ⁵⁹ Mary Park 13/12/94 and 13/11/96 p.30-1
- ⁶⁰ W. Gallacher, *The Tyrants Might is Passing* (London 1954) p.81
- ⁶¹ *World News and Views* Vol. 2 No. 36, 3 September 1955 p.693
- ⁶² *World News and Views* Vol.2 No.52 31 December 1955 p.961
- ⁶³ *World News and Views* Vol. 3 No. 11, 17 March 1956 p.164
- ⁶⁴ N.S. Khrushchev: *Report of the Central Committee: 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union Feb. 1956* (London 1956) p.78 The Y.C.L. had 'more than 18 million' members. p.87
- ⁶⁵ *ibid* p.80
- ⁶⁶ *ibid* pp.85-6 - here he also briefly mentions the lack of women in leading posts.
- ⁶⁷ *Glasgow Herald* 16 May 1956
- ⁶⁸ A. Pries "Khrushchev's 'Secret Speech': Confusion of Tongues" in the *Journal of Contemporary Society* Vol.6 No.1, March 1990 p.82
- ⁶⁹ Marion Easedale 23/3/94 p.18
- ⁷⁰ *World News and Views* Vol.30 No.30 29 July 1950 p354
- ⁷¹ *ibid*
- ⁷² Alice Milne 10/7/94 pp.24-5
- ⁷³ Mary Park 13/12/94 and 13/11/96 p.27
- ⁷⁴ Mary Park 13/12/94 and 13/11/96 pp.26-7
- ⁷⁵ Rose Kerrigan 9/7/95 p.2
- ⁷⁶ Janey Buchan 4/10/94 and 21/1/97 p.24
- ⁷⁷ *Resolutions of the World Peace Council* (Paris 1951) [BHC] p.3
- ⁷⁸ Brown (Ed) *The Soviet Union: A Biographical Dictionary* p.p88-9
- ⁷⁹ H.F. Srebrnik *London Jews and British Communism 1935-1945* (London 1995) pp94-5
- ⁸⁰ Wigoder (Ed) *Dictionary of Jewish Biography 'Solomon Mikhoels (1890-1948)'* pp349-50
- ⁸¹ *The Reasoner* July 1956, First Number, p.25, I am grateful to Willie Thompson for providing copies.
- ⁸² One of the additional interviewees believes that the meeting took place in the St. Enoch's Hotel, Glasgow. Both venues no longer exist. St. Andrew's Halls burned down in 1962.
- ⁸³ Janey Buchan 4/10/94 and 21/1/97 p.24
- ⁸⁴ *The New Reasoner* was published from 1957-9 by those people who left the CP in 1957 and had published *The Reasoner* journal from July to November 1956 whilst in the CP.
- ⁸⁵ Jean McCrindle 28/6/95 p.12
- ⁸⁶ *The Reasoner* July 1956, First Number, p.9
- ⁸⁷ Jean McCrindle 28/6/95 p.13
- ⁸⁸ *World News and Views* Vol.2 No.36 September 3 1955 p.694
- ⁸⁹ *World News and Views* Vol.2 No.35 August 27 1955 p.676
- ⁹⁰ *World News and Views* Vol.3 No.17 28 April 1956 p.268
- ⁹¹ Cathy Brown 29/5/94 p.19
- ⁹² *The Reasoner* July 1956, First Number, p.5
- ⁹³ *World News and Views* Vol.3 No.47 24 November pp.748-9
- ⁹⁴ *World News and Views* Vol.29 No.5 29 January 1949 p.50
- ⁹⁵ The Rev. S. G. Evans., *The Trial of Cardinal Mindzenty : An Eye Witness Account* [BHC] (Birmingham 1949) p.6
- ⁹⁶ *World News and Views* No.46 p.730
- ⁹⁷ Jenny Richardson 31/3/94 p.14
- ⁹⁸ *Daily Worker* 17 November 1956

- ⁹⁹ *The Observer* 25 November 1956
- ¹⁰⁰ C. Coutts *Eye Witness in Hungary* (London 1957) p.17
- ¹⁰¹ *The Counter-Revolutionary Conspiracy of Imre Nagy and his Accomplices* (Budapest 1958)
- (?) This pamphlet also contains a photos and documents section at the back.
- ¹⁰² G. Kallai *The Counter-Revolution in Hungary in the Light of Marxism-Leninism* (Budapest 1956)(?) [WGML] p.23
- ¹⁰³ W. Thompson *The Good Old Cause: British Communism 1920-91* (London 1992) p.105
- ¹⁰⁴ 'I had to rally, or at least to try and rally the Party. So, that was my baptism of fire as it were, as the Party Organiser.' Jack Ashton 18/11/96 p.6 also - 'And every morning I went into my office I used to get a bundle of resignation letters and it was a very demoralising experience but of course I was a zealot and thought 'ah, —'em', and we're fighting for the Party, which we were, and it was a very traumatic experience with all the people leaving the Party and so on.'
- ¹⁰⁵ Jack Ashton 18/11/96 p.7
- ¹⁰⁶ C. Thornton and W.Thompson 'Scottish Communists, 1956-7' in *Science and Society* Vol.61 No.1 Spring 1997 p.86
- ¹⁰⁷ Ella Egan 17/10/96 and 17/11/96 p.28
- ¹⁰⁸ S.Howe, 'Anti-Colonialism in British politics: The Left and the End of Empire 1939-64' Oxford university Ph.D. thesis, 1984 p.271
- ¹⁰⁹ *The Reasoner* November 1956 Final Number p.2
- ¹¹⁰ Jean McCrindle 28/6/95 p.18
- ¹¹¹ Barbara Thorpe 31/8/95 and 14/9/95 p.18 - this happened in Edinburgh.
- ¹¹² *Old Reds* BBC Radio Four Programme on the CPGB first broadcast 10 August 1995
- ¹¹³ Jessie Clark 4/4/94 p.10
- ¹¹⁴ Marion Robertson 19/4/94 p.39
- ¹¹⁵ Jean McCrindle 28/6/95 p.20-1
- ¹¹⁶ *World News and Views* Vol.6 No.43 24 October 1959
- ¹¹⁷ Jean McCrindle 28/6/95 p.20
- ¹¹⁸ Jean McCrindle 28/6/95 p.23
- ¹¹⁹ W. Thompson, 'The New Left in Scotland' in I. MacDougall (Ed.) *Essays in Scottish Labour History: A Tribute to W.H.Marwick* (Edinburgh 1978) p.217
- ¹²⁰ *Report of the Executive Committee to the 26th National Congress of the Communist Party.* covering the period January 1956 - December 1958 p.4
- ¹²¹ May Annan 22/4/94 p.33
- ¹²² Alice Milne 10/7/94 p.23-4
- ¹²³ Cathy Brown 29/5/94 p.19
- ¹²⁴ Nove, *An Economic History of the U.S.S.R.* p.353
- ¹²⁵ Effie O'Hare p.22
- ¹²⁶ May Annan 22/4/94 - 'First of all Yuri Gagarin came and met us and we got photographs taken and then Valentina and her co-pilot came and we met them, we were very highly honoured, really, and we got photographs taken with them which they took and which they gave us all copies of and that. So we were really very highly honoured.' p.35. Agnes Mclean, engineering shop steward and CP member since 1944, also met Gagarin on a plane to Britain from the Soviet Union in 1961.
- ¹²⁷ A. Brown (Ed) *The Soviet Union: A Biographical Dictionary* pp.384-5
- ¹²⁸ Katherine Gallin 13/4/94 p.18-19
- ¹²⁹ May Annan 22/4/94 p.34
- ¹³⁰ Ouaine Bain 27/6/94 and 17/8/94 p.40
- ¹³¹ Noreen Thompson 28/6/94 p.17
- ¹³² J.Franklin, *The Cuban Revolution and the United States: A Chronological History* (Melbourne 1992) p57
- ¹³³ Ella Egan 17/10/96 and 17/11/96 p.29
- ¹³⁴ Isa Porte 12/12/96 p.19
- ¹³⁵ Ouaine Bain 27/6/94 and 17/8/94 p.41
- ¹³⁶ M. Johnstone 'The CPGB, the Comintern and the War 1939-41: Filling in the Blank Spots' in K. Morgan (Ed) *Science and Society* Vol.61 No.1 p.33

¹³⁷ D. Johnson 'A Party Women's Delegation to the USSR' in *Party Life* Vol.1 No.7 October-November 1963 pp.4-6 - gives a typically descriptive and non-critical account of the same visit made by a Party delegation of women including May Annan.

¹³⁸ *The Reasoner* No.1 p.9

¹³⁹ S. Parsons '1956: What happened inside the CPGB' in *The Communist Party and 1956, Our History Pamphlet No.88* (London 1993) pp.33-35

¹⁴⁰ Slightly underestimated in K. Hudson '1956 and the Communist Party' in *The Communist Party and 1956*, p.23

¹⁴¹ *Report to the Executive Committee on Inner Party Democracy* December 1956 (London 1956) pp38-44.

¹⁴² *Ibid* p.7

¹⁴³ *ibid* p.iv

¹⁴⁴ *ibid* p.27

¹⁴⁵ *36 Million Communists Say...: Statements and Appeal of the World's Communist Parties, Moscow, November 1960*, (London 1960) p.3

Chapter Six

Proud , Radical and Optimistic in a Changing World: The Sixties Generation- 1960-76.

...it was a huge change from these Party members who had been in the Party in the fifties. For us in the sixties it was about asserting our culture and part of that was about asserting the autonomy of the YCL and we talked about that quite a lot, and trying to relate , belatedly, to the burgeoning youth culture in Britain¹

...it was a poor Third World country that was *taking on* and resisting the most powerful imperialism that possibly that there has ever been and it was such an *immense struggle* and they were so sure of victory because they knew right was on their side...²

I was devastated, I really was, this was socialism with a human face, this was going to be wonderful . Because the Soviet Union was never quite what you felt it should be because it always had the dark side to it but Czechoslovakia seemed to be bubbling ,young , new , fresh ideas and it seemed to be just what one would want , the kind of thing you could identify with and the Russians just drove in, it was just devastating.³

A New Era

The events of 1956 did not signal the end of the Communist Party and in Scotland, at the turn of the decade, it began to take on a new lease of life. British membership increased from 24,900 in 1958 to 33,008 by 1963 with a noticeable advance since 1961 of 5,700 members.⁴ There was a new, confident feel for the coming decade. Near full employment had given the British working class a better standard of living than ever before and a more confident mood was evident in their workplace organisation. There was also a burgeoning youth with more confidence in asserting itself than previous generations.

This chapter relies mainly on the testimony of those who grew up in the sixties and were active in the YCL and then progressed to the Party branch. In Scotland women were still a minority in the Party and only made up 29% of the Party membership by 1966, taking female membership to 1,500 in the same year (an increase from 1334 in 1964).⁵ John Gollan stated women were over one third of membership at British level⁶ therefore suggesting a slightly lower level in Scotland. But in these years women were involved in more aspects of the Party than ever before and became more prominent and central to its work.

Peace

The peace issue had always been a centre of the Party's activity as they put pressure on British governments to take a less militaristic stance and tried to highlight what was seen as subservience to the foreign policy of the USA through NATO.⁷ Since 1958 there were 40,000 US troops and eighteen bomber bases in Britain.⁸ There were annual marches to Aldermaston which introduced women to the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament which engaged Party women's energy from the late fifties.⁹ There was a definite history of anti-militaristic activity that went back to the early part of the century and preceded the CPGB. This had been an essential element in Scotland of the ILP and the Socialist Sunday School. Rather than being blindly loyal to the Soviet Union there were genuine concerns among women as the arms race escalated:

I think the fear of war is stronger in women maybe than it is in men or maybe its just the macho image of men who maybe don't show how concerned they might be, but I think women are really very, very conscious of just what it means to get involved in war and also women are the ones that are suffering from the lack of money being spent on social needs and I think a lot of women get angry about all that money getting spent on arms when they are needing better health services and better education facilities and better nursery facilities, things that just go by the board and all the kind of things that we need like care for the elderly...¹⁰

When it was announced, in 1960, that there was to be the siting of submarines carrying Polaris missiles at Holy Loch on the Clyde there was an immediate reaction by Party members both in the YCL and on the Executive of the Glasgow Trades Council. A campaign was launched to protest against the new US base. In 1961 there were mass arrests as activists, many of them women and some of whom were in the CP, staged a mass sit-down at Ardnadam Pier near Dunoon. Surrounded by police and their Alsatian dogs the protesters were read the Riot Act.

We sat down and it was a question of not resisting. So they came and carried us off and put us in, they took us to a makeshift police station that was a garage and there we were charged and they searched us for belts and we were put on a bus and taken to Dunoon. Well they took the women to Dunoon but there was queuing up, as people were lifted other ones queued up to sit down and take their seat. There was ministers, doctors, all sorts of people, students, working women and men, and the women were taken to Dunoon and there was about eight of us all put in a big cell and locked up... Well I wanted to plead 'Not Guilty' to 'Breach of the Peace' but I was advised to accept that because I was working as a Home-Help and I would have had to return to Dunoon and lost more work and I was advised to plead 'Guilty' which I hated to do and I they asked if I worked and because I worked, a working wife, I was fined ten pounds, but when my husband was taken up on Monday... he was only fined seven pounds because he was a labourer and I was fined ten pounds because I was a working wife (*laughs*).¹¹

Of the women interviewed, May Annan¹² and Mary Park¹³ were also arrested as were other Party women that day. In some cases collections were taken for the participants as was the case at Rolls Royce when Agnes McLean and other protesters who worked there were fined. The fines were seen as very high compared to the usual amount imposed for a similar civil offence and this indicated to those recipients where the

political sympathies of the magistrates lay. The protests had also been good humoured with the singing of peace songs including the recently penned *Ding Dong Dollar* by John Mack about the US presence at Dunoon sung to the tune of *Ye Canny Shove Yuir Granny Aff a Bus*. Other well known songs on the same subject were *Boomerang* by Matt McGinn and *The Glesca Eskimos* by T.S. Law. Thurso Bewick wrote *Ye'll No Sit Here* to commemorate the sit-down.¹⁴ The first US battleship to arrive with the missiles was the USS Proteus which arrived on March 3 1961 and was met by a few peace canoeists.¹⁵

The peace issue brought women from different generations together with a single, unified purpose. Unlike the Communist Party in Scotland, CND went into decline in the sixties. That the CP and the YCL did not follow the same fate had much to do with a new generation of activists who came into the Party and carried on its organisational work while allying it to new causes:

There were a number of young comrades at that time and it was decided to start a Falkirk branch of the YCL. We met down in the Party rooms which were in Graham's Road , Falkirk , at that time. Sunday afternoons I believe we held education classes, from what I recall it was peaceful co-existence that was the main topic at that time. How we could learn to co-exist, East and West as well of course as the surge in the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament at that time as well. We were involved in helping the local party at local elections with going around leafleting , going around knocking on doors canvassing , selling the *Daily Worker*...¹⁶

Post-war influences and the YCL

In the sixties the YCL took on the traditions of the Party but also attempted to adapt to the distinct identity of sixties youth. Arguably it was this mix which gave the YCL a body of youngsters of whom some came from families with Labour movement history but also a new membership attracted by the dedication of Communist Party members. Greater economic strength and the very beginnings of independence for this

new generation who grew up in the post-war era meant scepticism towards some traditional values and , in Scotland particularly (where religion was still strong), questioning the role of the church:

...I was conscious that there were people poorer than us in the world and therefore it was our duty to do what we could to help and then as I became slightly older I also became conscious of the fact that within the same church in Partick, St Peter's in Partick , that my parents and we all attended , there were relatively quite wealthy people belonging to that church as well. As a very young girl I used to think 'if they just sold that car', this was the early fifties, that there were people who had quite luxurious cars which weren't around our street or anything like that. We used to sort of question these same people who are kneeling at mass, going to confession and were very well thought of by the priest, you could see that by the way they were greeted with honour...and of course people like my parents were all just sitting there with their heads down because we never had flowers in the house... that was an absolute luxury, it was just being fed and paying the rent and so on.¹⁷

A strong antipathy towards the British empire from those of Irish-Catholic backgrounds and a certain identification with socialist politics meant that there was a more obvious influence of the Catholic church in the Labour Party in the post-1945 period. Just as it was becoming politically institutionalised then so were its own institutions being questioned by a new generation whose parents continually accepted its diktats because of the church's inculcating effect and not least because of the isolation and bigotry that many had faced. Yet Catholic support for Labour did not mean an endorsement of left-wing politics and involvement with communists met with outright condemnation. It was still a highly conservative institution and hostile to communists and its influence was arguably one of the reasons that there was such clear delineation between Labour and Communist politics in Scotland. This had not been so starkly the case before the war with the ILP.

Just as religion had strong roots , now there was the tradition of the Communist family. There were those whose parents and often grandparents had been involved in Red Clydeside , the Rent Strikes and the first actions in support of the Russian Revolution. Children were often aware from an early age of the values and activities of their parents:

Well you could say I was born into a communist family, my father had already been a well established communist in the area. My earliest recollections are from approximately from nineteen forty-five. As a three year old I was aware that my dad was campaigning for the homeless people in the area who at that time had been housed in the old Nissen huts which had been occupied by the soldiers until the end of the war. Yes, I was aware of them organising collections of clothing, toys for the children etc. Arranging meetings to campaign for them to be re-housed. We later moved from Lauriston to a house on the South Bentaskin Estate...I was aware by this time, this was the period from forty-eight to fifty-four, that dad was attending lots of meetings, it was referred to as Party meetings. He stood in local elections, we attended many socials in the Party rooms in the Winter time where there would be the singing, dancing , film show.¹⁸

Although there was a widening gap between the experiences of the previous three decades and the optimistic and advancing 1960s there was an appreciation of past sacrifice. There was the legacy of the Spanish Civil War¹⁹ and families were proud of those who had fought and died for the cause:

I felt very sad about it , it seemed an awful waste and I always felt that it had been a waste and it was something I suppose I felt quite proud off , I felt very proud off but I also felt he was twenty-one 'What's this about?'. And I think if you have kids of your own, in fact I suppose it was a conscious decision to call my son after Martin. And also I think it

affected my father in as much as he was very pleased when I joined the Party but he wasn't about to say , it was put in a way that 'This is a big thing you're doing , there are risks attached to this, you have to be quite clear about what you're getting into here'...²⁰

The growth of the welfare state and the seemingly permanent safety net which it promised to the population meant that for working class families there was now a greater opportunity, however limited, to receive better education, health resources and a rising standard of living. In areas of Scotland the process of more statutory schooling and better employment prospects for women itself revealed continuing social inequalities:

...I was also aware of poor children, I mean we were quite poor but there was poorer. When I went to school there was some really kind of raggy kids and I can always remember feeling quite sorry for them and *not* despising them but thinking 'What a shame'. We didn't have a lot either but my father worked, he was in an unskilled job but he worked. So that was the kind of thing. And I remember the first job I had was in a builders office , James Crawford and Sons, and it was still ha'pennies,...I worked in the Wages Department and they always rounded the figure down for the wages and I remember thinking 'That's not fair'. I remember thinking that was quite unjust, you know 'Why didn't they round that figure up?' and just small things like that I remember feeling.²¹

Importantly, the wider the sphere of employment for women then the greater scope there was for involvement in trade unions and also joining the Party through these experiences. In this respect the sixties generation of Party women would have a greater breadth of influences. It was from the early sixties that the YCL began to grow noticeably with its British membership target of 4,500 reached by 1962. This was its highest figure since 1945.²² In Scotland membership rose from 712 in 1962 to

1,334 by 1964.²³ Likewise there was an increase in adult membership and overall an increase in members of 19%.²⁴ The Labour Party Young Socialists were recently established and became markedly more active by the early 1960s:²⁵

...for me it was quite a revelation to find young people who were politically active. I knew there were people like my father who were involved in the trade unions, but to find a group of young people who were very well informed and could argue their corner was quite inspiring. I was quite taken up by that. At the time in Aberdeen there was little difference between the Young Socialists and the YCL, they worked very very closely in the CND campaigns. That was the main issue at that time.²⁶

By the early sixties the Young Socialists continued a tradition of opposition to the leadership that went back to the Labour League of Youth in the Thirties. There was a great difference between the confident radical idealism of the Party's youth and the more cautious and traditional social democracy of the mainstream Labour Party. With more experience, women in the CP at this time had no doubts about the limitations of the Labour Party:

Well, even Labour at its best is always going to be reformist. It's never going to change the system. I joined the Communist Party because you believed so much that you were going to change the world, you were going to change the system. But the Labour Party never, ever, they never even pretended to do that, they just want to make things a bit...manage capitalism a bit nicer, a bit fairer.²⁷

In 1963 there was a Parliamentary by-election in Kelvingrove, Glasgow, where the Labour candidate was Neil Carmichael. It was at this time a group of young left-wing activists came to Glasgow from the North East of Scotland. After seeking out the local Labour Party in the West-end, encountering the various tendencies of the Young

Socialists and then involving themselves in the Woodside Parliamentary by-election campaign in 1962 , they decided to join the Communist Party:

... Neil Carmichael never once in his loudhailer mentioned socialism We thought this was just a bloody nonsense. So we reckoned you couldn't be a socialist - we made very simplistic views about what socialism was and the way to get it - that you couldn't really be a socialist in the Labour Party. You could be a socialist in the Young Socialists but the Labour Party 'grown-ups' were going to clamp down as soon as you got out of line. So we reckoned that it wasn't really a struggle we were going to win, so we decided it would be much better to join the Communist Party where the actual Party had the policy for socialism and a very clear way ahead and we were quite impressed with the clarity of their impression. So we actually went up to the YCL and said 'can we join?' , three able bodied young people, and this made their day!.²⁸

For this particular group the Communist Party was seen as the only left-wing alternative. The Labour Party hierarchy had already sought to exclude any activists involved in the anti-Polaris demonstrations and those Young Socialists who had heckled Hugh Gaitskell, the Labour leader, on May day in Glasgow that year.²⁹ Neil Carmichael received nominations from Woodside ward and the Young Socialists and subsequently won the by-election. Future Labour governments did nothing to dispel the contempt for what were seen as stale and right-wing politics which never offered a strong alternative and for a party that was only seen at the time of elections. But the Communist Party still had to show it was a serious political Party if it was to retain these young members and so have a future. There were no clever tactics to be used here but the short heritage of the Party and the influence of its most senior members whose past was still inspiring:

I was in the YCL and Willie Gallacher was speaking at a public meeting in the West End on reminiscing about his experiences and I went along to

it. It was in Oakfield Avenue , one of the university buildings I think, a biggish room. Probably about thirty-forty people in attendance and I don't remember *everything* that Willie Gallacher said but one thing I do remember him talking about was meeting Lenin and this has been something which is a memory that I have always treasured, to have heard a comrade who met and spoke with Lenin...³⁰

At this time the YCL was asserting itself as the dominant political youth body in Scotland. The many issues it was involved in included highlighting the rise in unemployment which was increasingly affecting youth³¹ and was noticeably worse in Scotland than elsewhere in Britain.³² Membership was always a problem for the YCL as its aim of building a mass youth wing never materialised and it was always much weaker than the Party. Yet there was growth in this decade with a trebling of British membership in the early sixties³³ and an updating of image:

I was progressing into that sort of teenage year and then the knock came at the door and 'would I like to be interested in joining the YCL?' and of course. I didn't feel ready, to be quite honest, you know there is one thing about the Communist Party - I've *never ever* felt ready. You do your bit but you never ever feel as if you are ready, ready for what you don't know, but you never feel as if you know enough. That's really what the situation was. But I joined and went into the YCL and they were the happiest days of my life, *I loved the YCL, oh I loved it...* it was the sort of hey days of the sixties and we used to have some great times , we had a lot in our YCL branch, our YCL branch just swung, it was *swinging*, it was a great branch.³⁴

A new influx of young YCL'ers identified as much with the new trends of youth behaviour as much as they did with the political values of the Party and this must be seen as one of the reasons for it not becoming an archaic and outdated institution. Socialising together was as much a part of YCL life as formal branch meetings and

education and there was an attempt to bring the two together and so attract more youth to the cause:

I always remember we set up a YCL club in Glasgow, we called it the Mandela Club and I was very involved in that. It was a basement over in the South side just across the river and that was our attempt to involve the youth in a much broader way in politics and we had an espresso machine and we played pop music and we thought we were the bees knees. We'd got this club going and one or two people did turn up just out of curiosity, it was a horrible dump of a place but we tried to get them dancing. Our idea was that you got politics across and eventually we were in the club that night I remember when the local gang came in with their chains and hatchets, they were after one of the guys in the YCL who was Asian and it ended up they went round and round and the rest of the YCL'ers had to put a circle round him and it was terrifying, just terrifying. They went away without doing too much damage in the end but they smashed the place up a bit and I think we lost our bottle after that about the club.

There was little enthusiasm for the Club after this incident³⁵ but one can hardly fault the YCL for not having had a policy to combat youth violence which was sadly endemic in Glasgow at that time. The YCL also had regular meetings and rallies in Renfield Street in Glasgow where there would be a small stage where members would sing and speakers would address crowds in the city centre whilst the Party's youth paper *Challenge* was sold. Sales would also take place outside the dance halls like the Locarno at Charing Cross³⁶ and this carried on a tradition from the past as well as visiting housing schemes and areas throughout Scotland. The CP was at one time bigger than the Labour Party in Glasgow³⁷ and there was an undoubted confidence when the YCL went campaigning:

Jane McKay was Scottish Secretary of the Young Communist League at that time and I can clearly remember going to visit Jane to have the discussion about how I would carry out my function as *Challenge* Organiser. I was extremely overawed by this responsibility I might add and took it very very seriously indeed. And I went to this meeting with Jane in her house, she was married to Ian McKay at the time, where I produced all kinds of targets and such like for *Challenge*.³⁸

There was also the seemingly greater equality of women in the YCL. Although marriages often occurred earlier there was an attempt to continually involve couples in YCL branch activity and campaigning. The YCL undermined the old socialising conventions of the Party as pop music, unconventional lifestyles and better career prospects made for regular relaxed socials where there was less emphasis on the formality of sandwiches and folk song culture from the previous decade:

...it was a time when we were trying to change the kind of model of the YCL and we were trying to become less staid and we were getting into pop music and we hired this miners' holiday camp in Skegness and we had whole range of debates about music and youth culture and it was a time when the YCL was trying to incorporate youth culture and I remember the night of the big dance we had The Kinks playing, oh yes I remember dancing to The Kinks that night.³⁹ So really I would have said almost Nineteen Seventy when we moved into being Party activists rather than YCL activists. We were in our late twenties.⁴⁰

This is not to demote the folk circuit which was going through an important revival with Communists like Ewan McColl and Peggy Seeger writing and recording songs reflecting industrial and social life in Britain. The Glaswegian folk singer Matt McGinn put his pertinent humour to song and was strongly involved in Party cultural activities. The YCL identified with the confident assertive drive of the young and tried to make it a characteristic of the Party's youth and in turn this was a motivating force

for arguing for more change. With the issuing of 400,000 leaflets of *The Trend-Communism* in 1967 and the setting up of 53 new branches⁴¹ the YCL was seen to be a modern entity. This did not mean in any way a distancing of political belief, it was a way of renewing the Party's politics and making them fashionable. There was a confidence that conditions were more advantageous for the Left than ever before in Britain:

... We were going to reach a higher stage of civilisation and it would just be so more challenging. Certainly there was a huge camaraderie as well and this was very important , I mean the people we worked with we became very close to. Another thing that we found about the Communist Party 'grown-ups' , as opposed to the 'grown-ups' in the Labour Party whom we did not hold much for, the Party members were by and large very very fine people. Very fair, very able, highly moral, extremely, very very supportive of us who had just joined, so we got a very very good response, very supportive and were very very nice, by and large. That was another good influence, the fact that the whole Party we saw as being very good hard-working, worthwhile people.⁴²

It was this cohesiveness and the integrated nature of the Party that earned a respect from the younger members. There were limits to the effectiveness of the YCL's campaigns and the target of one thousand members in Scotland , from looking possible in the early sixties, seemed unlikely by the end of the decade. There were still attempts to influence more Scottish youth in the branch localities. With its myriad of gangs, youth violence was particularly bad in Glasgow in the sixties and suggested a bleak future.⁴³ The YCL attempted some kind of contact and influence:

...we ran an education school out in the youth hostel out in Loch Lomond, it was Maryhill branch , and we invited a whole lot of these youngsters that we knew in Maryhill and they were all in a gang, Maryhill Tongs I remember but we thought 'Well that's okay, you have to go to

the grass roots, youth culture' and we invited them all up. That night we'd done a block booking in the youth hostel and we got the use of a seminar room and we were doing Marxist education during the day and at night the warden came out in a kilt and he was trying to get us to do Highland dancing and these guys from Maryhill , and we were just sweating but they behaved themselves really well until he suddenly said 'Right now, it's bed time'. Ten o'clock the lights out and they were looking around for what you do now. There was a whole carry on in the dorms...I remember at six o'clock in the morning Doug having to get up and let them out because they thought 'Oh no we're no' having anymore, we're away back to Glasgow' and they went off into the dawn to hitch a lift back to civilisation...⁴⁴

There was no longer an incentive to keep up the youth work as YCL membership began to fall⁴⁵ and the enthusiasm of the early sixties became diffused into different areas of activity as members grew up. Although the YCL remained active those involved throughout the sixties were part of its most coherent period as a youth organisation and the one which nurtured and educated the Party's future leadership. There was a natural respect for those who shared the same philosophy and had also been part of the Party's youth at one time. Despite its much smaller Party membership there was a tradition of CP politics in Edinburgh which young women from the University branch progressing to an area branch noticed:

...the first woman I spoke to was an old woman who must have been in her eighties called Mrs Glancy and she was all of four foot nine. She had had a hell of a life , she had been widowed young, she brought up her own family in Dumbiedikes which was a terrible condemned slum. We lived there for a bit but the houses had been condemned. She never complained, it was quite extraordinary, it was just that life was like that and you got on with it and if you were a socialist it made it easier for you to get on with it because you knew why you were doing it and you knew

what caused your suffering and it wasn't your own fault or husband's fault or your children's fault it was the system and so you were going to change the system so that it wouldn't be that hard for another generation.⁴⁶

At the University Branch in Edinburgh Party members mixed with students from various countries. New Party members who entered this branch got a more international perspective. The greater presence of foreign students meant that the sixties generation could identify more tangibly with struggles abroad as they made contact with , and heard speakers from , Africa , the Middle East and Asia. Another influence that was part of the make-up of Edinburgh with its strong professional and white collar working population was the intellectual input of established writers such as Honor Arundel who was on the Scottish Committee:

...Well Honor had the lot , she was an intellectual , she was a woman, she was middle class and also she was an extremely nervous woman. Speaking caused her such a physical effort but it never stopped her doing it and she was so full of conviction. Very gently spoken she wasn't strident at all talking about culture and it was the time that George Lukacs was writing and Arnold Kettle was writing and so culture and for students I suppose it was a big deal...She had already published her books for teenagers which were selling well and she was writing a book on Marxist culture and then , a year or two after I got to know her, she got sick, she got cancer. And so they left Edinburgh and I lost touch with her then, I think she went to live in the Borders.⁴⁷

Arundel was a novelist and one time critic for the *Daily Worker*. In 1965 she wrote *The Freedom of Art* in response to Ernest Fischer's *The Necessity of Art* which had been published in 1963.⁴⁸ She died in 1973 having fought against cancer.

One of the reasons that some women may have felt more confident in applying themselves in the Party was because of the influence of work and trade union activity

which, encouraged by the Party, also brought less inhibitions to involvement in Party committees. There was still an acceptance of the structure and of the leadership of the Scottish Committee where many of the most articulate and able members sat

...I can remember good papers being produced by the Scottish Committee dealing with problems and issues that were far away from the central industrial belt...I was on the Scottish Committee in the sixties, as secretary of the Women's Committee, but I served on the Scottish Committee for probably about four years and didn't make a single contribution. I felt very much out of my depth.⁴⁹

The Scottish Committee would endorse those who went round the branches to speak and as education was such a central part of branch life there were now more tutors of varying ages to teach a wider selection of topics.⁵⁰ As for the branches, in the late sixties there were greater differences between the industrial/factory branches and the area branches. The latter were not always in good running order and some had more of a paper membership. The factory branches, because they were naturally integrated with shop-floor work, developed an advanced, class conscious and active membership. Trade union communism advanced in the late sixties as organised labour in Britain became more militant and the CP operated strongly within this area.⁵¹ There was also the development of more white collar and less traditional Party branches as in the west end of Glasgow and in Edinburgh city where in the sixties Party education could allow more time for reading and discussion:

The way that they ran it was we would choose a Marxist text like Engel's *Origin of the Family* or *Wages Prices and Profit* or whatever and we would be told in advance what chapters we would deal with. We would be expected to have read them and to come and be fully participatory which I think is great. That's okay if you've just finished being a student or if you're a teacher or a lecturer, that's very hard if you're not in the habit of close reading and analytical reading. But there would always be

somebody who would come who wasn't a theoretician who'd just come from a trade dispute or had had a hard time at his work place. That was of course important but in our branch the majority of people were brain workers.⁵²

The most important committee in the Communist Party was the Executive Committee at British level which had delegates elected at congress through the Recommended List representing factory and area branches and usually most districts of the Party. Delegates to the national executive expected that there would be the highest level of debate at meetings as the most crucial of national and international issues were discussed there:

You always went to a National Executive with a sense of anticipation because the quality of the preparation that was put into the papers that led the discussion was always very high. You had a quality of politics that you just didn't get anywhere else because it was a genuine attempt by people to try and 'sus' what was happening in politics. And of course because they were Marxists they came at it from this point of view that you had the basis of your economic politics, of political economy if you like, but then you had the life of politics as an independent part of the superstructure. So you had Marxists who were sitting down to talk and I always went with a sense of anticipation and always went and felt that you'd get a new insight somehow and just a very good quality of argument always...⁵³

International issues - Vietnam

If there was one issue that took up more of the Party's campaigning time, especially the YCL's, and became a part of peoples lives for ten years then it was the campaign to support the national liberation movement in Vietnam. The CP had aired its opposition to intervention by the US in Vietnam in the early sixties and by 1966 it was becoming a major issue. One thousand people a week were being 'murdered' and,

along with the bombing of Hanoi , there was the increasing use of horrific new weaponry such as chemicals, napalm bombs , poison gas and lazy-dog bombs.⁵⁴ By early 1968 any doubts about the commitment and strength of the National Liberation Front which was organised in the South was shattered by the Tet Offensive. *Challenge* reported the mass support for the liberation movement , the rampages by the US troops and the links between industry and the military.⁵⁵ The Party was quick to get support from unions and for Medical Aid for Vietnam. In Scotland as elsewhere in Britain there was genuine disgust at the armoury of new hideous devices thrown into battle and the blanket bombing of whole areas of the country. Lobbies were arranged as the Wilson government strongly supported American actions.⁵⁶ In Aberdeen Party women were involved in the Peace Committee⁵⁷ which lobbied the local Labour MP:

...we went to see Donald Dewar on the same issue and he was very unsympathetic to us and he told me I was emotional , I went on about people being killed and about Agent Orange, how they were destroying their crops and their vegetation and maybe creating abortive pregnancies and deformed children and we didnae get a bit o' sympathy or support fae Donald Dewar, he was very much the solicitor on that occasion, he's very clever and good wi' his tongue, so he didna gi' us any support and nae any straight answers either and I felt very angry wi' him. He accused me of being emotional and I said 'There's no other way you could approach this problem except being emotional' because they were killing people quite needlessly and then they had to draw oot and all these lives were lost, and American lives as well...⁵⁸

Margaret Rose was to report to the Scottish Committee that 'Dewar was arrogant last time the Peace Committee visited him but when evidence established that a majority of his constituency were against the war he became a bit more cagey'.⁵⁹ The whole Labour policy was seen as subservient to US foreign policy. If this subservience encouraged youth to come into the CP or other new left groups it also reminded elder

members of the British governments attitude pertaining to the cause of the Spanish Republic thirty years before (though then it was one of alleged non-intervention and not open antagonism).

Having asked the NLF what they could needed , the YCL organised a bus to travel throughout Britain collecting bikes to be sent to Vietnam. Action in support of the national liberation movement was a continuous aspect of YCL campaigning. *Challenge* showed young children hideously disfigured along with its headline *Hey ! Hey! L.B.J. How Many Kids Did You Kill Today?*.⁶⁰ The subsequent revelations of US Army offensives against the civilian population such as the My Lai massacre , which occurred in 1968 but only became known a year later, only enraged YCL members more as did the secret bombing of Cambodia in 1970:

And of course, we were so incensed, we were so emotional. Young people are emotionally - they become extremely emotional about situations and of course it's like every generation - you can see the inexperience, the wisdom has not set in. Of course, we were terribly emotional about it and we called extra meetings and had extra campaigns but, and we sang songs about it (*laughs*). A few of them were Dylan songs and one was 'how can the old lead us into war, it is always the young that fall'. It was these sort of things and it was good stuff. John painted, he got his pen out and did a Napalm painting, he had to *express* his self you know. I wrote to Nixon , I told him what a *turd* he was. It was so angry , it was so emotional, it was charged.⁶¹

This was no over reaction. To understand the genuine outrage of Party members and people not necessarily politically orientated one example of the horrors of the war should suffice. *Challenge* related the testimony of an American ex-serviceman who described a female NLF suspect taken prisoner who had a signal flare thrust up her sexual organs 'She looked at them with an air of disbelief...and then as the flare went off, her whole body contorted like one of those cartoon figures you see and then they threw her corpse over the side. I know you'll be shocked about what I'm telling you ,

but after a few months out in Vietnam, nice guys start behaving lower than animals!⁶²
There were 500,000 US troops in South Vietnam. In the United States on
Moratorium Day in November 1969 750,000 demonstrated against the war.⁶³
Vietnamese representatives graphically described the situation when they toured and
spoke at Communist Party meetings , as in Edinburgh:

They were so individual, they were so different. One of them was very
brusque and one of them was very very gentle. They had two different
approaches and they were given to understatement rather than over-
statement so that it was only after they had gone away I thought 'My
god', he was describing napalm. One of them actually had napalm burns
and I'd never seen what it was like before. But they also made you
realise what a poor country it was which I hadn't thought about really ,
how much development it needed...⁶⁴

Here it is apposite to consider why Vietnam was so important. The seeming injustice
of a small country fighting for independence against such odds was made more graphic
with satellite pictures that made news more immediate and digestible. Also a whole
population was under siege and the contribution and suffering of children, youth and
women and their role in the opposition was also evident.⁶⁵ In Scotland there was
practical activity that could make an important contribution and Party Women's
Groups organised activities to raise material support for the struggle:

...the Women's Assembly and Women's Movement, the Communist
Women's Movement. We did knitting, blankets and little vests for the
children who had to shelter during the American's bombing raids and the
wool had to be dyed navy blue or dark green so there was less chance of
being seen from the air. And we collected wool, bought it and collected
it from people and I had a big pot and dyed the wool dark blue and
whatever and then knitted it up for the kids.⁶⁶

Also, unlike Spain, there was not the isolation of the Soviet Union in support of this struggle as the growth of other socialist countries and the Non-aligned Movement meant that there was a sizeable force against US policy. Also there was the peace aspect; the horror of war and the suffering of the civilian population. Above all there was the hope that, unlike Spain, there was going to be a victory.

Czechoslovakia

Having replaced the repressive Novotny leadership of the Czechoslovakian Communist Party (CCP) in January 1968 the CCP, led by the new First Secretary Alexander Dubcek, embarked on a programme of major reforms to the socialist system. The publication of an Action Programme brought support from many quarters and the Prague Spring quickly began to interest young communists in Britain. A YCL delegation was invited over by the Czechoslovak Union of Youth (CSM) in 1968.⁶⁷ This new political shift was short-lived with the invasion on August 20th of troops from five Warsaw Pact countries:⁶⁸

...You felt 'Oh crikey', we couldnae really rationalise it all away, all these arguments you'd had in pubs about the USSR or all this stuff about how you managed to deny the Kulaks and people were always asking about the Kulaks, you would say '*But*, you had to change things' and all of this. But Czechoslovakia was a turning point for me and the YCL that day we decided we'd have to do something and we had contact with the National YCL and we agreed on a line despite the fact that the Party hadnae met and declared its line and that was unprecedented. And we went out into Glasgow and we got the soapbox and we had a public meeting, I mean there must have been half a dozen people heard us, nevertheless it was a momentous thing for us to do, was to go public on attacking the, or defending Czechoslovakia when the Party hadnae come. It was like the YCL growing up as well.⁶⁹

That it was a turning point for the YCL could be seen by the very definite counter blast by Barney Davis in *Cogito*⁷⁰ to Palme Dutt's sympathetic explanation for the Soviet action in the *Labour Monthly* of October 1968. The YCL had come of age in that it acted on its own initiative and gave scant respect to those it accused of 'political chicanery'.⁷¹

There had been criticism by the Czechoslovak CP of the 'condemned bureaucratic police methods' of the past whilst the Party still gave allegiance to Marxism-Leninism.⁷² Open discussion had been encouraged including that of anti-socialist groups and this had been used as a pretext for the armed action. Now the unique developments of the last few months were over. As in Hungary there were some, but this time a minority, who instinctively supported the invasion. The reasons forwarded by the five powers whose forces went in was that there was a threat from NATO and West German revanchists who were helping this 'peaceful counter-revolution'.⁷³ There was disagreement at the highest level in Scotland:

Jimmy Reid nearly jumped down my throat, he was the Scottish Secretary and the Scottish Committee met on a Sunday and I was the first person there apart from Reid, he was in himself and big mouth I said to him 'You know I read the *Morning Star* yesterday and I didnae know whether I was reading the *Morning Star* or the *Daily Express*', 'What do you mean?' he said and I said 'In the Czechoslovakian situation' and, oh, he *guttet* me. I said 'I think the Soviet Union was quite right to go in there because there was a counter-revolution taking place stirred up by the American CIA and the Catholic church and goodness knows who else'. I wasn't flavour of the month but that didnae bother me over much where Jimmy Reid was concerned...⁷⁴

The Czechoslovak Youth Movement (CSM) had started to lose members by the mid-sixties and there had been student protests in 1967. As part of the reform movement there had been a renewal of the youth organisations and they supported the Dubcek leadership. The opposition to the intervention had been unanimous from the Czech

Communist Party though there was a deliberate policy of non-violent opposition in the wake of the invasion. Internationally, twenty-five CP's were critical of the Warsaw Pact action including wholesale condemnation from the British Party. This appeared to echo the feelings of the majority of Party members:

On Czechoslovakia, I was on the Secretariat at the time. Johnny Gollan was up for the meeting and he very forcibly put the case to the Secretariat that how he would react if somebody, the Soviet Government, waded in against his wishes as a leader of the Party. He was very opposed to that, so was I. The thing is that Joe my husband didn't swallow it and neither did Robert. They wouldn't accept, that it was necessary, it was necessary not to intervene. We were against intervention and Johnny Gollan was very much for that line.⁷⁵

Critical to Gollan, (along with his own political belief), was the need to keep the Party united and to avoid a split or desertions due to a lack of criticism or initial indecisiveness as in 1956. The Scottish CP was also gaining members at this period having increased from 7,300 in 1966 to 7,605 in 1968⁷⁶ and a non-critical stance may well have meant losses and a blow to the advances in the sixties. Ironically in the same period the YCL, the most immediately critical of the Soviet action, had suffered a decline in Scotland from 1,500 to 1,200 members⁷⁷ and arresting this became harder, though for numerous reasons.

There was not unanimity amongst the younger members in the Party even though the YCL had been very sympathetic and excited by the policies of Dubcek and the reformers. What is clear is that those who supported the actions against the Czechoslovak Party leadership thought that the reforms were going too far and were leading to an undermining of the socialist system there. There was still a fierce loyalty for the explanations given by the Soviet Union at the time:

Because of the need to preserve socialism, in terms of the Soviet's own position. I really did have a problem with that, I accepted the Party's

[position], one has to do that, but I had a problem....I know it was condemned, and in a sense that's the problem. I can't say now that it was right, I can't say that now...There were differences of opinion , there *were* differences of opinion , yes. I remember Willie Thompson speaking very strongly , that was one meeting I did go to , even though I wasn't particularly involved. There was a big Aggregate Meeting , I think we were in Coatbridge at that time , and I remember Willie speaking very vehemently for the Party's position on that.⁷⁸

The dramatic events that spanned this period also brought out passionate debate at all levels. The majority of Party members would hear the policy of the Party either at their branch meetings or directly from the leadership at an aggregate meeting where all members (depending on it being a meeting for industrial or area branches) in the vicinity were allowed to attend. Gollan , who was the General Secretary of the Party , was not known for displaying his emotions but more for his diligence and thoroughness of work yet he was greatly affected by the events of 1968:

...I can remember John Gollan speaking I think it was over in the old Kingston Hall but that would be just after Czechoslovakia I think, and I remember him making a *very, very* passionate speech. Again, he was replying to the discussion on quite a few very bad statements that I would have thought were made, very much so, about Stalin and how wonderful he was, very much from that political stand point. And I remember Johnny, who was always quite a nervous speaker putting his notes aside and sort of making the point that some of the finest sons and daughters of the CPSU had been liquidated wrongly , trumped up charges and we weren't ever going to let that happen again.⁷⁹

Gollan voiced the CPGB's opposition at an international conference of communist parties in 1969 , the British Party being one of many that refused to accept a 'general ideological line' nor the need for a 'new international centre'.⁸⁰ Although the YCL

still gave its support to the socialist countries and even, as a point of ramming home its own view, said it believed the Soviet Union was 'motivated by concern for the best interests of socialism'⁸¹; there was never the same support for the socialist countries as there had been from many Party members and this attitude was most notable in the YCL. Their sense of betrayal was summed up: 'The Czechoslovak revolt against bureaucracy raised hopes on the left that at last we were going to see the successful combination of socialism and democratic freedoms in a traditionally developed industrial society'.⁸² What stands out is the crucial part that international politics played in the life of Party members in this period. Next it was events in Scotland that were to occupy most of the energy of the YCL and the Party into the 1970s.

Trade unionism triumphs.

The CP had been very critical of the complacency towards equal pay for women and stated in 1963 that 'We must say , and say bluntly , that the attitude of trade unions to working women has been one of organised hypocrisy'.⁸³ J. R. Campbell pointed out that resolutions were passed at the TUC but when negotiations took place on the shop-floor there were differentials being negotiated that increased the wage disparity between the sexes.⁸⁴ It was in the late sixties that the campaign for equal pay for women reached its zenith before the enabling legislation of the 1970s. The Party had set up campaign committees on equal pay as well as raising other issues such as the need for more nursery schools.⁸⁵ In 1968 there were a series of meetings held by local trades councils in Scotland over the issue of equal pay with Agnes McLean , who as early as 1952 had negotiated an important agreement on equal pay at Rolls Royce in Glasgow,⁸⁶ and Kay Carmichael (wife of Labour MP Neil Carmichael) often putting the case. At the Scottish Congress the same year the Scottish Secretary, Jimmy Reid said :

Women communists in Scotland like Agnes McLean and Mamie McConnell have played an outstanding part in the developing movement of women workers. The left must pledge its support for any and every

action taken by the women workers in Scotland for the immediate application of the principle of equal pay.⁸⁷

Party women who were on the shop-floor were unequivocal in their support for the Ford women workers who struck over equal pay in 1968. When the Minister of Employment Barbara Castle addressed the STUC in 1969 she met a lobby of women over the issue of equal pay and there was a small demonstration of women with placards outside the hall where the congress met. Castle had come to Scotland to defend *In Place Of Strife*, the Labour governments proposals for industrial relations reform. Those Party members with industrial experience were less than enamoured with these measures which would have severely restricted free collective bargaining:

I must honestly say you see that the longer you live the meer you see , you know what I mean? And it's very very sad that in each Labour Government that we've had where we thought there was progress being made that capitulation was made also and the capitulation didnae work in the interests of the workers and I really think that Barbara Castle, with all her brightness and all the rest o' it , was forced, by her Prime Minister, no to take the thing too far, you can only go so far and no further. I felt, very bright woman and good speaker and that but that doesnae get you places and she certainly didnae win the favour of the trade unions at that time because workers can see through. The holes are as big as bloody mountains.⁸⁸

The proposals were dropped after much mass opposition.⁸⁹ Barbara Castle failed abysmally to win over the STUC Congress at Rothesay where the government measures were decisively rejected.⁹⁰ By 1970 despite greater unionisation and 8,839,000 women employed (nearly half of all adult women in Britain)⁹¹ , there were still great disparities. Two thirds of all working women were married and three-quarters of working women had 'domestic responsibilities in addition to their jobs'.⁹² Women were working more hours, earning less than men and while the number of

women in work was increasing the proportion of women in skilled, managerial and professional jobs was declining.⁹³ There was one victory for the Scottish labour movement at this time where Communist Party activists played a vital role and was seen as an example from which there could be advances for the Party. Some impetus was needed as at the beginning of the seventies Party membership had fallen to 6,934 in 1970 a fall from the 7,605 of 1968⁹⁴ and YCL numbers were worse with only 503 members by 1970.⁹⁵

Upper Clyde Shipbuilders, a consortium of yards on the Clyde that faced rationalisation from the late sixties, had faced a threat of closure⁹⁶ that increased with the Conservative government elected in 1970. By this time there were 100,000 unemployed in Scotland.⁹⁷ When the government refused to give the yards £6 million in working capital this met with an organised response. Communist shop stewards, most notably Jimmy Reid, Jimmy Airlie and Sammy Barr, were at the forefront of the shop stewards who co-ordinated what was to be known as the 'work-in' whereby the workforce ran the yards and continued to complete orders. Although support for the action seemed solid there was little complacency about the possibility of divisions:

...the Scottish Committee was central to how that dispute unfolded. Great arguments about insuring that the momentum kept rolling because if you didn't maintain the momentum, if you stopped you would go back. And if they couldn't keep extending the support for this struggle then they were beaten and of course the big thing that worried them was that there would be the split, the Green/Orange split and very very careful to try and in every way prevent that from happening because that could have split the whole movement, so that was very central and very important and great details discussed about this...⁹⁸

As the proposals of the Co-ordinating Committee were disseminated there was the solidarity and enthusiasm from the trade union movement that the CP had always fought for and for which they had always prepared themselves for a leading role. If the yards closed then 8,500 shipyard workers would have been made redundant but so

would another 20,000 in supply industries.⁹⁹ As the leadership eloquently explained, this was a fight for the right to work and for the immediate survival of communities in Glasgow and Clydebank but whose outcome would affect the future of the whole movement. As activity increased during 1971 Party members in all vicinities of work put their weight behind continuing the momentum:

A tremendous atmosphere...we pulled out the stops, all the branches pulled out the stops, that was the major issue and that was the UCS and the UCS work in and everybody did it. Fund-raising, jumble sales, socials, bingo's, you name it, all sorts of sponsors we had, you name it, we had it. It was marvellous and of course you can just imagine the demonstrations and rallies that we had - countless rallies, *mass demonstrations* - yes we all went to them.¹⁰⁰

Party members were more than aware of the importance of the UCS struggle and the central role of some of the Party's leadership in it. There were mass rallies, one was held in June prior to the start of the work-in and attracted over 50,000. This was the precursor to an enormous day of action on August 18th 1971 when 200,000 people at work took action, 20% of the working population in Scotland, and over 80,000 attended a rally at Glasgow Green - the biggest seen since the Chartists.¹⁰¹

I think it was *marvellous*, it was a *marvellous* demonstration that was taking place. To me that gave you a sense of - that it was the right decision to join the Communist Party *because* of that, because people, well obviously, people who were in the Party who were leading or leaders of, not leading, but leaders of the UCS movement and I think it gave you a feeling that you were really glad to have joined the Communist Party and to be a member of the Communist Party.¹⁰²

Financial support through donations from unions, workplaces, individuals and various organisations helped to keep the momentum going and ensured that the Co-ordinating

Committee representing all the unions could be resolute in its basic demands. For women who found employment for the first time in industry there was a dramatic lesson of the rapidity with which trade union militancy and a confident workforce could combat government measures as they had in 1969 over trade union reform:

Oh well it was wonderful, that was a wonderful period. That was when you experienced the feeling that things could change, you could change things, it was wonderful. You will probably get other stories from the works and those who were involved in it, but I worked in Beatties which was a woman's industry and wasnae known for its militancy or anything like that...it was a biscuit factory. And it permeated in there tremendously and we stopped, the day of the UCS work-in we stopped work and went up...Well it gave them the feeling that they could be organised and get somewhere, get things done. And I mean they did, they supported them, they sent money to them which was a *big thing*, it may sound trite but it was a big thing for them to do you know. And of course that march itself, it's the highlight of, I've been on a few quite big but the UCS work-in was something that we'll maybe never - maybe we will but it really was, what a *day, what a feeling*.¹⁰³

The unions that led the UCS Work-in were long established, primarily skilled unions who were embedded in engineering and shipbuilding. That there were many Party members in the traditional industries of engineering and shipbuilding meant that they gained an important influence in Scottish trade union politics and through this, by pursuing CP policies for unity among the left, were able to bring together a broad movement. In one sense there was the continuing dominance of the male industrial trade union worker in the Communist Party and the UCS issue inevitably strengthened this. Also the success of the outcome for the workers, the government backing down and through re-organisation retaining the yards in 1972, showed the strength of the trade union movement in Scotland and Britain.

The public leader of the work-in , Jimmy Reid ,was very popular in the Communist Party. He was young , erudite and above all a brilliant orator. Stemming from the success of UCS came Reid's election as Rector of Glasgow University in 1972. He was also a councillor in Clydebank where the Party had four councillors in 1970 (and three by 1971) and had campaigned locally on many issues:¹⁰⁴

We went round the doors on a regular basis, we worked on questions like Medical Aid for Vietnam, but we also, on day to day issues there was lots of problems in Faifley than because we were in Scottish Special Houses: very, very basic, no great amenities, much needed done to them and we had list of problems, and we had a big rent strike and many, many meetings. The meetings were so big that you could hardly get into the school. So we were involved in all that and the Communist Party at one time had more than one hundred members in their branch in Faifley alone, which was no mean feat. People came to the Party and they trusted you. they came with their problems and you did what you could for them.¹⁰⁵

Clydebank Council was one of the few that were continually involved in practical defiance against the governments Housing Finance Act 1972. On Clydebank Town Council , with support from some Labour Party councillors , there was an attempt to defy the Act. Similar action was being taken by other councils , like Cowdenbeath Council where Willie Sharp had become the first Communist Provost in Britain. However it was obvious that a few dissident councils were going to be isolated and would suffer surcharging. An appropriate strategy was debated at the Scottish Committee where Reid was passionate for continuing opposition along with Clay Cross Council in Derbyshire:

...And of course we had quite a simplistic line until it was tested and we learnt, the Party was wise, it learnt the lesson and saw that we had to pull back in good order and Jimmy was not for pulling back he was keeping it going. And we talked to the Clay Cross people and told them that we

were going to pull back and tried to get them to pull back with us and Jimmy was for keeping going and so there was a big meeting, an important meeting, there was about a dozen to fifteen people, and they were all just wading into Jimmy and it was a fantastic thing to sit and watch because the psychology of the whole thing had Jimmy holding on, tremendously powerful figure, tremendously powerful intellect, but these arguments were coming strong and he was arguing back because it was a fine line that divided, it was about tactics, about ways forward and it was an important powerful discussion. And then you just saw Jimmy just collapse, that was it, he couldn't win them and he admitted psychological defeat and while he didn't admit psychological defeat in the words that he used, you just knew there was a kind of change in the meeting and you knew there was a change in what had happened. And of course the Party line then went through that we should pull back, that we should end the strike, that we would try and get the Clay Cross people to declare it off at the same time but of course the Clay Cross boys wouldn't do it and they went on alone...Powerful political arguments assembled, I mean I've never known such politics before or since. Wonderful attempts to marshal facts and to put a case and support it, one had the feeling, very powerful exchanges between humans, really, and arguing about things that they considered to be very important...¹⁰⁶

Clydebank council had been fined £5,000 by the Court of Session¹⁰⁷ for non-implementation and a fund had been set up to pay this.¹⁰⁸ By early 1973 it was clear that the earlier momentum of the campaign had gone and those Scottish councils who had remained defiant, including Saltcoats¹⁰⁹ and Cumbernauld,¹¹⁰ backed down. Clay Cross carried on and was surcharged. As for Jimmy Reid there were great expectations that he could become the first Communist MP since Gallacher and hopes were certainly raised during his election campaign in Clydebank in 1974. However there had also been a history of organisational incompetency on Reid's behalf and his

shortfalls were known to Party members. Some were more than a little annoyed at his complacency and arrogance as he firmly believed he was going to win.

Well Jimmy had a great gift of being able to express what the punters , that was his expression, 'what the punters were thinking', he really did. He was so often right but then in the course of the election they asked the women in the branch to try and organise house meetings to hear Jimmy as the candidate and I organised one in here for my neighbours and went round them all, invited them all to come and I got quite a turn out and Jimmy didn't come till about , och , about half past nine or something, the women were fed up waiting. In the first place they were fed up waiting for him and then he swept in like an entourage , swept in with big overcoats on and he talked down to the women. I've never heard Jimmy do it before. He was obviously tired and the end of a long day and all that but they were all there wi' things to ask him, they werenae convinced they were going to vote for him and they were going to ask him this and ask him that and they never really got the chance and a lot expressed disappointment to me afterwards. I was disappointed myself. I thought he would have had them eating out of his hand, that was the idea.¹¹¹

Reid was convincingly beaten. He left the Party in 1976 disillusioned with his lack of a political breakthrough. Although some people voiced negative aspects about him, (May Annan was more than positive about his contribution) there was stressed the positive aspects of his role in the Communist Party and his charismatic persona. He was held up as an idol by some communists¹¹² yet by no means was he an exceptional figure compared to those around him. Reid was the product of a Party that produced many capable people of which he was the most publicly attractive.

In Scotland the Party's influence was of greater breadth than ever before and this was because of the way it had so successfully operated in the trade unions and community groups such as tenant's associations¹¹³ where its members were naturally

involved. Union membership was increasing and young workers were encouraged to participate in trades councils in Scotland and in newly formed Youth Sections in the TUC. The denouement for the establishment must have been this feared union militancy seeping through to the youngest of minds and this it did, to the extent that even the CP was seen as slightly old hat:

...the National Union of School Student's was founded then as well and some of us joined that. I find it difficult to imagine that any young person would be in a milieu where that was relatively easy to do because I'm not *naturally* an outgoing sociable person that will gather a group of friends to do these things anyway, so it was because of the political environment. Even in East Kilbride at that time there was like thousands of these Trotskyite and Maoist sects , *Red Moles* and *Black Dwarfs* and all kinds of things like that and people used to argue vigorously about the rights and wrongs of it and to some extent you were seen as a hackneyed old Stalinist even then being in the YCL, or not *even then* but particularly then...¹¹⁴

The YCL at British level had been instrumental in the formation of the NUSS¹¹⁵ but the Scottish district of the YCL admitted that it had been 'later than most'¹¹⁶ in responding to this new eagerness amongst school students. As for the YCL in Scotland, it had stalled its decline and grown to 455 in November 1972¹¹⁷ since March 1971 when it had 380 members. The benefits of the UCS and other trade union campaigns seem evident. The YCL now had 15 functioning branches in 1972 compared to only 7 in 1970.¹¹⁸ By the end of 1972 there were four branches in Glasgow (the South being divided into South-east and South-west)¹¹⁹ and an Area Committee as well. There were still branches in all four major cities and Scottish sales of *Challenge* had also increased since its new format in 1971. Speaking at the YCL Scottish Congress in 1972 Scottish district secretary Alex Murray said, 'It is an extremely exciting period for Communists to live and work in. A time of great pride for Communists at this moment, is being a young Communist.'¹²⁰ There was much

reason to believe that progressive changes would increase both at home and abroad. Once again it was the development of a socialist experiment abroad, this time in Latin America , that was to cause much interest.

Chile.

Elected in September 1970 an alliance of parties supporting Chile's new President , Salvador Allende , promised great change. The Popular Unity Government was a progressive movement including Socialists ,Communists and Liberals, whose alliance won a near majority of parliamentary seats. In a similar way to Czechoslovakia some Party members placed great hope on this experiment but , apart from there being the important role of the peasantry¹²¹ , there was a major difference that communists everywhere could identify with. Popular Unity was an example of what could be done with political alliances and a mandate from the electorate in a country where democratic parliamentary elections were held. It was leaps and bounds ahead of the trade union advances that the British CP were restricted to because of their small political clout. Allende held out the hope that there was going to be a slow but sure transition from capitalism to a socialist society in the near future. Not only did people believe this, they acted en masse in support of the government. The Nixon administration in the United States was strongly opposed to an increasing left wing influence especially in its own continent. With support from the right-wing parties and sections of the middle class there was a military coup against Allende and the Popular Unity government in September 1973. Those who had hoped for great change saw instead the physical annihilation of the left in Chile.

In Britain there was an immediate response from the trade unions in condemning the action and trying to find out what had happened to people recently in contact with the Labour movement in Europe. Some of the largest political marches seen in Scotland were for Chile and gathered a quick response , as in Edinburgh:

Judith Hart spoke at the Mound on the very week-end it happened or something, it was a *rush* meeting within hours of the overthrow you know. Oh oh, I mean , oh Chile was a real , a terrible , terrible setback ,

it was regarded as such and , Oh, *real feelings*, strong emotional feelings about Chile.¹²²

There was a double blow for those who had put energy into developing a strategy for getting power through parliament and then believing that it could be turned round by constitutional means. Land had been redistributed , there were wage increases and a fall in unemployment.¹²³ The copper industry was nationalised affecting three US companies.¹²⁴ Such had been the advances made and yet here was the reality for those movements nearer to the United States who challenged the economic system:

I was horrified, I was really upset when it happened, obviously we all were and it was terrifying. I remember saying to Roger 'Well if that's your *British Road to Socialism* you can stuff it' and he got a bit agitated about that. I was kind of half joking but half wasn't, I said 'We're really selling ourselves down the middle, the other lot can just change the goal posts , if they don't like the result of the elections they can just come around and jump all over our faces and anything else' . There was a lot of anxiety around about that.¹²⁵

Allende's reforms also included ending discrimination against single mothers and the formation of a National Secretariat for Women. There was a better health service for women and provision of free milk distributed daily. These measures were reversed by the coup and by 1976 it was estimated that 50% of children suffered malnutrition.¹²⁶ Women had suffered much physical torture at the hands of the junta. From late 1973 refugees began to arrive in Europe and some families came to Scotland where they settled in Glasgow, Falkirk , Edinburgh and villages such as Lochgelly in Fife:

It had a tremendous emotional impact Chile just because a lot of the refugees came to Scotland , so you had a real big personal commitment to the country. And some of them went to mining villages in West Lothian and the kindness that people showed them, they were

overwhelmed. They would arrive and often the Party branch in the village would organise the house being furnished and getting furniture together, getting a cooker. The local council would give them a house but the Party branch would organise food for them being in the house. So the Party played a very important role in that and organising the solidarity stuff through the trades council and through the unions.¹²⁷

People began to meet and help those who had come over to escape persecution. Women learnt about Chilean politics and the political divisions even among the refugees. Not all refugees were on the left as nearly all sections of the population were persecuted, and those that were on the left were not always in the same party. Despite having fled their country and being thousands of miles in exile the Chilean community impressed Party members by their ability to entertain their hosts and maintain their culture despite their being exiled and having moderate means:

I think initially we thought that all the refugees were revolutionaries who'd been out fighting on the streets and obviously this wasn't the case because very many of them were out by association with somebody else, but it was very interesting to see how they managed to pull themselves together, maintain their identity and their music was terrific, that had a big impact on me.¹²⁸

The Pinochet regime was not going to be replaced within the foreseeable future though there were attempts to isolate it internationally with some exports being boycotted by unions in Britain. The Chile Solidarity Campaign was formed¹²⁹ and was active in Scotland among the trades councils and encouraged the sending of cards to prisoners to make sure they knew that they had not been forgotten and that the authorities were aware of international support. It was also successful in persuading the Labour government in Britain to refuse the postponement of debt payments by the Chilean junta.¹³⁰

Cuba

In December 1973, soon after the military coup in Chile, John Gollan , Jack Woddis and Irene Swan from the National Executive of the CPGB went on the first Party delegation to Cuba at the invitation of the Cuban Communist Party. British Party delegations were well received because of the possibilities that were expected from a country with a strong trade union movement in which the Party had a disproportionate influence. Once there they met the leaders of the revolution:

...Johnny was seeking to keep the end of the British Party up because there was no way Castro was going to ride, he was a leader of *state* , he was a head of state , we met many heads of state and here are we just a piddling little Communist Party and it was about Johnny keeping his end up and keeping the British Party's end up and the authority of the politics of the British Party. And our general view was that we had made an impression on Castro, he had respected our politics , that was the assessment we made, whether we were kidding ourselves or not I don't know but that was the assessment that we had made. And he was very *warm* , very warm indeed, I mean we could have been much more significant in some ways to him , but very warm and very welcoming. And I can remember inviting him to Britain , I said he should come , and Europe as well, because he could have an effect , I thought , on the youth because he was such a striking figure and the quality of his charisma because of what had happened in Cuba and that...¹³¹

By the late 1960's Cuba's education system had advanced enormously. There was a growth in nursery and primary school education which were more widely available than ever. From having 717,000 in primary schools in 1959 there were 1,460,000 by 1969.¹³² Adult education had also improved with 25,000 university students in 1959 and 34,000 ten years later and there were also 170,000 scholarships in school ,

university and adult education.¹³³ The youth were organised as 'Pioneers' and in a Secondary School Students Union which was not linked to the Cuban YCL:

...I mean we went to see this new housing estate on the edge of Havana where everybody there was a volunteer and they'd been able to volunteer to work there because their other work colleagues were covering for them and so their wages were paid from where they used to work and they had gone to work on this building site to build this thing. And they were so *proud* and such excitement you know, it was just absolutely amazing, the children in their uniforms coming from hovels by the side of the road with mud floors and shacks, were living in the schools, they wore nice uniforms, good clothes, they gardened. They had to do two or three hours labour a day as their contribution towards the country and they genuinely believed that what they were doing was correct and good and positive and I think a lot of enthusiasm then...¹³⁴

1961 had been declared the 'Year of Education' when there was an illiteracy rate of 28% of the population.¹³⁵ By 1971, 28% of the population was engaged in full time study.¹³⁶ Youth worked voluntarily for a few hours a day usually gaining farm experience. There were criticisms about the influence of the Soviet Communist Party and possible bureaucratisation but the delegation was supportive of the changes brought by the revolution and it remained the one revolutionary socialist outpost in the Americas. President Allende of Chile had visited exactly a year previously to much acclaim, now all his reforms were being quickly dismantled and economic and diplomatic ties with Cuba were broken. In January 1974 a new Maternity Law was introduced in Cuba based on previous legislation. Women were given time-off for pre-natal medical care and six weeks off prior to childbirth and three months afterwards. Time was also given for paediatric treatment.¹³⁷

The Cuban revolution was recognised as having had a broad base of support yet its fortunes contrasted with those of Popular Unity in Chile. Traditionalists in the Party could point to the true nature of capitalism and the folly of parliamentary

politics. However there was no clear cut division over the Chilean strategy. For its brief period of power Popular Unity was a great inspiration to CP members. Few would be critical of a President and government that had given so much hope of a new path to socialism in the Western world , whose efforts had been continuously undermined and were finally crushed.

Developing criticisms in the Party

A major breakthrough in the sixties had been the election of the CP's first woman chairperson , Irene Swan , who had progressed from the Scottish Committee to the National Executive Committee. This was only the second time in Britain that a woman had chaired a political party.¹³⁸ And if this showed what was attainable given the right support and circumstances it was still an exception. Whereas single women could commit themselves more to regular Party meetings and union activity, this was not the case for married women who saw themselves fulfilling the same traditional role. There was gender inequality as it was predominantly males who were involved in Party meetings and activity. In the seventies this was a deficiency that certain women now brought to the fore:

...I think women got involved through their men and the men tended to play a more active part or have more of a say in what was going on because they knew more and I think it took the women quite a while to get their act together and say , well you know, 'Hey, what about what's going on here?' and I think that did coincide with the growth of feminism, with people getting round to reading *The Second Sex* and Betty Frieden¹³⁹ and all that sort of stuff , although that came a bit later. And we all tended to have kids at the same time and we all tended to have the same preoccupation as well , either trying to carry on with a career or get into a career.¹⁴⁰

An indicative example of the traditional, subservient role that women were expected to play, irrespective of age, and where they started to assert themselves and demand a

more equal treatment was at weekend schools. These often took place in remote venues sometimes way out in the country and at times it was expected that women would carry out the menial tasks just to get things up and running for the event:

...there was also a kind of expectation that the women would do the cooking which I happened to be quite good at and didn't mind, I'd far rather do it and eat decent food than let somebody else cook a load of crap and then have to eat it. But some of the other girls thought, and I think they had an *absolute* point, 'Well bugger me, we've come on this course, we don't want to be left going into the shops five miles down the road and organising food for fourteen' and this kind of thing and that was a bone of contention. And I think as a result of that, it's quite interesting, there were various decisions taken not to repeat that particular format or that *everybody* would help or somebody would be got in to do the catering.¹⁴¹

Personal relationships were re-evaluated. Some young couples, because there was a bit more of a choice when or if they were to get married, were seen to attempt to be more democratic in their political and domestic lives. Among them there was more chance that political duties and the women's secondary political role might be less rigidly applied than before and so a balanced commitment from both partners could continue:

Women would be in more isolated employment to start with anyway, in shops or whatever. Not to idolise a communist marriage, because I did know some that weren't like that at all, but then I think they were difficulties of personalities and perhaps selfishness mostly in the part of the male, but the couples that I tended to know there was a sort of unity of purpose, it was like 'us against the world' sort of thing so that a lot of communist marriages that I knew of in the sixties seemed to me as a young woman, very comradely and a mutual respect for each other. The irony used to be

something about exploitation and maybe some of the men that were very involved say in the trade union movement hardly being at home...¹⁴²

The Party had well recognised the problem of women doing the housework, often being in paid work and then not getting to branch meetings because priority was given to the husband.¹⁴³ Whereas before there had been attempts to rectify this without questioning the premise of the Party's structure¹⁴⁴, there now came stronger criticisms about continually accepting the status quo until a major shift to socialism was achieved. For this had been the Party's attitude to achieving fundamental change for women.¹⁴⁵ There was also criticism about accepting the Party's education and fundamental basis of Marxism:

...I couldn't put this in a sequence in time, but I remember there being quite fierce discussion and debate about Marxist classes and women needing to have these Marxist classes whereas certainly myself and a group of women were much more interested in dealing with women's lives and issues affecting them *here and now*. And in fact some of these debates became quite vigorous and we were in the group that wanted to get ahead and discuss issues affecting women whereas there was a group felt that we had to have the grounding in Marxism before we could be doing that, so.¹⁴⁶

The response of the Party to the Women's Liberation Movement was said to be belated and insincere by those outside. In November 1970 the Party held a conference on the implications of the Women's Liberation Movement in which it assessed the impact of the movement.¹⁴⁷ There was anger that not enough was being done by the Party. Three important campaigns were highlighted: abortion and contraception, nursery schools and equal opportunity in education. Also, while equal pay was an essential demand it would not automatically change domestic oppression. Beatrix Campbell had already started to introduce feminist ideas into mainstream Party discussion.¹⁴⁸ In November 1971 at the Party's Thirty-second National Congress the

Executive Committee presented its draft resolution on 'Women in Society'.¹⁴⁹ From the branches and districts there were 252 amendments ranging from incidental one-liners to extensive re-workings of the statement.¹⁵⁰ There were brief amendments from Scotland, the nature of which show that feminism had not yet permeated strongly through the district or the branches. Noticeable were calls to see women as a separate and more repressed group. The issues of rape and domestic violence would soon been brought up as central debates by women in the Party. Later *Marxism Today* discussed this from January 1973 to February 1974, one article stating: 'The emergence of an autonomous Women's Liberation Movement has been the stimulus for questioning and challenging the existing Marxist theory, or absence of it'.¹⁵¹ It had also discussed marriage as a repressive institution where women had no rights and their individual sexuality was subordinate to the role of the family unit in society and was controlled by men.

Young couples, especially if one was employed by the Party on a small income, had made great sacrifices trying to build up membership and in getting campaigns off the ground and in this work there was a unity of purpose. Therefore many emerging problems had been overridden by an initial confidence and would need to be resolved:

...I suppose the other effect was that Doug was out all the time, being a YCL Organiser meant you were out every evening as well as during the day. We were *both* dedicated to the cause, wrapped up in the YCL activities, which meant that we didn't pay attention to our own personal lives very much, things were subsumed. I remember going through a pregnancy in a bit of - my daughter's pregnant now, and reading the books and we were talking about it all - I went through pregnancy as if it was just something incidental to the struggle, the exciting thing was that activities tended to surround our wee flat and there was always some people staying the night or people coming and going...¹⁵²

The limitations that had restricted women previously not only existed but were still dominant. There was also the male orientation of labour movement politics - by

design or circumstance - that would be a contentious point raised in the seventies. What seems the major difference from the sixties is that if women ended up in the same conventional roles then this could be after having grasped the opportunity of employment, going to University , or perhaps establishing a career:

...women in the Party who were really well read, they weren't women that just had this simplistic commitment, a lot of them read a lot, a lot of them didn't if their children were young and if they didn't have time to think about things, but they were very courageous a lot of them. I remember being inspired by a lot of them but their place was to do , and it was always still valued, work for the Bazaars and so on. When it came to the late sixties, early seventies, its a mixture of things - of women changing anyway, their expectations rising altogether and also I think the Communist Party, I mean the detractors would say the Communist Party looking at yet another angle of anything that's in turmoil or anything that was in turmoil, 'lets latch on to it', I mean I think our detractors said that.¹⁵³

Feminism was introduced into the Communist Party from the early-seventies, its proponents pointing to complacency and deficiencies in the Party's approach to the 'women question'. On what might be termed the traditionalists side, there were those who thought this was a distraction and a middle class-based one at that. What seems evident from the material that the Party was now producing and publications that were emerging generally was that a section of Party women strongly identified with , and recognised the validity of , a gender-based analysis. That the divisions and patriarchal dominance that existed in all structures in society not only permeated the labour movement but were a distinct and integral characteristic of it. For some Party women feminism replaced the enthusiasm and belief in vanguard class politics as providing answers to fundamental questions and this was a major revelation:

...it had a tremendous impact on me personally, the women's movement, and I began to read *Spare Rib* and *Red Rag* came out at that time as

well, all the periodicals and I began to read a lot of novels as well. And I suppose I see in my latter time in the Party as being part of the project to feminise the Party and taking part in that project. For a lot of us that was very important and it was an escape from male politics. It was a realisation that I suppose I equated male politics with a kind of centralism and a lack of democracy and a triumphalism and a lack of listening and hearing people. I'm sure some of these things now, looking back, were a bit exaggerated but it was a tremendous *relief* to be able to participate in politics in a way that you wanted to and we struggled to do that in the Women's Advisory...¹⁵⁴

By the early seventies¹⁵⁵ the Scottish Women's Advisory Committee was meeting irregularly and was barely functioning at all. At the 1974 Scottish Congress resolutions called for the re-establishment of the Scottish Women's Advisory¹⁵⁶, for the establishment of Women's Groups in areas and branches and for positive discrimination towards women. There was criticism of the small amount of questions given to women in the Party¹⁵⁷ and their limited number on the Scottish Committee.

From the mid-seventies the SWAC was meeting quarterly at Scottish level and there were now Area Advisory's in Glasgow (there were women's groups in Yoker, Kelvin, Drumchapel, Central/Camlachie, Maryhill and Govanhill) and Fife and Women's Groups in Glenrothes, Paisley, East Kilbride and Edinburgh.¹⁵⁸ A bulletin was produced and it seemed as if there was some regeneration of the Advisory: 'All in all progress has been made but much more remains to be done'.¹⁵⁹ A few major issues and demands now took precedence in the work of the Women's Advisory and were brought to the Glasgow and Scottish Committees for discussion:

...There were a whole number of issues coming up at that point. There were domestic issues like abortion, women's control of their fertility, childcare - that was a huge issue that we campaigned on, there was a closure of a nursery and we had a big campaign in Glasgow...¹⁶⁰

Although one might think it was habitual that communists would support abortion on demand, this was not always the case and women forwarding support for the National Abortion Campaign¹⁶¹ found that there were men (and some Party women)¹⁶² who found it hard to come to terms with these demands and this often reflected the influences of religious backgrounds and a social conservatism. A strong case had to be put before the leadership:

...for example the abortion issue in the seventies was one that I took up within the Party. When I say I took up I don't mean to sound individualistic about it but it was an issue I felt very strongly about it and I fought within the Glasgow Party and the Scottish Party for the issue to be taken up by the Party, abortion rights, and by the trade union movement...Lip service was paid if you understand. No it wasn't taken up automatically because I remember being invited into an Executive meeting to put the case for it.¹⁶³

Women seeking internal changes pointedly worked within the Party structure shaping the role of the Advisory in relation to the Scottish Committee rather than the other way around. Another crucial turn was a new view towards the Soviet Union and challenging the traditional belief that the position of women had fundamentally changed there.¹⁶⁴

...there was an element in the Party that thought that feminism was a diversion and that it didnae relate to the class struggle and that once we got the revolution then all of these problems would be sorted out. And they would point to the position of women in the communist countries and say that it all improves once you've got a revolution. The counter blast to that for us was that in fact there was research coming out that women were still doing the double shift in the Soviet Union, that although they had nominal places on committees they still didnae have power, they were still going home and doing the housework...¹⁶⁵

There were those who agreed there were deficiencies within the Party and important issues had not been addressed but they did not embrace a wholesale change. Members still believed that as a campaigning body and as a left-wing force there was still no other organisation to touch the Communist Party when it put its weight behind issues. From this stemmed an apprehension about changing the Party out of all recognition. It was the beginning of many shocks to the system for those who feared the fundamental implications:

...you see I resented the women's movement coming because I thought it was a digression from the central thrust of the struggle. I thought that the central thrust should be the human rights thing so I wasn't prepared. I had a marriage where I had the chance to do my own thing , I'd had children but it was me that was the activist not my husband. I was given that opportunity, in fact I was encouraged to take that opportunity but in a certain sense I was the mistress of myself and I didn't feel put down by the Communist Party , I actually thought that communists were very encouraging and very supportive of women. I didn't see the men as this chauvinistic thing...¹⁶⁶

It is essential to point out that there were women who did not accept the politics of feminism and , apart from some criticisms which they accepted, rejected its premise. They still believed in the traditional Marxist-Leninist approach rather than seeing the need to develop criticisms as to how present inequalities could be reformed *before* advance could be made. There was also the criticism that feminism had negative features as some of the Party women who organised the Edinburgh Women's Group felt:

Some of us who went to the Group had become very sceptical of ultra-feminism because we had gone to Women's Liberation workshop meetings at various times, I did and several others did, and couldn't

handle the anti-men strand, not all the women but a very persistent tendency to be down on men, and that just struck us as irrational and not very Marxist. I mean if you had a Dad and a brother and a son and a partner I mean what were you going to do with them? It was very odd. So for that reason we didn't see it as feminist in that sense and we felt it was a much more balanced view of how women's politics were going because it would take on board any issue...¹⁶⁷

The Party, while increasingly recognising the need to address the many inherent inequalities in the movement, still sought a unitary approach. However it seemed to be swinging behind those seeking greater attention to recognising there was a serious deficiency in policy:

But it is also important to recognise the class basis of oppression. Women can be brought to realise that they are a specially oppressed group (the "slave of a slave" as it has been put) - but that the oppressors are not all men but capitalist society. It is also important that men, too, should realise this, that the whole labour movement should take new initiatives on equality for women...¹⁶⁸

In Scotland differences which became key debates were starting to develop by the mid-seventies but did not come to fruition and open confrontation until the debate over the new draft of *The British Road to Socialism* in 1977.

Changes - the Edinburgh Women's Group

One of the ways women asserted themselves in the Party and helped develop their confidence together was by having separate meetings for women only. The Edinburgh Women's Group developed from women who put on a play for the United Nations International Women's Year in 1975.¹⁶⁹ The play, commemorating the fight for women's suffrage, dealt with problems women had faced such as being treated for pregnancy and working in a Dundee jute mill. The play was rehearsed over six months

- a process that brought Party women together in this way for the first time - and put on in Edinburgh at the trades council and at a large Party rally in Glasgow. The response was so positive that it was decided to keep on meeting:

...by this time there were very vocal women on the Area Committee and in Central Branch, Eileen Simpson being remarkable among them, and Carol Downes, for raising all the issues repeatedly and any more of us who were there *would have* been very free to add our voices to whatever they were saying. We certainly weren't, on the surface, discouraged. I'm just wondering why we didn't manage to bring more women into activity, whether we were as intimidating to other women as they had been to us before, you know what I mean?. Or whether the men's discouragement had just got so subtle that I don't remember it being there. That's being a bit cynical perhaps.¹⁷⁰

The Group seemed to encompass women from all sides of the Party and was not distinctly for the dissemination of feminist ideas nor initiated by them. What it did provide, and was seen as a very positive advance because of this, was an environment for women only to meet and discuss issues either specifically relating to their gender or to discuss literature as a group without any male presence. This opportunity had very positive results despite some CP men feeling left out and powerless:

We didn't always have a text because as we became a group, you know how a group builds, we just came together to be together and my marriage broke up, several other relationships marriages broke up so it was a support group as well, it wasn't just a brain thing at all. It became very much a solidarity and support group as well and interesting how in the Women's Group, supposing we were six or ten or three sometimes, if there was a flu epidemic, *everybody* spoke but *everybody*, I mean people that you never heard open their mouths at Party meetings. So interesting and so much of it very reflective, I mean years of reflection

coming out about life in general in the world that the Party men would never hear...¹⁷¹

Interestingly the group lasted from the mid seventies to the early eighties with its activities purposefully announced at Branch and Area meetings. The group deliberately met away from the Party's premises and usually in a member's house and this was taken in turns by the women. One reason it began to fall apart was that division emerged over the suggested texts, but while the Group lasted it was seen as a very positive venture:

...I enjoyed it, it was good and , again , you were with people that you knew that you trusted and the women were considerably less involved in this kind of political correct line. There were women there who might have voted against what you'd voted for but it wasn't a big deal, it didn't become a personal issue and I think that for me was one of the really hopeful things - that you could still meet with people and maybe they had different views about *The British Road to Socialism* or Eurocommunism but you weren't at each other's throats and you could just get on with it. You could get on with the business in hand.¹⁷²

The political differences that would culminate in distinct ideological groups in the Party in consistent opposition to each other had their roots laid in the early seventies. These developed with the influence of the Italian and Spanish Communist Parties and what was to be called Eurocommunism. The Scottish district did not formally embrace any of these terms as it had never led any ideological offensive or introduced any new political ideas into the CPGB, hence its loyal image. This merely mirrored its own general criticisms: 'In terms of theory, the Left in Scotland has a record that leaves a lot to be desired'.¹⁷³ New ideas were raised in other domains:

I went to the Communist University of London in Seventy-four I think. That was the first time I'd come across people who said I prefer Gramsci

to Lenin' and I thought 'That's a very strange thing to say' , that was when all that was just beginning to happen and they were off in another kind of world that I hadn't made contact with before. So it was a funny mix that Communist University of London between that group of folk, it was Judy Bloomfield I remember , but also equally quite a lot of people who were much more traditional Marxists , James Klugmann was speaking at it and folk like that so it was quite a funny mix...¹⁷⁴

The changes that became so apparent in the CP by the late seventies were beginning to appear at the start of the decade in certain districts such as London. That they were not yet predominant in Scotland may have been because of the achievements of the trade union movement and an ongoing united approach. Also there was still one triumph that all members celebrated in. On May day 1975 the *Morning Star* carried the headline of *Victory*. The Vietnam War was over and the United States backed government in the south had been defeated by a final offensive codenamed Campaign Ho Chi Minh. This had been launched on 26th April and was over by April 30th with a new Provisional Revolutionary Government in power.¹⁷⁵ As well as elation there was a need to rebuild the country:

Well when I was the first year in Vietnam, the first Summer after I went to Vietnam, it was like being high the whole time because everyone was liberated and they had their own country to themselves and although they were in want most of them, very skinny and starving, it was indescribable the feeling , the sort of lift of everyone.¹⁷⁶

In Scotland, Medical Aid for Vietnam had been well supported by the Scottish NUM , who levied its members at one stage, and by the STUC, at whose congresses it took collections. There were women who had been involved from the inception of these campaigns in Scotland and who had raised money. For Mary Cowan from Dalkeith there was an award from the Vietnamese Government to show their appreciation for

fund-raising and also voluntary work done in Vietnam such as the translating of works from French in a state publishing house:

I was given the Medal of Friendship and the first one that they gave because I happened to be handy. I was on the spot of course and I was an old person and I was coming back to Britain and so they had a little ceremony and gave me the Medal of Friendship which I've since lost, it was pinched on Berwick Station...I had my bag with a few things in it, my little hand luggage and I left it hanging on the door handle, in the way one gets used to doing that sort of thing in an honest communist country, and I went out to walk the dog and I came back and it was missing...oh I felt furious and upset, very upset and I got in touch with the police at once and the policeman said 'oh it's not so much the little things you lose, it's your faith in human nature', nice remark from the police (*laughs*). Anyway that was that, I've never had it back.¹⁷⁷

Conclusion

This chapter has focused on the activity of younger women in the YCL and later their participation in the Party. Many of the major issues that they were involved in, Vietnam, Czechoslovakia and UCS, were not exclusively youth issues. They were part of the whole political struggle of the Communist Party. Accordingly the place for young communists was in the Party branches as much as in the YCL and so there was less reason not to go straight into branch activity. Hence the problems from the late sixties.¹⁷⁸

As for the cohesiveness of the Party, this had survived the events of 1956 surprisingly well. Those events were now history for women who joined later and there was an acceptance, through rationalising experiences or through a CP family background, of the politics and nature of the CP as it now stood. There were no illusions in joining the Party and although there was a greater ebullience than ever from the Party's youth there were no major problems that divided age groups. In this sense the Communist Party in Scotland continued to offer a homogenous and efficiently run

body that encouraged and accommodated youth. Crucially, there was also a commonality in the level of participation in YCL branches that was less balanced in CP branches where there could be a great disparity between the intense and very active trade union communist politics of the industrial branches and the less dynamic and overall, less influential area branches.¹⁷⁹ One can easily point to the original decision to structurally separate the two spheres as increasing this divergence. Women in the sixties who were predominantly in the area branches may have offset some of these deficiencies, first by their aforementioned YCL involvement in greater numbers and secondly by the conscious changes that were brought about by some of them in the Party branches and committees in the seventies.

Czechoslovakia was a critical turning point in many ways as, (and obviously this is hugely open to interpretation of British CP history) it signalled the end of united support for the Soviet Union that was a characteristic of the Scottish district and had seen them through the losses of 1956. Thereafter there was more open criticism of the socialist countries and John Gollan's article in *Marxism Today* in January 1976 was more the opening of a debate rather than its denouement. The Party had come to terms with the events of 1956 twenty years after they had occurred and at a time when the vitality of feminist politics were becoming more influential in the Party. There now started an even greater debate as to whether the Party should go further with its reforms, as the Italian Communist Party appeared to be doing, or if it had gone too far down the road of reformism and non-communist (against traditional Marxist-Leninist) policies.

If critics faulted Party women for the late embracing of gender issues then they survived longer in the CP than they seemed to elsewhere. Until Czechoslovakia, there was still a belief in the Party's leading role and the progressive nature of world socialism. After 1968 there were major questions about the role of the Party and its attitude to women. Yet the politics of the Women's Liberation Movement came into the Party in Scotland somewhat later. This must be seen against the success of trade union issues from the late sixties and the advances in membership and shop-floor activity. By 1968 the Scottish district was noticeably the strongest in the CPGB with 7,617 of its 32,054 members (24%).¹⁸⁰ The Party in Scotland was helping to play a

leading role in uniting the left and producing political leaders. All seemed to be coming to fruition at about the time of UCS. That it never came to more and lethargy set in is surely one of the reasons for greater divisions from the late seventies.

The Party did try and merge the aspirations of Women's Liberation with its socialist politics which still put precedence on primarily changing society before addressing the inequalities within it. The demands of the WLM were seen as challenging certain fundamental structures within society when the Party was for overall change to socialism.¹⁸¹ It was then posited by the Party trying to come to terms with this influx of ideas : 'will not the women's movement be a very powerful force in carrying forward the struggle to realise liberation fully?'.¹⁸² The validity of feminist politics in the CP was that it illustrated to many women (and men) the complacency to inequalities in the Party and movement and also a docile approach towards rectifying what were seen as major deficiencies on the gender issue. Party women were not unanimous in support of feminist policies and by no means was this because of age difference , yet the issues of gender , gay politics,¹⁸³ race¹⁸⁴ and class were to be greatly debated in the CP and continually reassessed until the Party's demise.

Party membership had revived in the seventies and there was an increase from 7,116 to 7,585 between 1972-3¹⁸⁵ and then it began to fall slowly whereby 1976 it stood at 6,580. There would not be a reversal of fortune here. Towards the close of the decade there were 178 branches in 14 areas of which 137 were area branches, 38 factory/industrial branches and 7 student branches.¹⁸⁶ Curiously area branch numbers had remained the same as in 1974 and there was an actual increase of seven factory/industrial branches and a decrease of three student branches suggesting that the workplace was still increasing in influence as the recession began to take hold. From 1972-3 there had been an increase in YCL membership to 609¹⁸⁷ in Scotland but by 1976 it was down to 440.¹⁸⁸ Previously, attempts to revive it had been successful but would now prove futile. Related to this , sales of *Challenge* had risen to over 1,160 per issue but fell after 1974. The change of format had proved successful for a while and these figures show that YCL decline was not systematic with the end of the sixties.

If the internal politics of the CP seemed to take precedence over what was going on outside this would be an exaggeration when addressing women's activities from 1960-75. The world seemed to be advancing towards socialism with national independence and socialist movements making a greater impact than ever before. The immediacy of events, related through words and images often gleaned through radio and film, made for an exciting political apprenticeship and this at a time when there were better career and economic prospects than ever before. All the positive advances for working people in Scotland and Britain - social reforms, greater union density, successful industrial action, the defeat of the Heath government, greater national awareness in Scotland expectantly leading to the 1979 referendum - could be allied to events abroad by communists: the victory of socialist forces in Vietnam, Angola¹⁸⁹, Mozambique, revolution in Portugal, the death of Franco in Spain. Despite the defeats - such as in Chile, the conflict and division in Ireland¹⁹⁰, the militaristic actions of the US government, and even though there were now over 162,000 unemployed¹⁹¹ in Scotland - it had been a very positive time to have been involved in the Communist Party:

Because it was optimistic, because it was forward looking, we were going somewhere, we were building and even at the beginning of the seventies the set backs were small, we were winning, we were going to get there. I wasn't under any illusions that socialism was round the corner, it wasn't. When we were young I think perhaps there was that element there but as I got older it wasn't like that but it was still very very positive, and winnable above all.¹⁹²

¹ Ouaine Bain 27/6/94 and 17/8/94 p.7

² Mary Cowan 16/3/94 p.20

³ Noreen Thompson 28/6/94 p.17

⁴ J. Gollan *Britain's Future* (London 1963) p.15

⁵ *Report of the Scottish Committee of the Communist Party covering the Period June 1964 to June 1966* (Glasgow 1966) p.4

⁶ Gollan *Britain's Future* p.17

⁷ *Twenty-Seventh Congress Report* (London 1961) p.43

⁸ B. Wainwright *Close All U.S. Bases* (London 1958) p.4

⁹ Willie Thompson 13/6/94 - 'The Youth Peace Committee, it was a predecessor of CND and had a badge which was a white dove on blue ground and it was quite important to the Party, more so to its youth wing, the Youth Peace Committee to the YCL because it was a sort of bridge to CND. Quite a lot of members came over that bridge.'

¹⁰ Marion Easedale 23/3/94 and 17/11/96 p.23

¹¹ Isa Porte 16/2/94 and 12/12/96 p.5

¹² May Annan 22/4/94 p.38

¹³ Mary Park 13/12/94 and 14/11/96 p.55

¹⁴ Kathryn Chalmers 22/3/94 - a YCL'er on the marches at the time recited the chorus-

'Ah but I will sit here, ah but you'll no' sit here, ah but I will sit here, no but you'll no' sit here, they tried to shift the front line they tried to shift the rear, they couldnae get the Black Maria on the pier' p.9

¹⁵ *Daily Record* 4 March 1961

¹⁶ Kathryn Chalmers 22/3/94 p.8

¹⁷ Pat Milligan 15/3/94 and 11/5/94 p.1

¹⁸ Kathryn Chalmers 22/3/94 p.1

¹⁹ Barbara Thorpe 31/8/95 and 14/9/95 - 'My father's youngest brother at the age of twenty-one volunteered to fight in the International Brigade and he was one of the first people from Scotland to go out there. He went out in Nineteen thirty-six and he was in the Thaelman Battalion and he was killed at the Battle of Aldere Del Monte. He was in the same battalion as Esmond Rommely, Jessica Mitford's husband, and he was killed. He had only been in Spain for about two and a half months and he was killed and I think that also influenced my father again in the sort of feeling that his main pre-occupation was his family.' -p.2

²⁰ Barbara Thorpe 31/8/95 and 14/9/95 p.2

²¹ Maureen Sanders 25/3/94 p.2

²² *Report of the Executive Committee of the Communist Party of Great Britain From January 1961 to December 1962* (London 1962) p.14

²³ *Report of the Scottish Committee of the Communist Party Covering the Period January 1962 to January 1964* (Glasgow 1964) p.6

²⁴ *Ibid Report of the Scottish Committee of the Communist Party Adult membership increased as follows -*

1962 - 6,451

1963 - 7,079

1964 - 7,661

²⁵ *Twenty-seventh Congress of the Communist Party: F. Stanley: The Communist Party and Young People* (London 1961) p.3-4

²⁶ Noreen Thompson 28/6/94 p.2

²⁷ Jean Mackay 25/2/94 p.5

²⁸ Noreen Thompson 28/6/94 p.3

²⁹ *Glasgow Herald* 26 October 1962

³⁰ Katy Campbell 28/3/94 and 11/2/97 p.31

³¹ *Glasgow Herald* 3 October 1962 - The increase in unemployed school leavers was 23% up on the 1961 figure.

³² *Glasgow Herald* 21 September 1962- Unemployment was at its 1959 level at 82,780, 20,742 more than in 1961. There were twice as many unemployed as 1961. The total unemployed rate for Scotland was 3.8% as opposed to 2.1% average for Britain as a whole.

³³ *Twenty-Ninth Communist Party Congress Report* p.16

³⁴ Christine Sloan 24/3/94 and 26/4/94 p.3

³⁵ Katy Campbell 28/3/94 and 11/2/97 p.36 -'...a fight did break out among some of the young people there, quite a nasty fight, some of the musicians instruments were damaged, there was a rampage through the hall and I was in a corridor at the time and distinctly remember two or three

young women racing past shouting, they must have been drinking outside or as soon as they came in, rushing past 'Come on lassies, there's wine in the lavvies'. And that really was the demise of the Mandela Club. And that was all about organisation and understanding exactly what the problems might be to run a venture like that. While it lasted it was good.'

³⁶ Willie Thompson 13/6/94 p.3

³⁷ Willie Thompson 13/6/94 - '... We were very proud of the fact that we were so much more politically committed. There was actually more individual members of the Communist Party, not just the YCL, but there was more individual members of the Communist Party in Glasgow, there was about two thousand of them, than there were individual members of the Labour Party.' p.9

³⁸ Katy Campbell 28/3/94 and 11/2/97 p.5

³⁹ This was at the Whitsun Weekend May23-June 3 1967 at the Trend '67 International Youth Festival run by the YCL.

⁴⁰ Ouaine Bain 27/6/94 and 17/8/94 p.4

⁴¹ *Challenge* April 1967

⁴² Noreen Thompson 28/6/94 p.4-5

⁴³ *Challenge* (New Series) May (?) 1969.

⁴⁴ Ouaine Bain 27/6/94 and 17/8/94 p.7-8

⁴⁵ *Scottish Bulletin* 22/1/69 [WTC]

⁴⁶ Anna Sardesai 27/8/94 p.3-4

⁴⁷ Anna Sardesai 27/8/94 p.5

⁴⁸ *Scottish Marxist* No.1 Summer/ June 1972 p.64

⁴⁹ Pat Milligan 15/3/94 and 11/5/94 p.7

⁵⁰ Cathy Brown 29/5/94 - 'The Scottish Committee had a list of Marxist tutors of whom one was Alex Clark... You had David Ainley and Ben Ainley in England, Brian Filling was one and my favourite one was Alex Clark and we always tried to get him if we had Marxist lectures. Bob Horne did them as well and old Bill Joss, he was great Bill, Dave MacDowell... we had a lot of Marxist education at that time, we really had.' p.5

p.5

⁵¹ John Foster 23/11/94 p.2-3 - he suggests that there was a noticeable deficiency in branch organisation at this time which had developed from the constitutional separation of industrial and area branches in the Forties.

⁵² Anna Sardesai 27/8/94 p.8

⁵³ Irene Swan 23/9/95 and 28/10/95 p.36

⁵⁴ *Challenge* (Old Series) September 1966

⁵⁵ *Challenge* (New Series: the month is not always apparent) No.4, March 1968

⁵⁶ *Report of the Scottish Committee of the Communist Party covering the Period June 1964 to June 1966* p.1

⁵⁷ Margaret Rose stated that the 'Party was much to the fore in Peace Committee not dominant (of course!!) we're *naturally* accepted'- Scottish Committee meeting 27/11/68 - hand-written notes Willie Thompson, the bracketed words may be his. Willie Thompson Collection, [henceforth WTC]

⁵⁸ Alice Milne 10/7/94 p.28

⁵⁹ Scottish Committee meeting 22/12/68 - hand-written notes [WTC]

⁶⁰ *Challenge* April 1967

⁶¹ Christine Sloan 24/3/94 and 26/4/94 p.5

⁶² *Challenge* No.17 January 1970 (?).

⁶³ *Ibid*

⁶⁴ Anna Sardesai 27/8/94 p.30

⁶⁵ *Challenge* (New Series) No.5 April 1968

⁶⁶ Isa Porte 16/2/94 and 12/12/96 p.6

⁶⁷ *Cogito* (YCL theoretical journal) supplement No.4 Frieda Park Collection, [henceforth FPC] 1968 p.1

⁶⁸ These were the USSR, Poland, GDR, Hungary and Bulgaria.

- ⁶⁹ Ouaine Bain 27/6/94 and 17/8/94 p.7 and continues - 'Fortunately they came to the same conclusion next day but they would have found it very difficult. Normally if we'd done something like that without the party line being decided there would have been hell to pay, we would have been severely censored. There was a struggle at that point'.
- ⁷⁰ *Cogito* supplement No. 5 October 1968 p.1-9
- ⁷¹ *Ibid*
- ⁷² *Cogito* No.4 p.5
- ⁷³ *Ibid*
- ⁷⁴ Cathy Brown 29/5/94 p.9
- ⁷⁵ Marion Henery 6/4/94 and 17/11/95 p.18
- ⁷⁶ *Report of the Scottish Committee of the Communist Party Covering the Period July 1966 to July 1968* p.4
- ⁷⁷ *Ibid*
- ⁷⁸ Katy Campbell 28/3/94 and 11/2/97 p.19
- ⁷⁹ Pat Milligan 15/3/94 and 11/5/94 p.14
- ⁸⁰ CPGB Press and Publicity Department 20/8/69 *Information Notes on The International Communist Conference*. [WTC]
- ⁸¹ *Cogito* No.7 p.1
- ⁸² *Ibid*
- ⁸³ Twenty-Eighth Congress Report p.47
- ⁸⁴ *Ibid*
- ⁸⁵ *Report of the Scottish Committee of the Communist Party July 1966 to July 1968* p.2
- ⁸⁶ *Scottish Marxist* No.13 Spring 1977 p.35
- ⁸⁷ *Report made by J.Reid, Scottish Secretary, at the Scottish Congress 9-10th November, 1968* [WTA] p.4
- ⁸⁸ Marion Robertson 19/4/94 and 20/10/95 p.43
- ⁸⁹ *People Before Profits* : Communist Party General Election Manifesto (London 1970) p.6
- ⁹⁰ *Comment* Vol.7 No.19 10 May 1969
- ⁹¹ *Facts about Women in Britain Today*. Central Education Department and Women's Department, Democratic Left Scotland Archive [henceforth DLSA] (CPGB) June 1970 p.1
- ⁹² *Ibid*
- ⁹³ *Ibid* p.2
- ⁹⁴ *Report of the Scottish Committee of the Communist Party covering the Period July 1968 to July 1970*. [WGML] There were 197 branches in 16 Areas = 152 Area branches and 45 factory branches. p.3
- ⁹⁵ *Ibid* p.5
- ⁹⁶ A. Murray *UCS-The Fight for the Right to Work* (London 1971) p.3
- ⁹⁷ *Ibid* *Report of the Scottish Committee of the Communist Party* p.1
- ⁹⁸ Irene Swan 23/9/95 and 28/10/95 p.16
- ⁹⁹ Murray, *UCS-The Fight for the Right to Work* p.6
- ¹⁰⁰ Christine Sloan 24/3/94 and 26/4/94 p.7
- ¹⁰¹ W. Thompson and F. Hart : Foreword by J. Reid . *The UCS Work-In* ,(London 1972) p.53
- ¹⁰² Ella Egan 17/10/96 and 7/11/96 p.34
- ¹⁰³ May Annan 22/4/94 p.19-20
- ¹⁰⁴ Jean Mackay 25/2/94 - When I first joined the Party I went right into branch activity right away. As I say I didn't come to the Party through studying Marx or Lenin or anything like that, but just through all the injustices I saw in society. That was a good period. The period when we worked on elections we done a job for the people, as I say we were well got in Clydebank, so when I joined the Party into the Seventies was good. p.16
- ¹⁰⁵ Jean Mackay 25/2/94 p.1
- ¹⁰⁶ Irene Swan 23/9/95 and 28/10/95 p.17 and John Foster 23/11/94 - ' It would be carrying into operation those decisions by the Scottish Executive and the Organisation Committee, which was principally the full-timers committee, and ensuring that leaflets got out into the factories, the meetings were held, factory gate meetings were held, everything was followed out in an

organised way. So it was very much a political and organisational powerhouse- the Scottish Committee.' p.9 Foster also cites the defiance policy of communists on Clydebank council as one of the reasons for Alex Murray resigning as Scottish Secretary in 1974. He was replaced by Jack Ashton

¹⁰⁷ *Evening Citizen* 9/2/73

¹⁰⁸ *Glasgow Herald* 22/2/73

¹⁰⁹ *Glasgow Herald* 7/3/73

¹¹⁰ *Daily Record* 7/3/73

¹¹¹ *May Annan* 22/4/94 pp21-22

¹¹² Jack Ashton 18/12/96 p.17

¹¹³ *Scottish Congress Report 1972 Discussion Statement (Glasgow 1972) [WGML]* p.3

¹¹⁴ Frieda Park 7/11/94 p.4

¹¹⁵ *Challenge* No.4 February 1972

¹¹⁶ *Comanaiche: Monthly Report of the Scottish YCL No.1 November 1972 - a shortlived publication the title is Gaelic for 'the communicator'.* [FPC] p.2

¹¹⁷ *Ibid* p.3

¹¹⁸ *Ibid* p.6

¹¹⁹ *Comanaiche* No.2 December 1972 [FPC] p.7

¹²⁰ *Ibid* p.4

¹²¹ *Labour Monthly* Vol.54 No.5 May 1972 p.211

¹²² Irene Swan 23/9/95 and 28/10/95 p.65

¹²³ *Labour Monthly* May 1972 p.212

¹²⁴ *Labour Monthly* Vol. 55 No.1 January 1973 p.35

¹²⁵ Barbara Thorpe 31/8/95 and 14/9/95 p.20

¹²⁶ *Challenge* No.31 February 1976

¹²⁷ Ouaine Bain 27/6/94 and 17/8/94 p.44

¹²⁸ Noreen Thompson 28/6/94 p.20

¹²⁹ *Scottish Marxist* No.5 November 1975 - states that the Chilean Defence Committee was launched on September 13th 1975 in Glasgow. p.3

¹³⁰ *Labour Monthly* Vol. 58 No.1 January 1976 p.21

¹³¹ Irene Swan 23/9/95 and 28/10/95 p.63

¹³² *Tolpuddle* No.1 , 1971(?) p.6

¹³³ *Ibid* p.7

¹³⁴ Irene Swan 23/9/95 and 28/10/95 p.64

¹³⁵ *Tolpuddle* No.2 , 1971(?) p.3

¹³⁶ *Ibid* p.4

¹³⁷ J. Franklin *The Cuban Revolution And The United States: A Chronological History* (Melbourne 1992) p.101

¹³⁸ Irene Swan 23/9/95 and 28/10/95 p.25 - 'I always felt as though there was great care taken of me in the Communist Party. I think I was the first woman chairperson that they had ever had , always in the past they would have had people who had played a major role on the trade union scene who were used to chairing public meetings and that kind of thing and I think they did take a lot of care. So I was very conscious, you were up there you were the figurehead you chaired the Congress but there was a lot of back up support. You never felt unsupported and you were just fed everything that had to go through and they ran like clockwork.'

¹³⁹ Betty Frieden's *The Feminist Mystique* was first published in 1963 but was discussed later in party circles in Scotland.

¹⁴⁰ Barbara Thorpe 31/8/95 and 14/9/95 p.4-5

¹⁴¹ Barbara Thorpe 31/8/95 and 14/9/95 p.6

¹⁴² Pat Milligan 15/3/94 and 11/5/94 p.9

¹⁴³ *Report of the Executive Committee of the Communist Party January 1969 to December 1960* p.12

¹⁴⁴ *Party Life* Vol.1 No.2 December 1962 p.8

- ¹⁴⁵ *Communist Review* November 1952 : 'The further advance of the women's movement in Britain must depend upon the organised strength of the working people and their determination to move forward along the road to socialism. It cannot be a separate movement , nor have a different direction.' p.348
- ¹⁴⁶ Maureen Sanders 25/3/94 p.4
- ¹⁴⁷ Women's Liberation: CP Women's Conference 3/10/70 Marion Henery Collection [henceforth MHC]
- ¹⁴⁸ *Challenge* 26 March 1971
- ¹⁴⁹ 'Women in Society' Draft of Report to Congress [DLSA] 26/10/71
- ¹⁵⁰ *The Communist Party: Thirty-second National Congress Amendments submitted by branches and District Committees November 1971* (London 1971) [DLSA] pp.41-52
- ¹⁵¹ *Marxism And The Family: Selected contributions from a discussion in Marxism Today* (London 1974) p.9
- ¹⁵² Ouaine Bain 27/6/94 and 17/8/94 p.4-5
- ¹⁵³ Pat Milligan 15/3/94 and 11/5/94 p.20
- ¹⁵⁴ Ouaine Bain 27/6/94 and 17/8/94 p.26
- ¹⁵⁵ *Report of the Scottish Committee of the Communist Party July 1968-July 1970* p.3
- ¹⁵⁶ *Scottish Congress 1974: Resolutions from Branches* [WGML] - On the Advisory these were Pollokshields, Kelvin, Paisley, Glenrothes and East Kilbride branches p.2-3
- ¹⁵⁷ *Ibid* Pollokshields resolution - '...that this is a result of viewing the development of women comrades as a small, separate problem facing the Party, when in fact it is a major problem of obvious political and social importance' p.2
- ¹⁵⁸ *Report of the Scottish Committee of the Communist Party Covering the Period August 1974 to September 1976* p.6
- ¹⁵⁹ *Ibid*
- ¹⁶⁰ Ouaine Bain 27/6/94 and 17/8/94 p.27
- ¹⁶¹ The NAC was founded in 1975 - A. Phillips, *Divided Loyalties: Dilemmas of Sex and Class* (London 1987) p.7
- ¹⁶² Katherine Gallin 13/4/94- 'But you do make the mistake in believing that because you think something about women's issues that all the other women are thinking the same. I got quite a big surprise when we were all talking, women, about abortion and I took it for granted in my mind that although it's horrible and I've seen it in 'Gyny' wards where there's a woman desperate to have a baby and can't have it, in one bed, and next to her is a schoolkid who's had an abortion and no way it's nice, you can't say it's nice anyway but it's a woman's right to choose whether she has a baby or not. And I thought *stupidly enough* that all Party women would think that but of course they don't.' p.8-9
- ¹⁶³ Katy Campbell 23/3/94 and 11/2/97 p.7
- ¹⁶⁴ G.N. Serebrennikov *The Position of Women in the U.S.S.R.* (London 1937) pp252-256 explains the high values on women working and as mothers and the reason for prohibiting abortion. 'Motherhood is essential for the complete fulfilment of woman'. This policy was a reversal of Lenin's direction.
- ¹⁶⁵ Ouaine Bain 27/6/94 and 17/8/94 p.26
- ¹⁶⁶ Irene Swan 23/9/95 and 28/10/95 p.36
- ¹⁶⁷ Anna Sardesai 27/8/94 p.16
- ¹⁶⁸ R. Small *Women: The Road to Equality and Socialism* (London 1972)(?) p.17
- ¹⁶⁹ *Scottish Marxist* No.9 Summer 1975 p.23-6
- ¹⁷⁰ Anna Sardesai 27/8/94 p.15
- ¹⁷¹ Anna Sardesai 27/8/94 p.17
- ¹⁷² Barbara Thorpe 31/8/95 and 14/9/95 p.15
- ¹⁷³ *Scottish Marxist* No.10 Winter 1975 p.42
- ¹⁷⁴ Frieda Park 7/11/94 p.9
- ¹⁷⁵ *Morning Star* 1st May 1975
- ¹⁷⁶ Mary Cowan 16/3/94 p.23.
- ¹⁷⁷ Mary Cowan 16/3/94 p.30

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- ¹⁷⁸ *Scottish Congress 1968 Composite Resolution No.3 : Young Communist League [WTC]*
- ¹⁷⁹ John Foster 23/11/94 - I think Easterhouse had a good base and they were strongly involved with the tenants movement and I think Knightswood as well was good in that respect, and in Pollok. So you had activists who were taking leading positions within the tenants movement which is a very strong one in Glasgow at that time, but not really so much as communists, there wasn't a vigorous branch life in terms of branch discussion, there wasn't much Marxist education if any and I don't think branches were particularly encouraged down that road and there was a large paper membership. p.1
- ¹⁸⁰ *CPGB Weekly Letter*, No.41 - the figure for London was 5,998, Lancashire 3,997. However it was reported the number of cards issued for the end of 1968 was only 4,430 with an aim for 5,330. - *Minutes of the Executive Committee 17/11/68 [WTC]*
- ¹⁸¹ B. Matthews *Democracy and the Fight for Socialism* (London 1976) p.7
- ¹⁸² *Ibid* p.8
- ¹⁸³ *Challenge* No.32 March/April 1976
- ¹⁸⁴ *Challenge* No.36 August/September 1976
- ¹⁸⁵ *Report of the Scottish Committee of the Communist Party: Covering the Period August 1972-1974* p.3
- ¹⁸⁶ *Report of the Scottish Committee 1974-1976* p.3
- ¹⁸⁷ *Report of the Scottish Committee of the of the Communist Party: 1972-1974* p.5
- ¹⁸⁸ *Report of the Scottish Committee of the Communist Party: Covering the Period August 1974-September 1976* p.3
- ¹⁸⁹ *Comment* Vol.14 No.4 21 February 1976 pp55-7
- ¹⁹⁰ *Comment* Vol.10 No.3 29 January 1972, this whole issue is devoted to Ireland.
- ¹⁹¹ *Scottish Marxist* No.11 Spring 1976 p.11
- ¹⁹² Katy Campbell 28/3/94 and 11/2/97 p.24

Chapter Seven

Open Discord, Internal Division and Permanent Decline : 1977-91

The interpretation of *The British Road* was constantly being revised and rearranged, the question of class struggle was a major issue. People in the Party were trying to take this out of our policy, out of our approach.¹

I was very sad that it had come to that. Some of them I felt though that they didn't want the Party to change *at all* which I thought was being awfully selfish. You couldn't have a Communist Party that only catered for the Hungry Thirties and the Anti-Fascist Forties and the Cold War Fifties and the Peacenik Sixties and the Women's Lib Seventies. You had to have a Communist Party that could respond to and be passed on to younger, if you like, revolutionary people. You can't have one generation that says 'Its my Party and you will not change it'.²

Well at first I thought he was great. But what happened I don't know. He seemed to do everything too quick. I mean, who could say how all the mess began. It must have been going on for years, mustn't it? I mean, it couldn't have happened overnight.³

***The British Road to Socialism* debate**

This chapter will relate the opinions of the opposing sides in the disputes that emerged during and after the debate of the new draft of *The British Road to Socialism* in 1977. It will also recount the widening areas of disagreement which came to a head over the *Morning Star* and the People's Press Printing Society. Much of the additional oral testimony to that of the women is from those at the forefront of the disputes in Scotland.

Both nationally and internationally there were great political changes with the election of the Conservative government in 1979 and the emergence of Gorbachev as General Secretary of the CPSU in 1985.

Towards the end of the seventies Communist Party membership was beginning to fall and the impetus to the Party that earlier successes had brought had been whittled away.⁴ There was the disappointment of another right-wing Labour government and the failure of the Party to make a greater impact from its role in the UCS dispute and within the trade unions. This specifically applies to Scotland where there was mass union activity and the tactic of one-day strikes had continued.⁵

The Party still had a high profile, especially in Glasgow where it boasted a membership of 2,400 members in 40 branches.⁶ Here it pointed to the inequalities in one of the most deprived cities in Europe where 45% of women went out to work⁷, more than in any other city in Britain, and where Youth unemployment had reached 200,000.⁸ There was now an Indian and Pakistani population of 10,000 and the Party had recently been fighting the growing appearance of fascist groups in the city.⁹ There was still some confidence that the Party could become a major force but also greater realisation that this was becoming more of a hope than a probability as industry declined, unions lost members and unemployment increased. Supporting the new social forces was seen as a way of winning new members and where the Party could diversify and embrace causes that it had hitherto seen as supplementary to the class struggle. It was here that the new draft of *The British Road* played a vital part in redirecting the Party's campaigning role.

Although there had been some opposition to the 1968 draft of *The British Road to Socialism* in no way was it comparable to opposition to the new draft in the run up to the 1977 Congress. John Gollan's article *Socialist Democracy -Some Problems* had prepared the ground for a qualitative break with the past and the Party's exclusive role in the fight for socialism.¹⁰ There now emerged very severe and permanent divisions. Two opposing sides represented ideologies that were incompatible. These were between those who wanted the Party to play the leading role based primarily among the working class and its industrial base in the trade unions and those, now increasingly to the fore, who wanted to emphasise alliances with the Women's Movement and emerging interest groups and engage a wider social diversity of causes than the Party seemed to be addressing. The major difference over the new draft of *The British Road* was with the definition of a broad

democratic alliance¹¹ This was to replace the 'broad popular alliance around the leadership of the working class'¹² of the previous edition in being central to the Party's strategy. The strategy of the new draft strongly emphasised alliances with other sections and groups in British society in order to achieve socialism. A Parliamentary majority and changes to the state apparatus would be the centre of class struggle.¹³ The vanguard role of the Party was now noticeably relegated although Marxism -Leninism did not go unmentioned.¹⁴

I was in support of it. I felt that it took account of changes in the world, and also changes within Britain and I very very much subscribed to the idea of a broad democratic alliance. I did not subscribe to this 'wee elite' of politically clear people who could carry forward anything, the sheer numbers game apart from anything else, but I liked the idea of the Communist Party being central to something that was broad, that involved all of our people and was democratic in character, I was very much in support of it.¹⁵

The difference was obvious to all Party activists who concerned themselves with the debates over policy. This new phrase or concept of the broad democratic alliance could suggest many commutations especially towards joining forces with groups and ideas previously ignored , sometimes deliberately, by the Party. The traditionalists (or those purporting Marxism-Leninism in the revolutionary sense) saw the changes as scaling down the Party's 'leading role' and in its being the principal force for socialism:

The formulation which preceded the broad democratic alliance was the anti-monopoly alliance which seemed to me to have a much clearer class content and it wasn't only about the working class it was about everyone whose interests were not served by monopoly capitalism. The broad democratic alliance has no *focus* , what is it aimed at? It's a nice

idea but how do you forge it?, what are the terms in which it would be created? It didn't have any political bite really.¹⁶

The continuing strength of trade unionism at this time and the lack of socialist policies from the Labour government , introducing monetarist measures from 1976 , more than convinced the traditionalist element that the leading role of the working class should still be primary. Whatever one thought of the new draft, members detected a new vigour to the debate about the programme and its importance in changing the Party's direction. Thus it received more attention both and outside inside the Party than all the drafts since 1950. Emphasised more were the British democratic traditions of the past which *The British Road* gave cognisance of:

...Every country has its own identity, its own way which is the only Marxist view of it because different countries have got different traditions and different ways and they are bound to be different. I didn't see any problem with *The British Road*...in theory it was parliamentary because we were going to get Members of Parliament , we were going to shoot to power, but I think in our heart of hearts we knew that it was just a theoretical position because we couldn't even get a councillor never mind an MP. It was revolutionary in that it was a change of emphasis and was looking at things from a radical point of view but not revolutionary in a fighting in the streets type of thing.¹⁷

In Scotland the debates became heated and laid the basis of irreparable differences but the Party draft carried the day in terms of support from the Scottish District. At Aggregate meetings and in the (local area or factory) branches¹⁸ there were more definite splits. Those opposed to the changes estimated that they had support in a number of branches, in Glasgow , Fife , Clydebank and the Vale of Leven , Stirling , Falkirk , and to a lesser extent Edinburgh and Dundee.¹⁹ The latter is a good example of an area where there was a strong industrial base, an active and lively YCL and a deep loyalty to the Party leadership.²⁰ There were to be more bitter ,

heartfelt and passionately argued meetings over the *BRS* than on any issue since the internal changes of 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968:

It wasn't exactly bloodshed but it was horrendous. It was a question of packing....meetings were packed if there was a controversial issue coming up everybody, different sides would get their troops out and going into a meeting you would glance round and think 'oh god there's something coming up, now what are they doing here ?, what's brought them out?, you know we'll have to watch our step here'. And it really was horrible, it was really *bitter* , *nasty*, very nasty.²¹

Such a prevailing atmosphere was not conducive to a Party seeking to renew itself but there seemed so much at stake , a political heritage , that all those in the debate sought to uphold. At the 1977 British Congress the changes were voted in despite a noticeable minority against. There was a small split with the emergence of the New Communist Party lead by Sid French from the Surrey District. The NCP only managed a handful of members in Scotland (literally), including a few women.²² The disagreements and splits at British Congress shocked younger Scottish delegates , especially from outside Glasgow, who were not used to the deeply expressed differences that they saw at British level.²³

Differences were not alien to the Party in Scotland. In a circular of July 1977 the Glasgow Secretary Ian McKay predicted the growing problems that the Party *was going to have over the emerging disagreements on policy*. He noticed a 'lack of conviction'²⁴ towards *The British Road to Socialism* and the broad democratic alliance and saw the anti-leadership tendency in the Glasgow Party as 'a new and serious feature of the present situation'.²⁵ This opposition emerging still believed in the dictatorship of the proletariat and were against the 'Historic Compromise' in Italy between the Italian Communist Party and the Christian Democrats in agreeing the passage of certain items of legislation together. Citing the Gollan article McKay noted that differences existed before the new *British Road to Socialism* was published but that an anti-leadership tendency was evident at the Glasgow conference

held on 28 May 1977 where an estimated 45 to 55 of delegates voted against the Party leadership.²⁶ The influence of this opposition was said to have been amongst non-industrial comrades.²⁷ Hence from the beginning opposition to the leadership and the new policies was recognised and heavily condemned by the hierarchy. Contrariwise from the 1977 British Congress there came a new confidence from those who wanted to take the Party in a new direction as mapped out by *The British Road*.

An opportunity for greater changes came with a new Commission on Inner Party Democracy (IPD) which was to report back to the 1979 Congress. There began a realignment of forces as not all those who upheld the changes to the Party programme supported the constitutional shift that one section of the Party now fought for. For the reformers there now seemed an opportunity to try to change the CP structurally after years of disaffection at Area and Scottish level:

...I used to have a problem with all of the committees in that I used to describe it as 'The tyranny of the contribution'. That you didnae really have a debate, the scene was set by whoever was there from the Political Committee, the political statement was the scene setting and then the chair controlled the debate in that the tradition was that you got up when you had a contribution to make and you didnae interrupt that contribution and you didnae just say something if something came into your head, you had to wait until a contribution had somehow worked itself up or you had prepared it.²⁸

The phrase 'the tyranny of the contribution' described the tradition at Scottish or Area meetings of giving detailed reports, from the world view to industrial and branch reports. It was seen as stage managed and ready-made allowing no room for spontaneous or impromptu inputs. The Political Committee handed down a political statement and then committee members made their own rehearsed offerings while the meeting was strongly controlled by the chair. These were criticisms that went deep

into the Party psyche and in the debates about Party democracy the reformers saw the same procedure stifling them at committee level:

... There was a growing cynicism about how the Party operated as there was a growing cynicism about how the Eastern European countries were operating and the whole notion of democracy and that was what prompted our IPD proposals as well. This notion that we were very good at the centralist bit but we were hopeless at the democracy and a lot of the stuff about the women's movement fitted into that because I remember doing meetings about 'feminism in the socialist countries' and what the implications were and realising that they didnae tolerate autonomous movements within their countries. In lots of ways you were coming to the conclusion about the Party and its problems with democracy for a *long long time* but you stayed in it because you were fighting and you did have allies that shared the same kind of concept, so I wouldn't have said that it took me all of that time to conclude that.²⁹

Among the dedicated activists the contentions over Inner Party Democracy were no less earnest than *The British Road* debate though there were noticeably less contributions from branches and committees.³⁰ The fear of change going too far came not only from the traditionalist wing but also from the Party hierarchy and Party members who had supported recent changes. This opposition to the more radical IPD proposals³¹ was a distinctly strong characteristic of the Scottish Party in that its potent industrial base and working class membership still strongly identified with a centralised structure and its related discipline. Despite being defeated on their more radical proposals for IPD³² the momentum was still on the side of the reformers (I am distinctly not using the word 'reformist' in this context). They increased their numbers on the Scottish Committee by being put on the recommended list which was put to congress by the Elections Preparation Committee:

Jimmy Airlie had proposed a trade union convenor from Dundee I think and he was on the list but it was the point at which feminists were beginning to make some kind of impact on the committee and we were making this strong argument that there was hardly any women on and that women didnae play an equal part in the Party and so on. So the EPC was moved to , probably for all kinds of reasons I can't remember, put me on instead. And I remember Jimmy Airlie going to the rostrum and making this speech , the last of the backwoodsmen speech, he made the case for this guy he was trying to get on and then he said 'And for such and such Jimmy what's his name to be replaced by a *woman* and a *psychologist!*' he said. Because there was still a workerist thing in the Party that somebody that was a psychologist would be totally suspect or a psychologist and a woman, I cannae remember which was the worst , but I remained on that...³³

The politics of the broad democratic alliance were most cogent at this time. , Some women made a pointed contribution in an act at the sixtieth birthday celebrations for the Party in Glasgow in 1980. Several of them marched and spoke a text that criticised those male communists who left their wives at home whilst they did all the politicking in the pub. It was a night celebrating the Party's history as well as endorsing its most recent policies.

As these new ideas began to become more focused at Scottish level there was an even greater input from a section seeking to try and inject enthusiasm for change and a new perspective associated with the Spanish and Italian Communist Parties. Not that there was a wholesale identification with the term Eurocommunism. Most Party members did not use the term and neither is it evident in Scottish Party publications of the time. The new social forces were identified with this trend and the Party leadership in Scotland accepted and encouraged them hoping there would be growth through their adoption.³⁴ Not all members were so sure:

...What we seemed to be doing was saying 'Eurocommunism, that's great' whereas our situation was really totally different, we were a real minority Party, we hadn't even got to that stage of even considering any of that and it seemed to me to be grafting one lot of historical experience on our own without any reference to the process that had brought these mass parties about, whatever that was.³⁵

In England Party districts , especially London and the North-west , were openly divided over the political issues. However the specific nature and homogeneity of the Scottish Party had avoided such a visible break as each camp sought not to be seen as detrimental to the Party. Indeed this was a vital and important characteristic of the Scottish district: that it still unified its members on the whole and that members still worked together when needs arose. It is this that accounts for the continuing support given to the leadership as much as any in-depth knowledge and agreement with the new policies in *The British Road to Socialism*.

Feminism from the late seventies

The last chapter showed the conversion to feminist politics of some Party women in the early to mid seventies. In the late seventies there was the implementation of feminist policies once they were a part of the Party's strategy. The purposefully dedicated work of Party women in the Scottish Women's Advisory and Women's Groups ensured many aspects of feminism were accommodated within the Party. From the late seventies the politics of the Women's Movement were increasingly accepted in the Scottish Party and there was sanctioning of the activities of the Women's Advisory Committee and its role at Scottish and Area level. More women understood the pertinence and relevance of measures now fought for:

When the Women's Movement was starting to become more active, I identified with it right away because I had always felt the suppression even within my own home, I always felt subservient and it really annoyed me that because the men were the wage earners they took upon themselves this

authority over women, and while I mean my husband wasn't the worst of many, he was as good as most, at the same time he was affected by it as well, so obviously so was I. When the feminist movement began to grow I was right with it and while I felt that the Communist Party wasn't exactly a feminist party but at least they were trying, the Party were trying to embrace the Feminist Movement and trying to develop a feminist approach, not always successfully, I mean we had as many male chauvinists in the Communist Party as there were in any other sector of society but at least they were aware that they had to try and embrace this new idea.³⁶

Reconstituted , the Women's Advisory Committee fought for abortion rights (against the Corrie Bill for example³⁷) and for greater recognition of the extent of rape and domestic violence in society. This male brutality towards women also extended to child abuse and some startling statistics were used to illustrate this: 97% of adults who abused children were male and in 92% of cases the children they abused were female.³⁸ Violence was not just seen as a product of capitalism but of patriarchy, the imbalance of power between men and women. Feminists believed that these areas had been woefully neglected by the left. Yet there was a difference between feminists who thought there was a need for more separation from men socially and sexually and the more Socialist and Marxist feminism which saw a resolving of the problem at some stage under socialism. Central to the feminism in the Party was the criticism that class power alone as an explanation denied the reality of women's oppression.³⁹ A beginning was a commitment to changing the role of women in the Party:

I mean we were the group of women that really took issue with being expected to run the bazaars and stuff. Now that was very difficult because you didn't want to devalue what our older women comrades had been doing, not that they had all been doing bazaar's, a lot of them had been involved in lots of areas of work. But there was no doubt about it, when I came into the Party the *Morning Star* Bazaar that kind

of featured high on your agenda as well because that was ongoing as they say and certainly there was traditional roles played within the Party , without a doubt. And I can remember an incident even at Scottish Committee where this old male comrade told a really a very sexist joke and I remember thinking 'I wonder if I should take it up' and being a bit scared because he was old, he had done a lot but I remember at the next committee, once I had plucked up courage and thought about it, I thought 'No I am going to take that up'. In my book it wasn't on but it was hard to raise it without appearing to be critical of this old comrade.⁴⁰

The politics of feminism, from changing the perspective of women in the Party , were now changing the manner in which the Party operated and the role of women in its structures. A qualitative leap was made from the first half of the seventies , with people being won over to feminism , to those politics making an impact structurally in the latter half of that decade. Still , establishing Women's Groups and Area Advisories could meet with opposition from Party members who saw it as irrelevant and had no grasp of the new role that some women were attempting to establish. In this respect there was as much opposition through ignorance as through ideological hostility:

We had a Women's Group and I can remember our Branch Secretary *telling us we couldn't have a Women's Group*, even to the stage of *coming to somebody's house, aye!*. We arranged to have this group of us in Clouston Street and this was a debate about whether we should - I remember the secretary saying 'Look we're not a women's magazine' because I was also saying that we had to start where women were at and he says 'We're not a women's magazine' you know, like a problem page and we had to have Marxist classes, Emile Burns. And I remember a group of women who were supporting the view of the Secretary turned up on the night that we had the meeting to say that we

had to have Marxists classes and then there were some *real* ding-dongs went on, I mean it did seem so important to us and it was at the time.⁴¹

The positive role of Women's Groups was seen to be in their allowing a freer atmosphere and greater scope for the personal development of women than the Party branch allowed. The Edinburgh Women's Group was open to non-Party women⁴² and, until disagreements in the early eighties, was very successful in this sphere. Women's Groups could also be a stepping stone in returning to Party activity after an absence:

...because men dominate within society, within the family , within any situation men will dominate and they will dominate the speeches and the speaking and the conversation , so therefore women *do* have to assert themselves and it can be quite difficult. That was why the women's groups were useful , I personally got re-involved with the Party through a women's group in Govanhill but it was education classes they were running. I mean it wasn't just conscious raising, I didn't have much time for that kind of thing I have to say, this self contemplative sort of stuff, it was basic Marxist education and I found that very very very useful and it brought me back into activity and it also led to the setting up of a new Party branch which I became Secretary of and again that was with Calum's co-operation and work and assistance. We were living in Pollokshields.⁴³

The issue of Gay rights was also raised in the Party in Scotland and a Gay Rights Advisory Committee met for the first time in the late seventies in Edinburgh and Glasgow. There was also a YCL Gay Committee.⁴⁴ The Party worked with the Gay Activist Alliance and it was argued that the Gay movement must be seen as 'an integral part of the left and progressive movement'.⁴⁵ The importance of 'coming out' was showing pride in personal sexuality and in opposing the accepted norms of the role of the family in society.⁴⁶ The criticism of the left was that it had previously

treated homosexuality as a bourgeois deviance and this had been the case in the socialist countries and most recently Cuba.⁴⁷ The 1967 legislation decriminalising homosexuality was not applied to Scotland and Northern Ireland. Lesbianism was still not recognised as , according to feminists, it was not accepted that women could have their own sexuality. That these issues were now discussed by the CP in Scotland and that feminism was being accommodated in the Party was seen as a major advance for the reformers. Industrially, where a lot of traditional attitudes survived in the labour movement, Party women rose to the challenge of organising and presenting their case to a school of Scottish miners amongst whom the Party had an influence:

...it was a weekend education school and the pits sent various delegates to the school, I don't know how the Party managed to have that kind of hegemony but I guess it did in the pits, and we were to run this weekend school with these miners on women's issues and the women's movement. The very fact that that happened was a credit to the Party if you like because they were open enough to do that and , however uncomfortable they were with the issues , they realised that it was important to do that but it was also the wonderful clashes that we got into with people who had never really examined their attitudes to women. We were talking about how women serviced their families and clearly a lot of them had never thought of that and had just always taken it for granted. And we talked about the roles that women had in the house and listed them and this young guy said he'd lived with his mother and he still lived with his mother and he said 'Right enough, I come in and she sets my dinner on the table. She doesnae just set my dinner doon she sauts it for me' , she put salt on for him (*laughs*) and it was the way he said it was like a sudden realisation of the extent to which she was servicing him...the weekend was *fantastic* ⁴⁸, it was just wonderful...⁴⁹

The customary responsibility of the mother and the natural biological role that capitalism afforded her was fundamentally questioned, as was the Party's previous acquiescence on this. The Glasgow Women's Advisory, reconstituted in 1977⁵⁰, argued for greater child care facilities and pointed to research which countered the duty of motherhood and any inherently 'natural' role for women that was crucial to the formative years of childhood.⁵¹ The conventional view had persisted that children would become dysfunctional if not looked after by the mother. Countering this was research that showed several adults of either sex could still form attachments that would benefit the child in the same way.⁵² The Advisory stated that women were still restricted to their domestic role because of the lack of child care facilities. In Glasgow this meant that only 31.7% of 3-4 year olds attended nursery schools and only one in eight of these was full time.⁵³ The demand was for more workplace crèches, child-minders and nursery school facilities⁵⁴ to free women from their imposed role. The Glasgow Advisory's document was distributed widely amongst Party branches and groups such as Gingerbread and the Child Poverty Action Group.⁵⁵ In 1980 the Scottish Women's Advisory held a successful day school on the 'Women's Right to Work', presented by Sue Slipman. This was followed by a 'Reclaim the Night' march⁵⁶ which had become an annual event.⁵⁷

If women's oppression was increasingly recognised by more Party members this did not mean that the whole feminist agenda was automatically accepted by all Party women. The Edinburgh Women's Group appears to have worked because it brought women from all sides of the Party together and, although proving the need for women's organisation and the very positive effects of meeting together, it was not ideologically committed to any camp:

...I think when we met as women we met to supply something we felt lacking in the Communist Party, that's for sure, but we hoped that we could have it all taken on board and we were, most of us, active in the Party as well so we were trying to cover the spectrum. The way the feminist issues began to be addressed in the Party became like, it was a single issue, they were neglecting the other issues I thought and I

thought it was counter-productive because it antagonised people. It was confrontational.⁵⁸

There was the criticism that single issues such as gender, race and sexual politics were becoming the prime focus for Party work rather than being integrated as part of the overall struggle for socialism. The rejoinder to this was that these inequalities needed immediate recognition and specific policies in order to win more people for the CP and socialism. Those opposed to single issue politics taking precedence stressed what they saw as the limited resonance of feminist politics to sections of women:

...because of the divorce of the trade union struggles from political struggles that took place there failed to be a focus on working class women and again that's where , when the more middle class sections which were typified in the Eurocommunist element began to gain ground, they had discussion groups on sexuality and stuff like that which has some importance but was perhaps not key to the reality of life that faced women at that time and still faces them today when you're really struggling to get by. I'm not saying that we should neglect the mechanisms of oppression but I don't think it had a resonance with working class women. And also not to *see* women as part of the working class as well , that there's women's oppression out here and *there's class struggle* over here, the two are coterminous in a lot of respects.⁵⁹

By the early 1980s there was criticism from the Party leadership in Scotland at those women on the Scottish Committee who did not attend any meetings of the Women's Advisory 'nor have been won to become involved in any aspect of the fight to take forward in Scotland , Party policy on women as agreed at National Congress'.⁶⁰ The ideological divide would be compounded by a new government with which the Party could not unify against and come to terms with.

Conflict

The failed 'Yes' campaign for a Scottish Parliament in the referendum of 1979 and the subsequent election defeat of the Labour government signalled the end of advance for the Communist Party. The Thatcher government fundamentally affected many areas of British society with its rejection of the post-war consensus. The monetarist policies pursued by the government reduced the capacity of much traditional industry and unemployment increased dramatically with 30,000 jobs being lost in the West of Scotland within a year.⁶¹ The Thatcher government's first term was their hardest to steer but after the Falklands War in 1982⁶² and the overwhelming defeat of the Labour Party in the 1983 general election there was a most definite retreat for left-wing politics. In the Communist Party some attributed this to the lack of socialist direction and timidity of the labour and trade union hierarchy to meet the challenge and show leadership. For the reformers this was the era of 'Thatcherism', a new defining period in British politics and a total break with the past:

I think I would go along with the notion that *Marxism Today* tried to put across, that in fact Thatcherism was the revolutionary force, that it won hearts and minds, that there were major shifts in traditional values and that the way society was developing anyway meant there was huge shifts in work patterns so there was such a huge upheaval that Thatcher won hegemony, not just in the old style ruling class way but by winning the hearts and minds. And I remember reading about a major shift being in blue collar workers, Ford workers, car workers and things and that impressed me, the extent to which she had effected a major change in attitude in the country and I suppose like everybody else I felt a bit defeated by it. There didnae seem to be any foothold or any place that you could work.⁶³

There was a rapid decline in employment in the engineering, shipbuilding and mining industries, those that had been closely associated with militant trade unionism. The growth of the service sector and white collar employment meant there was a change in the composition of the workforce. Whilst trade unionism was numerically large there was no longer any natural allegiance to the Labour Party.⁶⁴ This was more apparent in England than in Scotland though. The creation of the SDP was also seen as a realignment of political forces unfavourable to the left.⁶⁵ From this viewpoint the Party needed to eschew its traditionally militant industrial character or die. Membership of the Party in Scotland was 5,216 by October 1980 and while it had stabilised, 33% of members had been lost in ten years.⁶⁶

A debate about the future role of trade unionism had been opened even before the 1979 election. Eric Hobsbawm brought in a new perspective with *The Forward March of Labour Halted?* suggesting that post-war advances were over. There was now open criticism of the inequality in unions and the lack of women in positions on Executives and as full-time officers.⁶⁷ Support for the return to free-collective bargaining was seen as producing greater differentials between men and women and upholding patriarchal values.⁶⁸ To the traditionalists these were excuses for supporting more right-wing methods such as wage restraint and the failed Social Contract of the last Labour government. The base of the Party's strength was its industrial membership in well organised unions. An article by Tony Lane which attacked the shop stewards movement was printed in *Marxism Today*, now edited by Martin Jacques. This angered some Party members:

...I saw it as being very critical. I mean I spoke against the Tony Lane article and said it was a hotch-botch and it was so provocative and it was timed for a TUC from what I remember and I can remember saying that 'how irresponsible'. I mean, I actually said that before I was on the National Executive but I certainly said it at a Scottish Committee. But I worked in a secretarial capacity for a Trade Union, I knew all the loyal comrades that had always worked there but I also knew that the trade union movement was changing and you couldn't *not* say that it was

changing and that the basis of the shop stewards movement was shifting altogether... they should have stuck to areas about sociology or even about international issues. Some of the articles I can remember reading about not just about the French and Italian parties the two big West European parties quite interesting, but I felt they'd no knowledge and they were approaching trade unionism in Britain and the shop stewards movement with a real staggering ignorance and I can remember saying that to Martin Jacques.

Marxism Today was strongly identified with the politics of Eurocommunism. Desiring a whole change in the way the Party approached issues and in its internal structure, the magazine became the theoretical house for ideas and articles that were not always to Party members tastes. Articles seemed inaccessible and incomprehensible to those used to the magazines old style under James Klugmann and the digestible contents of *Comment* or *Labour Monthly*. Yet this new style was also attracting a new readership:

I went along with the new ideas to a certain extent but *Marxism Today* was a magazine which I stopped buying because first of all the language, I mean I would start to read an article in *Marxism Today* and I would get to three or four paragraphs and I would need to go back to the beginning again and say 'what are they talking about?' I found that the language that was being used in *Marxism Today* was alien to me, but over and above that there were certain discussions and certain people who, I mean I didn't approve of them interviewing right wing members of the Tory Party for instance, I didn't think that was relevant and there were certain things about *Marxism Today* that I didn't like but mainly the reason I stopped buying it was because I couldn't understand it half the time.⁶⁹

This was from a supporter of the new social forces in the Party. Opponents of the changes were , not surprisingly , even more scathing.⁷⁰ As for interviewing a Tory MP; like so many issues this seemed to divide the membership between those who

thought it was being bold and breaking new ground and those who saw it as accommodating the enemy. The reformers who were identified with *Marxism Today* and who emphasised the importance of Gramsci were not seen to have identical counterparts in Scotland. There was not an organised bloc of distinct Eurocommunists. The authority of the leadership still convinced most members to support or reluctantly accept the changes and so there was not a divide between middle-class elements and industrial workers as 'Euros' and 'Tankies'. In Scotland one could not identify the politics of either with any one side or trend in the Party. Branches, areas and committees had a mix of both. In contrast to this was the Management Committee of the People's Press Printing Society which oversaw the running of the *Morning Star* and who met in London. Although controlled by its shareholders, the paper was still strongly influenced by the CP who forwarded nominees to this Committee. By the early eighties differences were becoming increasingly bitter and the atmosphere at meetings contrasted with the experience of Committee members from Scotland:

...because it was so numerous I never felt ostracised from our politics , I never felt as though people were vindictive about my politics. I felt I could move around in Scotland in an open way and also in the Scottish Party , even although you didn't agree with one another, I never experienced sectarianism in Scotland but by golly when I went down to work in London , the London Party was just so riven with sectarian politics, it was horrible, absolutely horrible. I couldn't understand; sectarianism is one of the most horrible things in the world and I used to think that it belonged to other than the Communist Party, to other groupings on the left because I'd never experienced sectarianism as I did when I went to London, I thought it was just dreadful.⁷¹

It was on the PPPS Management Committee that a major dispute broke out between the Executive Committee of the Party and the *Morning Star* editor, Tony Chater. The Party EC accused Chater of not following Party policy and forwarding policies

that had been rejected by the Party Congress. There had also been criticism of the paper and its editor by Congress. A section of Party activists allied with some PPPS shareholders feared that new proposals for the paper would conclude with its becoming a weekly paper and so ending its role as the only daily paper produced for the labour movement. They were also convinced it would eventually be wound up if these changes were implemented and so they supported the editor. This opposition argued that the paper was accountable to the shareholders directly and not to the Party. The opposing sides in this practical dispute on the whole mirrored the political differences over *The British Road to Socialism*. Consequently there had been mounting antagonism on the Management Committee of the PPPS:

The Party never talked about the working class, always talked about the working people and time and time again Tony Chater would bring an editorial to us which talked about the working class and I would always have to say 'Can I just have the wording changed please, we don't use the term working-class we talk about the working people' and he would accept it but that was it. And I was sitting in among a whole lot of people who were actually opposed to the line of the Party Executive but I hadn't the wit and sense to see it because I just did not see their sectarianism.⁷²

It was those who opposed the CP Executive's plans for the *Morning Star* who were labelled sectarian. This division was obvious in other districts. In certain Party districts in England the division between members supporting or opposing the Party's Executive Committee reflected the same splits on the paper's management committee. Ironically, in the North-west district which covered Manchester and Liverpool, this disharmony was the first major political conflict experienced by the last new recruits to the Young Communist League:

...when I joined the YCL the people who were involved in starting the YCL came from pro-*Morning Star* trade unionist backgrounds and

Manchester was split between the Euros and the Marxist-Leninists if you like, was very much along class lines, it really was. Euros were professional , middle-class , academic, that kind of group in the Party and everybody else, they were the trade union communists and the working class. It wasn't my fault that those were the people that had been running the YCL but those were the people I kept in contact with so I was therefore seen as part of this grouping and I'm quite happy to have been in that grouping but it wasn't something which I'd actively chosen at the time, it was accidental I'd come into the Party that way. When I came up to Scotland obviously the political divisions within the Party were quite different, there wasn't that kind of class basis to the position, I think it was much more complex in Scotland and in Glasgow. You had the phenomena of the Party loyalists , large sections of the Party who were working class and they just didn't accept the political developments there had been in the Party and they saw that it was important to be loyal to the Executive Committee and that was their view and for a long long time, even when there was expulsions and everything , they stuck to that position.⁷³

From 1983 the meetings of the People's Press Printing Society were packed. There was support for the CP Executive Committee's list of candidates for the Management Committee of the PPPS. Opposing them were those dissenting Party members who stood by the editor of the paper , a section of the existing Management Committee and other shareholders. Those supporting the EC believed that the editor , who had been on the Party EC, should have been disciplined and removed:

I was sick, I was disgusted with the behaviour of the people who had been manipulating for years obviously to take over this paper and we were blithely ignorant that anybody within the Communist Party could manipulate to the extent that they were going to take this paper away from this new idea, it was because of the new ideas in the Communist Party and

these people were determined that if there was a split they were going to have the paper, I think that was it. When it came to the bit, we were quite helpless to protect the paper from these people, they won the arguments, well they didn't win the arguments but they were able to win the support of people who were like-minded but I never understood how we could have lost that paper...⁷⁴

Scottish Party members , many of whom had sold the *Star* over the years,⁷⁵ supporting the Party Executive believed that the paper would given a new lease of life if the current incumbents were removed. The divisions and acrimony over the paper were realised later in Scotland compared to the earlier schisms at the Management Committee meetings. Many ordinary members did not realise that disunion had come to open feud until they were urged to attend the PPPS AGM in Glasgow.

What the opposition feared was not the re-hauling of the paper but that it was going to be put into the hands of those who had no intention of trying to make it a continuing concern. Seeing the subsidies given to *Marxism Today* and its new priority in the Party's strategy , it was felt that the *Morning Star* would be quietly disposed of:

When the split came about the *Morning Star*, I was one hundred per cent on the side of the people who were supporting the *Morning Star*, I was agin the Executive because I firmly believed , by that time, that they were trying to destroy the *Morning Star*, that if they got their hands on the *Morning Star* it would no longer be on the street and in my opinion by the end of this period I saw the Party crumbling and I wasn't sure that we would be able to save the Party as I wanted to see it but I was damned determined that I would do everything in my power to save that paper.⁷⁶

In Scotland those going against the recommendations of the Party Executive, argued that the Paper belonged to the labour movement and was accountable to its shareholders through a management committee and not directly the Party. Countering this was the riposte that the Party had been the major influence in the paper and that EC nominations were always accepted in the past. Either side could technically prove their case. The division was the practical result of two politically opposed camps. There were also the supporters of *Straight Left*, a paper which had started in 1979⁷⁷ but whose history of factional activity made them (to the Party hierarchy and unsympathetic members) the 'anti-Party' group *par excellence*. Although on the left and strong traditionalists, there were differences that made them operate separately from the left emerging around the *Morning Star*. An AGM of the People's Press Printing Society AGM took place in June 3rd 1984 at the Woodside Halls in Glasgow. The hostile atmosphere and antagonistic behaviour of the participants augured badly for any future unity:

...a young women gave me my papers and she said 'right , you go into the hall and sit down' and I said 'Just a minute I'll do that when my husbands been dealt with , I'm waiting on my husband, I'm going into the hall along with him' and I felt it wasn't a very friendly attitude for a start, and we went in and sat down. And that was a very troubled meeting. Nothing went right as far as I was concerned. Mick McGahey got up to pass a resolution and was refused permission and it got quite heated and there was very angry exchanges within the meeting and after it and tempers were very frayed...And we withdrew our shares and gave our money to charity but continued to purchase the paper. It's a very unhappy episode in my political life.⁷⁸

In 1984 the Annual General Meetings met in seven cities throughout Britain. In Glasgow those supporting the Party Executive tried unsuccessfully to move a resolution in opposition to the Management Committee of the paper. Countering this it was argued that the business for all AGM's had to be the same and that no

motions could be taken on the day from the floor. Having failed to get the chairperson to allow a resolution to be moved the meeting broke up without a vote being taken, a vote that would have been vital in determining who would control the paper. The altercations continued:

...it was like rent-a -mob up the stair I don't know where they got them, stamping their feet and howling. *It was absolutely horrendous.* We were stuck right in the centre, we couldnae even get out and finally when it finished up we all went out, Eric Park's son got punched.⁷⁹ He was doing his steward and he got punched. When I got home I phoned Monty Berkeley, said 'What did you think of that?' he said 'Cath, I went home' he said 'And I looked at my Party card and I tore it in two, I've been fifty years in this Party, if that's what it's come to I don't want to know'. It was absolutely awful.⁸⁰

With no vote being taken and the rest of the votes in Britain going against the reformers, the Party lost its influence on the PPPS Management Committee and of the *Morning Star*. The Glasgow AGM only confirmed the actual state of affairs in the Scottish CP that the Party membership was irrevocably split. Symbolically, and it was a traumatic event for many members, I believe the meeting in Glasgow effectively marks the end of the Communist Party in Scotland.⁸¹ Though most Party members still supported the leadership it appears that there was some pragmatic voting going on as subsequent AGM votes were decisive for the opposition despite the Party trying to mobilise to reverse the decisions. There was definite support for the opposition from left-wing elements outside of the CP but tactical voting must *have been exercised by members who the Party leadership thought they could rely on*. Active CP supporters of the *Morning Star* faced disciplining by the Party hierarchy:

It was seen as a crime, it was quite criminal. The *Morning Star* was anti-Party, that was the phrase, anti-Party. For someone who spent

their whole life working for the Party and supporting it, I took that very badly...I was removed from the Chair of the Glasgow Party and although the reason for it was a vote of no confidence due to my conduct in the chairing of a meeting , it was basically they didn't want me up there any more. To an extent I had been put there with the approval obviously of the hierarchy , so I was to be removed when I didn't play the game.⁸²

The divisions over the *Morning Star*, coming at the twilight of the Party's history, caused much animosity and anger among people who had been close friends or were in Party families. The bitterness over this rupture cannot be overstated and was patently obvious during the interviews because of its proximity (ten years or less from the first interviews in 1994) and because of the depth of the break. The anger of both sides over their feelings of mistreatment and betrayal suggested that some relationships would never be the same again. It was an alarming time and unlike events in 1956 these were disagreements over indigenous issues:

It was very bad. We were called Trotskyites , we were also told that we had hijacked the paper, it was a disgrace - the letters that had been written in the paper, and I had written one myself about the previous *Morning Star* meetings. These were the actual Annual General Meetings and this was crucial votes for the Editorial Board at the time and we were just considered as traitors and it was just really dreadful and the thing is I was seen as being a renegade within my family. I was a rank bad yun.⁸³

It was hard to find someone who did not have a strong word to say on this issue and about their opponents as well as the resultant measures that were taken such as suspension and , the ultimate sanction , expulsion⁸⁴. In Scotland these began with suspension of some members in 1985 and , from 1986 , expulsions. These included some well known figures in the Party such as John Foster , an established academic

and selfless activist , and Andrew Clark, from a mining family and now a *Morning Star* journalist. Instead of being formally expelled some members were not re-carded which meant that they were effectively excluded from Party activity and so were in essence no longer members.⁸⁵ The Party leadership justified this measure as certain members still supported the *Morning Star* and thus its stand against Party policy.⁸⁶ Members on the receiving end of these measures saw the irony of the increasing use of democratic centralism to implement discipline by those who supposedly abhorred this mechanism.⁸⁷ Not all Party members supported any one side in the dispute and a fall in membership to 2,900 members by 1986⁸⁸ suggests that many had quietly left:

It was all this fighting, all this aggro and people not talking to each other and folk who had been friends, comrades, work associates , whatever for years and you suddenly *have to* make a definitive statement about things that a) you don't think are that relevant when it really comes down to it , b) there are positive things on both sides and you're being asked to make up your mind and stick to a position and I just felt I couldn't do it.⁸⁹

The dramatic fall in membership was possibly more attributable to the 'colossal problems with de-industrialisation and unemployment.'⁹⁰ The Party was losing its most important base in the traditional industries⁹¹ due to the rationalisation programme of the government and the limiting of established trade union practices.

Breaking the back of trade union militancy 1983-5

From a communist perspective the splits and acrimony could not have come at a worse time. Although trade union organisation was still evident , despite a falling membership, new legislation restricting trade union rights and immunity from the law had been introduced by the Minister for Employment, Norman Tebbit , in 1982. Towards the end of 1983 there was a major dispute over union recognition in Warrington at the *Stockport Messenger* paper run by Eddie Shah. Mass pickets supported the reinstatement of sacked print workers. Here, local YCL'ers

experienced an important dispute which set a precedent for industrial conflict in the 1980s:

It was not just the police, there were riot police but there were also the Special Patrol Group which Anderton, the Chief Constable in Manchester, had just set up and they were basically paramilitary police and they were brought out in force to counter the pickets. The whole experience that night was just horrific, it's the most horrific thing I'd ever seen in my life and everything, you can read *State and Revolution* and read everything you like but when you actually see all the forces of the state out to physically smash people, it had a major effect on my political development at that time. It had a big effect personally because my sister was arrested that night, she was only fifteen, we stayed the whole night and, it must have been about five or six in the morning, most people were leaving and the police just went mad and attacked everybody and my sister, the police had this guy on the floor and they were just like kicking his head in, the whole group of them, and my sister, we were all screaming and my sister went in and tried to drag them off, she was only a wee girl and they just dragged her off, the police had all these cabin things. It was just horrifying and it just happened in minutes and she was arrested for obstructing the police and we all had to go along to the police station and try and find out where she'd be taken to, loads of people had all been dragged off, and we spent the night at Warrington Police Station...⁹²

If this confrontation with the authorities indicated an ominous hardening of methods towards trade unionists in dispute then it was substantiated by the next major dispute which became the longest and bitterest industrial conflict since the Miners lock-out and General Strike of 1926. The forerunner to the Miners' strike of 1984-5 was the fight to save the Kinneil and Cardowan collieries and strike action over Monktonhall, all pits being in Scotland. There was also a national overtime ban in opposition to

redundancies.⁹³ What distinguished this strike from all others in the post-war era was that it was a British wide strike, despite a majority of Nottinghamshire miners who worked, which was for the retention of jobs in mining communities. Unlike a wage demand or strike against reorganisation, this strike was purely for survival and the Party recognised its importance: 'The miners' heroic struggle dominates the struggle and rightly so. It is one of the greatest and most fundamental struggles this century...'⁹⁴

At the start of the strike the Women's Advisory of the STUC had organised a women's demonstration in Edinburgh on the theme of 'Victorian Values'. Women dressed up in Victorian outfits and some women from the coal fields also got involved.⁹⁵ An important turning point was a meeting in Lochgelly which brought decisive assistance from women of mining families who expressed their support for the strike:

It was as a result of a decision taken in the Party. Jean Miller had been at a Party meeting for the whole of Britain and women were becoming involved in Barnsley and in Yorkshire and it was decided in Scotland that there should be a women's meeting in Lochgelly and that for me was the start of my personal involvement. We then set up a Scottish Area Women's Support Group and two women from each of the support groups in the various areas in Scotland were on the Group. Fife, Lanarkshire, Ayrshire and Lothians and we came together and discussed many things. Again, too, women from the Support Groups were addressing meetings and playing a vital role in the situation. No matter what level the meeting was held a women speaker was always included. The women were also involved in the strike committee meetings that were being held in the districts.⁹⁶

This new role did not mean that there had been a sudden transformation of the NUM membership and that women were easily accepted in the front line of the struggle. Many prejudices remained among the miners and the women were often fighting on two fronts

trying to break down their established family role whilst fighting against the government's measures. By their perseverance they broke some prejudices down. Women became actively involved in the picketing, organised the kitchens and learned to address meetings and so became more politically aware:

...I think it was the exact nature of the women's involvement in the miners' strike that was so important. They realised that the strike was for the future of their husbands, their brothers, their uncles, their fathers, but it was also for the future of their children and their communities. And on this occasion the media couldn't get women, as they normally had been able to do, to condemn their men for taking strike action and urging them to go back to work. They didn't get that. Women were in fact arguing for and were supportive of the strike action that was being taken by the miners.⁹⁷

Although miners' leader Arthur Scargill was criticised by many of the Labour and trade union establishment, and also a section of the CP, in Scotland the membership of the Party united and practically helped the strike. There were different perspectives on who had influenced the women in the mining communities. Some Party feminists claimed it was proof of the effect of the women's movement and as much a rejoinder to patriarchal elitism in the labour movement.⁹⁸ Other women argued that this was straightforward support from working class women for traditional class-based industrial action and that the women's movement had been negligible in the coal fields prior to the strike.⁹⁹ The CP Women's Advisory assisted Women's Support Groups and Women's Action Groups. Trades Councils, trade union and Party branches often adopted pit communities and raised funds for them. Mining villages in Fife were supported by groups and political parties in Dundee where there had been equally strong support for the miners in the 1972-4 dispute. In the West there were support groups in Glasgow and surrounding towns:

The Paisley Trades Council organised collections every Friday and we had a good Labour controlled District Council then and they gave us permission to [use] part of the Town Hall where we could take the

collections and that, gave us the cans to do it and collect in the streets. We collected in this area I think it was about Eight-Five Thousand pounds in money and thousands of pounds in food because we used to stand down there outside the Co-op when the people were coming out on a Friday with their groceries and all the big stores and *never had anybody* saying they wouldnae give you anything and we did it in Johnstone and Barrhead and Renfrew as well and the miners came up from Ayr, so many of them every week...¹⁰⁰

Despite assistance from sections of the population there was now caution from many unionised workers and a reluctance to take industrial action in support of other disputes. Another new fear was the sequestration of union assets. In Scotland the STUC gave support and the miners' leaders still had influence in that sphere. Women's Support Groups were determined to show their solidarity with the strike and joined men on the picket line. They received the same physical and verbal abuse from the police¹⁰¹ and were resolved to organise themselves:

We also organised a rally at Polkemmet on the 14th February, St Valentine's Day, and it was to be a women's rally to stop the pit from being closed but miners also came along although the majority were women and their children. There was a huge police force at the pit and I remember one incident where a young women with two children was trying to get through the police cordon and this policeman told her to get back in the f..... kitchen. I said to him 'let her through, she's only trying to get through' and he repeated what he had said. So she had to walk all the way round the police cordon. There was however a tremendous feeling amongst the women and they tended not to let an incident like this get the better of them.¹⁰²

Unfortunately for the mining communities and the labour movement the dispute ended in defeat for the strike and the wholesale rundown of the mining industry. It

had been an exhilarating twelve months of activity as well as a fundamental turning point in British industrial relations. Women had also, though temporarily, broken free of their traditional role and been critical in the continuance of the strike. There was some disappointment that politicisation of the women did not continue and many dropped out although this can hardly be surprising given the length of commitment during the strike and the problems arising from it such as reinstatement of sacked miners. A disappointment was the rejection of associate membership of the *Women's Support Groups to the British NUM*. At British level the women were organised as *Women Against Pit Closures* and their work was co-ordinated by a National Committee. Here there seems to have been a split between what the Communist Party termed the 'ultra' and 'hard-left' elements and themselves in the organisation.¹⁰³ There were strong differences among members of the National Committee which became obvious after the strike. The CP was well aware of criticisms directed at itself¹⁰⁴ and one Party organiser, Pete Carter, commented on '...the general hostility between the NUM and the Party resulting from our analysis of the strike ...'.¹⁰⁵ Despite these differences at British level the strike had been enormously liberating. Having travelled throughout Britain, sometimes addressing meetings, there was pride from the women involved:

...I mean it was a great time. I was involved in the strike and particularly with the women, I'll never regret that, that I was involved with them...My son worked in the mining industry and he was on strike for the whole year and I remember the day he went back into Monktonhall after the strike ended. Everybody was in tears, the men that were going back to work, the women who were there, the victimised miners who couldn't go back to their work - it was a very emotional day. But I think they had to go back at that stage, it couldn't have gone on any longer.¹⁰⁶

Dramatic changes in the socialist countries

If there were major changes in Britain during the eighties, there were fundamental changes affecting international relations between the superpowers. The Brezhnev leadership, effective from 1964, was associated with an orthodoxy that brought in a stricter social regime than the brief spell of liberalisation under Khrushchev. Fractures in communist unity had become permanent from 1968 after events in Czechoslovakia and were reinforced in 1969 at an international meeting of Communist Parties in Moscow which was called to try and placate differences. By the late 1970s there was less of an allegiance from Communist Parties in Europe and more open criticism of areas of Soviet rule. Official Party delegations from Britain were still well treated by their hosts but disapproval of their criticisms was made obvious:

...I went with Gordon to the celebrations for the Revolution, that would be in Seventy-seven, the big one, and Gordon spoke to the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party and nobody clapped, they all to a man and women sat on their hands because he was saying things. They could read the 'in' words, they knew the 'in' words and they knew when to clap and when not to clap and the British Party's position was such that they didn't approve of us.¹⁰⁷

Later, there was condemnation of Soviet intervention in Afghanistan in 1979 and this was another point of disagreement in the CPGB. The traditionalists at the 1981 Congress argued that the action was in defence of a infant socialist country surrounded by hostile regimes: 'And it was this thing of the Soviet Union invades 'again', 'This is what the Soviet Union is like' and the other side was supposed to be saving the Afghani people from this poverty and it was a *total* travesty of the facts...'¹⁰⁸ In opposition to the action of the Soviet Union there was cynicism about the coup d'état between rival forces in the Afghan government and a fear of the similar practices of other socialist regimes. In tandem with almost universal

condemnation of Soviet action there was increasing hostility from the British and US governments and the reawakening of Cold War politics. Once more CND became a very active campaigning body protesting against the new arms race and the siting of Cruise missiles in Britain. Women ran the peace camp at Greenham Common and the Communist Party heavily supported moves towards arms reduction. Despite much activity, socialist politics seemed to have less resonance domestically and internationally than they had in the sixties.

Communists had admired the socialist countries for having rebuilt their economies after the effects of war and for a time had believed that they were advancing towards socialism. The Rumanian Communist Party, which had been dominated by a few individuals since the war, had taken a separate foreign policy line from the Soviet Union in more recent years. The Rumanian Party Congress in November 1984 made few positive impressions on Pat Milligan, a member of the National Executive of the CP who met the Rumanian Prime Minister Nicolai Ceausescu and his wife Helena:

Oh dear, how can you say it? I mean apart from all the portraits it was quite bizarre, you were driven around in all these big limousines and there was posters at every available lamp post of the man himself with the dark hair, darker than mine was at the time and you meet the person and he doesn't look anything like that. It's a bit like Saddam Hussein really. What I do remember about his wife there was a particular reception, she was so warming and she spoke a bit of English and was admiring my dress and I said it was my mother's and she said something to me like 'oh mother's', I'd sort of said something to her 'oh this is my mother's' and she went 'Mmm' and I said 'Oh my mother is much more fashionable than me' and she laughed at that and all of the time she was holding my hand.¹⁰⁹

There was less enthusiasm from visiting Western delegates about the socialism they saw in Rumania. The conduct of the official rallies with their regimentation and discipline was unnerving. However there was the opportunity for visitors to hear and

speak about developments in their respective countries such as the Miners' strike in Britain, a strike that was now into its ninth month:

Just the whole conduct of the Congress but also a demonstration that I took part in that when I looked round at the people it was nothing like people you saw in demonstrations in Britain and particularly in Scotland... They were just chanting, they were just like robots they really were, it was a family business really. I should say at that Congress probably the most worthwhile thing in a lot of ways for me was that it was during the British Miners' strike and I spoke at a few meetings and said things that now I wonder where I got that optimism from. That the role of women in particular in the Miners' strike in Britain which meant they would never ever go back to the position they had before. I didn't realise of course that we wouldn't have a coal field for men and women to try and get their proper place in. But I remember I spoke at a good few meetings and in the course of that I met comrades from Australia, New Zealand from America from the Caribbean. I think that was probably the most worthwhile aspect of that Congress that there representing the British Party as a Scots woman.¹¹⁰

A report of the visit to Bucharest , drafted for the National Executive of the British CP, was rejected and never presented. It was felt to be too critical especially as the Rumanian ambassador in Britain would usually be sent a copy.¹¹¹ Living socialism was failing to inspire many Party members. Not surprisingly those in the CPGB defending or attacking the socialist countries were pointed in entirely different political directions.

A change in the leadership of the CPSU brought brief hope to most quarters. In March 1985 Mikhail Gorbachev became General Secretary of the CPSU. Noticeably younger than Yuri Andropov and Konstantin Chernenko who preceded him, Gorbachev brought in a period of brief optimism for most communists. This was because of the air of change and the new terminology of *Glasnost* and

Perestroika that promised an opening up of Soviet society to greater scrutiny and new economic reforms. It was not immediately apparent where Gorbachev was leading the Soviet Union but his young appearance and the vigour of his new administration suggested several possibilities of reform:

I think Gorbachev wasn't supported enough. Actually I feel sorry for Gorbachev because I could understand what he was trying to do. I felt as if he was trying to bring democracy to the Soviet Union but still have a socialist, a *good strong socialist* government but do things in a gradual way but unfortunately it just did not happen that way and I think there was far too many influences from the West that put paid to that. I think the pressures also of the Cold War had really got to the stage where, economically, they could not cope.¹¹²

The view of most of the women was that they believed that Gorbachev was sincere and the opening up of debate in the Soviet Union was a good thing. There were also those who had reservations. Suspicions were fuelled by the less than cautious welcome from Margaret Thatcher that she 'could do business with Mr. Gorbachev'. Party women visiting the Soviet Union in the eighties were still inspired by what they saw but, now used to being in a Party that had accepted the need for greater equality between the sexes and the importance of Gay rights, there was criticism of the Soviet Women's Committee on these matters:

I thought it was awful. I really thought they were years and years behind any kind of democratic development that even we had reached in this country, and it's far enough back here. That's one thing the Communist Party were very much ahead of than the average person in the street; we believed in women having the same rights as men; we believed that homosexuals shouldn't be discriminated against; and the same with coloured people. But there was nothing like that there, they hadn't developed their ideas at all to that level and I was really quite disappointed

that after all these years of supposed socialism there was still this backward looking attitude to so many things. There was no fight for women's rights there at all, there was no women getting together to discuss how they could improve their lot.¹¹³

If there were growing internal problems and less actual practical attempts to solve them there were also changes to the accords and strategic arms agreements of the seventies. The Soviet Union faced the most hostile opposition in the West since the height of the Cold War of the fifties. Once again the escalation of the arms race became the main feature of the conflict. New Conservative and Republican governments in Britain and the United States were the main protagonists of non-appeasement and a concerted effort to counter what was seen as the threatening communist influence throughout the world. Opposition forces in Afghanistan and Nicaragua were supported with arms and finance against ruling socialist governments. Both governments would fall before the end of the decade. In many ways the Sandinistas represented the ideals of Czechoslovak and Chilean democratic socialism in that they had a left wing programme with a popular base, proof being their re-election in 1985.

The arms race put further pressure on the Soviet economy and from the mid eighties socialism appeared to be noticeably unstable. Under Gorbachev there was open criticism of the immediate past, especially recognising more of the mistakes and injustices of the Stalin era and those under Brezhnev and Gromyko. A distinctly looser attitude was adopted towards other countries in the Eastern bloc and this quickly took pace with the Hungarian government opening its borders through which thousands of East Germans crossed. Events unthinkable to communists a few months before came to a climax in November 1989 when the most graphic symbol of the opposing political systems fell. Party members were unprepared for what they saw:

Empty inside , really empty. We felt as if our whole life had been for nothing, absolutely nothing. We felt that when we saw that Berlin Wall

coming down that capitalism had actually invaded the Soviet Union because it was like an invasion, an invasion , you know without the army but it was there you could tell. The writing was on the wall. I said 'If they don't consolidate soon, if they don't stop the rot' but the rot had already started and you could tell by that anyway because East Germany to us was even better than the Soviet Union because we felt as if the Soviet Union-although we didn't question it when we were young- we used to think that it was that wee bit *rigorous* there was a certain *de riguer* with the Soviet Union whereas with East Germany we felt as if it was more democratic , you know it was more accessible...¹¹⁴

The GDR had always boasted a better standard of living than most other socialist countries. Although much had been achieved in employment and social services there was the character of an economy still reliant on the basic industries, some of which had done great harm to the environment in attempting to keep up production levels. Watching the report of the collapse of the Berlin Wall had shaken Party members as it seemed those eager to embrace the West were expecting too much from capitalism:

I felt very unhappy and very sad about the collapse. I felt that it would bring further misery to the people, I didn't think that what happened would improve their standard of living. I felt that their standard of living would go down although it wasn't as good as we'd been told it was but on the other hand I felt it was going to be a lot worse than what they had at the moment and I felt very unhappy. I felt distressed, very distressed about it.¹¹⁵

Older members were demoralised because for so long they had believed that some progress had been made and as communists they had naturally identified with the socialist countries:

Oh shattered, shattered, absolutely shattered. People in the Party for years who had given a lifetime, not me, my old friend that died last year, Monty Berkeley, been in the Party all his life, was shattered. But then again, everything is in the process of change, and capitalism will never be the answer, so it's got to come back, and I mean it wasn't a communist country was it? It was socialism, we thought, working towards communism, but they were a long way from achieving it.¹¹⁶

In Rumania the Ceausescus had been overthrown and executed in a popular revolt against the Rumanian Workers Party in December 1989. In 1991 a failed coup against Gorbachev fuelled the rise of nationalism and with it a new leader, former communist Boris Yeltsin. World socialism in its strongest sphere was now gone. At the last stage of Soviet socialism the historical arguments about the disinterest and non-involvement of the population in the Bolshevik revolution were now reversed:

Peoples attitude was like they didn't care. I was actually there when the Soviet Union ended, it was really a *weird* experience, we arrived in the Soviet Union and left Russia the day before Gorbachev resigned... And that was quite a bizarre experience that being there because there was this total lack of popular involvement either for or against what was happening. So there's in a sense counter revolution taking place without a revolution, the peaceful gradual road back to capitalism, and people were relatively disinterested because they didn't feel they could make any difference.¹¹⁷

The end of the Communist Party of Great Britain

In 1989 the Communist Party was adopting a new document, *Manifesto For The New Times*, and a new identity. This was a programme that broke with the politics of class confrontation. It had been drawn up by a Commission appointed by the Executive Committee and had thirteen members, one of whom, Mhairi Stewart, was on the Scottish Executive of the CP as well as the British Executive.

The era of post-modernist politics was arriving and the reformers thought that transformation would prepare them as a distinct if not major force in this new era. Post-Fordism was the new catch-phrase and capitalism was said to be past its classical production line, blue-collar worker stage.¹¹⁸ The enthusiasm for this new concept in politics brought out a new opposition in the Party in Scotland. At the 41st Congress in 1989, the penultimate Congress of the CPGB, senior Party members who had supported many of the recent changes wholeheartedly, or out of loyalty, were now confronted with changes they could not identify with and a denouncing of the past they could not accept:

...Joe Marshall actually got up on the platform and at one point *rubbished* Harry Pollitt, Willie Gallacher, Peter Kerrigan and Gordon McLennan. Now Gordon McLennan was sitting there as a visitor and how he could sit and not do anything about that, I'll never understand...¹¹⁹

Gordon McLennan had resigned as Party leader and was replaced by Nina Temple, the first woman General Secretary of the Party and still only in her thirties. Those arguing for transformation were interpreted as supporting the wholesale dissolution of the Party by their opponents.¹²⁰ With the adoption of *A Manifesto for the New Times* there was no doubt that the Party was no longer committed to the same type of socialism as its founders:

I was sick. I really felt *sick* listening to it because people like Harry Pollitt and Willie Gallacher had been my heroes. I know the kind of life they'd had to lead and Johnny Gollan, Johnny Gollan was another one who gave his health for the Party because long hours of working and not eating properly because he had these jobs to do for the Party, they ruined their lives. I really felt that these young people who had never known or had come up through University never really knowing what it was to work far less anything else to criticise these people was just out of order but I was a visitor so I couldn't do anything about.¹²¹

In Scotland an interesting development took place. Those opposed to the changes and the change of name to Democratic Left organised to try and reverse the whole process that was winding up the Party. Having lost their influence in the *Morning Star* dispute it was not surprising that the Party leadership made a concerted effort to win through with this new strategy. Inevitably their tactics brought criticism and hostility. Douglas Chalmers had been Scottish Secretary since 1985 and received both fulsome support and open resentment from Party members, but he was unprepared for this new opposition.¹²² He had fully supported the changes and had overseen the expulsion and exclusion of members but he could not be blamed for the splits and decline of the Party in Scotland. That process had started before his arrival. Now there was even opposition from previously sympathetic members. Support for the changes came from Jack Ashton, until recently the Scottish Secretary, and John Kay, a long serving Scottish Organiser. They now came head to head with opponents of the same generation, if not a little older and more experienced, like Bob Horne and Bill Lauchlan. There were also those allied to *Straight Left*, a faction in the Party which had organised its own education schools and meetings clandestinely for a couple of decades. They appear to have had some support in Scotland and were possibly stronger in the branches than was estimated by the Party leadership. They were, paradoxically from my impressions, very much more part of the Party's makeup and character than they or their opponents would ever care to admit though they were firmly entrenched against the reforms adopted in the seventies and eighties.

The Scottish delegation that went down to the last Congress of the CPGB was split as never before, and this reflected the state of the Party in Scotland.¹²³ This was a Party district whose delegates at Congresses customarily supported the Party Executive usually unanimously, and were placed where all delegates could see them. There was one last emotional attempt to keep the name of the 'Communist Party', because it was a Party that many people in Scotland had known, that families had been associated with and for whose cause people had given their lives. The debate on whether to change the name of the Party was the last debate at the last Communist Party Congress and the last speaker for retaining it was a Scottish woman delegate:

We had a very short time in which to speak , a matter of three or five minutes, something like that. So I wanted to make a case because the Party had been rubbished, the whole communist tradition had been rubbished in the lead up to the congress and through it , as though it had been akin to fascism and something as evil as that. I *knew* that was nonsense and it also angered me because some of the people purveying it had come from Party families like myself and had inherited all the very positive traditions of communism. So unwittingly I'd included those elements in the speech and while I was making it a whole lot of images of what the positives of communism and the communist tradition in Britain began to flash through my head and you could *feel* the tension actually rising in the hall as people anticipated what I was going to say next and defended the traditions of working class struggle, of communists having a tradition of self education , of great culture. The ludicrous caricature that had been painted of the Communist Party, nobody would have joined it if it had been as people said it had been.¹²⁴

For all the effort and emotion of some Party members the vote was to change to Democratic Left. The Communist Party of Great Britain was no more. The Party had been extinguished by what was seen as a need to discard any association with what had occurred in the now defunct Soviet Union and the revolutionary socialism of Red Clydeside. Not all the women interviewed had bothered to stay and see this formal change, though most had. Some had gone over to the Communist Party of Britain. Others had left because they were weary with the in-fighting or disillusioned that the Party would never change, others because it had changed too much. In Scotland the strong characteristic of unity of purpose among Party members had long since gone. There were advocates of the changes who were still aware of the positive aspects of the Communist Party that they had been associated with and that they would always be proud of:

Well of course I think that there was certain characteristics about the Scottish Party , well it seems to me as a Scotswoman that it was special and I think the Scottish Party was a kind of , can I say rounded. Until we had all the problems and all the differences we all seemed to be going the same way and being active in the same projects and campaigns and it was good to feel that. You felt as if the Party was important and that you were important: it was important to you that you were in it.¹²⁵

¹ Katy Campbell 23/3/94 and 11/2/97 p.12

² Pat Milligan 15/3/94 and 11/5/94 p.36

³ Jean Mackay 25/2/94 p.13

⁴ *Report of the Work of the Scottish Committee October 1976-August 1978* - In this period between which the new draft of *The British Road to Socialism* was debated, Party membership had fallen from 6,580 in 1976 to 5,660 in 1978, a fall of 920. [DLSA] p.5

⁵ John Foster 23/11/94 p.8

⁶ *Glasgow: A Call to Action. Communist Party Policies* (Glasgow 1977) (?) p.2

⁷ *Ibid* p.6

⁸ *Ibid* p.10

⁹ In 1975 there had been mass arrests including many Party members protesting outside a meeting of the National Front in Kingston Halls, Glasgow.

¹⁰ J.Gollan : *Socialist Democracy - Some Problems* (London 1976)

¹¹ *The British Road to Socialism : Programme of the Communist Party* (London 1978) p.45

¹² *The British Road to Socialism : Communist Party Programme* (London 1968) p.28. This edition seemed to stress less the Anti-Monopoly Alliance of the programme in the 1950s.

¹³ *The British Road to Socialism* (London 1978) p.46-7

¹⁴ *Ibid* p.25-6

¹⁵ Pat Milligan 15/3/94 and 11/5/94 p.28

¹⁶ Frieda Park 11/11/94 p.38

¹⁷ Noreen Thompson 28/6/94 p.21

¹⁸ *Report of the Work of the Scottish Committee October 1976-August 1978* - 'Almost every branch held meetings on *The British Road to Socialism*'.

¹⁹ John Foster 23/11/94 p.10

²⁰ Douglas Chalmers 5/12/96 - ' When I joined it was at the time of *The British Road*, the last one that was adopted and the Party was overwhelmingly in support of it in Dundee. In fact I didn't really see any inner party struggle at all and I was very young, maybe quite naïve , but I wasn't aware of it. Inner party struggle was what you read about emanating from the West of Scotland or elsewhere in the columns of the *Morning Star*.' p.2

²¹ Noreen Thompson 28/6/94 p.7

²² One of the interviewees joined a few years later for a brief period - Cathy Brown 29/5/94 p.25

²³ Douglas Chalmers 5/12/96- 'I went down in Seventy-seven and I was *absolutely shocked* at the divisions in the Party. You know it seemed to be two parties really or there was a 'them and us' situation - something that at that time didn't exist in Dundee although later on the trouble certainly did impinge on us a couple of years later.' p.2

²⁴ *A Characteristic of the Differences in the Glasgow Communist Party - A Basis for Discussion* - Ian McKay July 25 1977 p.1- this is a very important document only belatedly found. McKay obviously fears the end of the 'strong concept of Party unity and adherence to majority decisions , which has always been a strong feature of the Party in Glasgow' *Ibid*.

²⁵ *Ibid* p.2

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- ²⁶ *Ibid* p.8
- ²⁷ *Ibid* p.11
- ²⁸ Ouaine Bain 17/8/94 p.15
- ²⁹ Ouaine Bain 17/8/94 p.19
- ³⁰ *Report of Commission on Inner-party Democracy : with Alternative Proposals Comments of the Executive Committee* (London 1979) There were 68 submissions. p.6
- ³¹ CP/CENT/ORG/9/2 Communist Party Archive [henceforth CPA] Minutes of the meeting of the Scottish Committee of the Communist Party August 10th 1979 - it was decided to circulate branches and ask for submissions.
- ³² Douglas Chalmers 5/12/96- 'You see a lot of the women were associated with Inner Party Democracy so they were disheartened by what they saw as the leadership tolerating the sort of Stalinists as opposed to the changes. Having said that, as I say it's hard to know what effect IPD would have had. Whether it would have split the Party...' p.18
- ³³ Ouaine Bain 17/8/94 p.25
- ³⁴ 1978 *Scottish Congress: Scottish Communists Debate the Issues!; Draft Discussion Statement* - '...Vital issues of women's equal rights, abortion, rape, women's right to choose, nursery provisions, are among the issues that have come to the fore. This moment must be reflected more in our activity and on growth of membership among women. This in turn would give a further development of the women's movement'. [WGML] p.4
- ³⁵ Barbara Thorpe 31/8/95 and 14/9/95 p.22
- ³⁶ Marion Easedale 23/3/94 and 17/12/96 p.23
- ³⁷ CP/CENT/ORG/9/2 [CPA] Minutes of the Scottish Women's Advisory Committee 1st September 1979 p.1
- ³⁸ *Introduction to Feminism: A Communist Party Education Pack* (London 1982) p.59
- ³⁹ *Ibid* p.63
- ⁴⁰ Maureen Sanders 25/3/94 p.10
- ⁴¹ Maureen Sanders 25/3/94 p.19-20
- ⁴² CP/CENT/ORG/9/2 [CPA] Minutes of the Scottish Women's Advisory Committee 26th January 1980 p.2
- ⁴³ Katy Campbell 23/3/94 and 11/2/97 p.8
- ⁴⁴ *Report of the Work of the Scottish Committee of the Communist Party November 1978-1979* p.5
- ⁴⁵ *A Discussion Document on Gay Rights: Glasgow Committee of the Communist Party* (Glasgow 1978) p.1
- ⁴⁶ *Ibid* p.7
- ⁴⁷ *Challenge* March/April 1976
- ⁴⁸ *Guidelines For Men: Drawn up by the National Women's Advisory June 1986* - 'Received notions of what is political often do not include subjects like sexuality, the arts and cultural matters which can produce lively and interesting meetings'-p.1
- ⁴⁹ Ouaine Bain 17/8/94 p.31
- ⁵⁰ CP/CENT/ORG/9/1 [CPA] Communist Party Glasgow Committee, 6th September 1977- letter from M. Sanders and I. McKay to branches and leading women comrades.
- ⁵¹ *A Discussion Document on Child Care; Glasgow CP Women's Advisory* (Glasgow 1978) p.3
- ⁵² *Ibid* p.5
- ⁵³ *Ibid* p.8
- ⁵⁴ *Ibid* p.8-9
- ⁵⁵ CP/CENT/ORG/9/2 [CPA]- The document was compiled by Noreen Thompson and Caroline Green. Minutes of the Glasgow Women's Advisory Committee 27th September 1978
- ⁵⁶ *Women's Right to Work Day Conference November 8th 1980 Leaflet/form* [DLSA]
- ⁵⁷ CP/CENT/ORG/9/2 [CPA] Minutes of Glasgow Women's Advisory Committee 27th September 1978 mentions a 'Reclaim the Night' march a few days after a week highlighting rape.
- ⁵⁸ Anna Sardesai 28/4/94 p.33
- ⁵⁹ Frieda Park 11/11/94 p.18

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- ⁶⁰ *Report of the Work of the Scottish Committee of the Communist Party* November 1980-October 1982 [DLSA]p.5
- ⁶¹ *What Future For Glasgow?* Glasgow Committee CP (Glasgow 1980) p.2
- ⁶² The CP in Scotland distributed 50,000 leaflets on the War, the most of any leaflet - *Report of the Work of the Scottish Committee* November 1980 - October 1982 p.2
- ⁶³ Ouaine Bain 17/8/94 p.38
- ⁶⁴ D. Priscott *The Roots Of Thatcherism* (London 1986) p.4
- ⁶⁵ *Ibid* p.5
- ⁶⁶ *Report of the Work of the Scottish Committee of the Communist Party* November 1978-1979 p.2
- ⁶⁷ *Introduction to Feminism* p.27
- ⁶⁸ *Introduction to Feminism* p.28
- ⁶⁹ Marion Easedale 23/3/94 and 17/12/96 p.23-24
- ⁷⁰ Susan Galloway 11/10/95 and 1/11/95 - 'I was a bit dismayed by it really. When I first joined the Party I took out a subscription to *Marxism Today* and I used to struggle through all the articles by Martin Jacques and Stuart Hall and everything and try to understand them. Their ideas never used to make sense to me and I thought it was because I didn't know very much but I came to the view that it was just because they were just wrong , their whole analysis of power and the state and everything , all these ideas that they were putting forward and the nature of the working class. They just bore no relation to the reality that we all know about, the nature of capitalist society and power within it, it was just nonsense , I still think it is *nonsense*.' p.21
- ⁷¹ Irene Swan 28/10/95 p.48
- ⁷² Irene Swan 28/10/95 p.26
- ⁷³ Susan Galloway 11/10/95 and 1/11/95 p.19-20
- ⁷⁴ Marion Easedale 23/3/94 and 17/12/96 p.25
- ⁷⁵ Douglas Chalmers 5/12/96- 'Oh definitely , I mean I was the *Morning Star* Organiser in Dundee when I was in the YCL so I was really involved in the *Morning Star*. I grafted at it and my brother was the Assistant Editor so I was involved right up the nines. The whole party organisation in Scotland - we got the sales of the *Morning Star* in NCR and in Timex and down the pits and so on, it was us that did the work.' p.14
- ⁷⁶ Jessie Clark 4/4/94 p.23
- ⁷⁷ *Straight Left* March 1979 the first issue. This group had previously organised around the theoretical magazine *Communist*.
- ⁷⁸ Isa Porte 23/3/94 and 12/12/96 p.22
- ⁷⁹ Related to two of the respondents this was the son of Mary Park and brother of Frieda Park - unbeknown to me at the beginning of my research. The person responsible was a Party member and was suspended for three months and was charged by the Police.
- ⁸⁰ Cathy Brown 29/5/94 p.26
- ⁸¹ Douglas Chalmers 5/12/96- 'I think basically that was what destroyed any chances of the communist movement modernising and keeping its strength , it was the loss of the paper.' p.11
- ⁸² Katy Campbell 23/3/94 and 11/2/97 p.27
- ⁸³ Christinc Sloan 24/3/94 and 26/4/94 p.34
- ⁸⁴ Susan Galloway 11/10/95 and 1/11/95 -'In Partick Branch the branch members were expelled from the Party around that time because they were continuing to support the *Star*, I can't remember the exact reasons that they were expelled but all the leading members of the branch, the branch committee, were all expelled round about that time...' p.17
- ⁸⁵ The Communist Campaign Group was formed and held meetings in Scotland, it attracted those expelled, those who had left and those not re-carded. The strategy was to wait and see if there was any change in the CPGB before setting up a new Party.- *Morning Star* 17 February 86 and John Foster 23/11/94 p.18
- ⁸⁶ Douglas Chalmers 5/12/96 -p.23
- ⁸⁷ John Foster 23/11/94 - '...and you can see the intense embarrassment; these people were supposed to be liberals were going through this bloody charade of total administrative control and terrifying people with authoritarian methods and these were the people who were claiming that they were the liberals and writing up in *Marxism Today* they were leading Britain towards the new

liberal democratic socialism or some kind of nonsense and they were the most bureaucratic authoritarians.' p.18

⁸⁸ *Report of the Work of the Scottish Committee 1984-6*, there were now 90 branches in 14 areas: 72 local branches and 18 workplace branches (including two student branches) p.5,

⁸⁹ Barbara Thorpe 31/8/95 and 14/9/95 p.24

⁹⁰ *Report of the Work of the Scottish Committee 1984-6* p.4

⁹¹ Kathryn Chalmers 22/3/94 p.39 - I think it had lost an awful lot of its influence compared to earlier, just why, whether it was through the change in industry, the dying off of a lot of the old traditional industries. The coal mines, the foundries, factories and so on. There were no longer the groups attached to those workplaces...

⁹² Susan Galloway 11/10/95 and 1/11/95 p.12

⁹³ *Report of the Work of the Scottish Committee of the Communist Party 1982-4* Democratic Left Scotland Archive [henceforth DLSA] p.3

⁹⁴ *Ibid* p.2

⁹⁵ S. Corrigan, C. Cunningham and M. Thorburn 'Fife Women Stand Firm' in V. Seddon (Ed) *The Cutting Edge : Women And The Pit Strike* (London 1986) pp.30-49 p.32

⁹⁶ Ella Egan 17/10/96 and 7/11/96 p.15-16

⁹⁷ Ella Egan 17/10/96 and 7/11/96 p.17

⁹⁸ B. Campbell 'Proletarian Patriarchs And The Real Radicals' in V. Seddon (ed) *The Cutting Edge* pp 249-282

⁹⁹ *Focus* 28 March 1985 - letter from Sophia Young of Glasgow.

¹⁰⁰ Cathy Brown 29/5/94 p.29

¹⁰¹ S. Corrigan, C. Cunningham and M. Thorburn 'Fife Women Stand Firm' p.40

¹⁰² Ella Egan 17/10/96 and 7/11/96 p.18

¹⁰³ CP/CENT/WOM/5/2 National Women's Advisory 23rd September 1985- analysis of meeting of Women Against Pit Closures held on 20th September 1985 p.2

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid*

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid*

¹⁰⁶ Ella Egan 17/10/96 and 7/11/96 p.18

¹⁰⁷ Irene Swan 28/10/95 p.45

¹⁰⁸ Anna Sardesai 28/4/94 p.31

¹⁰⁹ Pat Milligan 15/3/94 and 11/5/94 p.18

¹¹⁰ Pat Milligan 15/3/94 and 11/5/94 p.16-17

¹¹¹ Pat Milligan 15/3/94 and 11/5/94 - Yes, posted it to Gerry and Gerry phoned and said 'we can't have that' and I said 'well why not?', that's how it was' and Gerry said 'well, the comrade from the Romanian Embassy - its a courtesy we normally send something to him', I don't know exactly what I said but the essence of it was I was saying 'well courtesies are all very well but that is actually how I found that Congress and I was the only member of our Executive there but every word that is down there is absolutely true' and Gerry said 'oh well, its about diplomacy and would you mind very much' because Gerry's a very very nice lad - 'toning it down a wee bit?'. I can't remember, I think I did another two drafts but as far as I'm aware that never saw the light of day that report of mine.' p.18 Gerry Pocock was head of the International Department at the time.

¹¹² Christine Sloan 24/3/94 and 26/4/94 p.28

¹¹³ Marion Easedale 23/3/94 and 17/12/96 p.19-20

¹¹⁴ Christine Sloan 24/3/94 and 26/4/94 p.27

¹¹⁵ Mary Park 13/12/94 and 13/11/96

¹¹⁶ Jean Mackay 25/2/94 p.13

¹¹⁷ Frieda Park 11/11/94 p.31

¹¹⁸ *A Manifesto For The New Times* (London 1989) p.5

¹¹⁹ Jenny Richardson 31/3/94 p.19

¹²⁰ Gordon McLennan 29/6/95 - 'I never used the word transformation, I think it was not the right word to use, it was the dissolution of the Party...' p.14

¹²¹ Jenny Richardson 31/3/94 p.19-20

¹²² Douglas Chalmers 5/12/96 'And I was absolutely flabbergasted. It was to discuss the new constitution and we had people there some of my colleagues hadn't seen for quite a few years, had sort of dropped out although veterans of the movement you might say, suddenly appeared back at the meeting which I thought 'Oh that's good' because I do welcome their point of view and it's nice to have that generational spread. And then the obvious fundamental ideological differences that came out shocked me' p.32

¹²³ Gordon McLennan 29/6/95 - 'And that congress, the final Congress of the Party was I think, that and maybe the previous one, was the only time in history in which the Communist Party in Scotland was not fully supportive of the leadership.' p.14

¹²⁴ Frieda Park 11/11/94 p.54

¹²⁵ Marion Easedale 23/3/94 and 17/12/96 p.33

Chapter Eight

Integral to the Cause: A Women's Place in the Communist Party in Scotland

I don't think there was *any* comparison , I really don't. Whatever you did with that background or that knowledge or whatever it was, it provided you with something that you got from no other organisation I think, CND or the Labour Party or anything. I'm very grateful that I was educated in that way or helped to educate myself in that way. They really were shit hot on things like self-education, I think that's great because I'm all for that.¹

I mean you could dwell on it forever and say 'If only this or if only that' but none of that will work so it's a bit pointless I think. I do find that in terms of relationships funnily enough, during the debates and the difficult times some really strong friendships and comradeship's crumbled and that was *dreadful*, that was painful , that was physically and emotionally quite a painful thing. But as time has gone on (*laughs*) one can meet these old comrades and friends now and look at each other and say 'What on earth was that all about?' which is good, the healing , the time thing is there and of course there are moves now, unity moves to try and come together on issues we can unite on, which is good.²

This thesis set out to show the areas in which women were involved in the Communist Party and their views on various political and social issues. What it has attempted to reveal and what became increasingly obvious during the interviews was that women were at the heart of Communist Party activity. They were central to its campaigns , an essential element of its operating ability and were also its invisible backbone. Although women were a smaller part of the membership in Scotland and they had the less prestigious roles to play by not being , on the whole , leaders in industry, they were involved throughout all the important struggles. They were on the

Scottish Committee and on area and branch committees. They were involved with Party advisory committees, local campaigns, peace groups, Co-operative Guilds and numerous other groups. But central to their activity was usually the Party branch and all the activity that one associates with that level of Party work. Certainly the bazaars were important but it was not as if women who did these menial tasks were unaware of the political issues, less capable in Party education or less able in their contribution:

...I think the Party was terrific in as much as it helped you develop a way of looking at things, it sharpened your wits in a way, it enabled you to look at the hidden agenda about what people were saying and about what's actually going on. That sounds like real paranoid stuff, I don't mean that at all but when you hear a politician standing up and saying something you think 'Ah ha, he really means something else', that kind of thing.³

Women were limited by specific restrictions. From the testimony collected and the examples throughout the chapters it is obvious that their intellectual and practical ability was highly developed if not underrated. The non-recognition of their role is all the more regrettable when one considers how politically developed and aware they were whatever the period they were involved. The perceptiveness and maturity of women in the Party does not seem to have gained its due respect. If these limitations reflected a typical aspect of capitalism then criticism could be made that more should have been done to redress them in the Party instead of accepting the straight-jacket of social conventions imposed by such an exploitative system. No one can discount the existing culture of the time and the impoverishment that both sexes suffered, yet it is evident that there was little room to manoeuvre for women especially as they often were expected to carry on their traditional domestic role. Such attitudes seemed to permeate thoroughly throughout the Scottish labour movement. Although the Communist Party continually and consistently called for equal pay for equal work the arrival of feminist politics made this demand seem limited and meagre when so much

more was needed to begin addressing gender inequality. Hence the liberating effect of these politics for some Party women.

Women involved up until the sixties might be seen as stuck in a corner doing the most unenviable tasks in the Party. Because of the sixties generation there is a tendency to see, too much surely, previous generations as being too submissive and accepting of a secondary role. With the oral evidence this no longer seems the case. The vibrancy and rebelliousness of the YCL was always one of its characteristics and this emerged during the interviews: how else could a young group of people survive the despair of the thirties, the intimidating experiences of the Cold War and episodes as in 1951 on the way to the World Youth Festival? In Scotland, despite its small size, the YCL always had a high profile and was extremely active and so fulfilled the expectations of many of the women looking for regular and intense political activity. In Scotland only now do we see some of the cohesiveness and resilience of the YCL and just how important a body it was in convincing women to become fully involved in the Party.

The Scottish Women's Advisory Committee was a body that raised the profile of women and tried to encourage campaigning on many issues. Of all the advisory committees it was the most important but admittedly that was because women were still very much in the background in the Party's main leadership and so the Women's Advisory was attempting to bring more women to the fore. Also the Advisory mainly involved women who wanted to concentrate on issues specifically related to women. It would be well to remember those women who felt they were equal to other Party members and purposefully avoided women's groups and the Advisory. They operated in the Party believing that they were treated as such by fellow members.

Despite cultural changes and growing opportunities for women, the sixties generation of women seemed as committed to Party work as their predecessors. The YCL was very active in parts of Scotland and the Women's Advisory was organising campaigns related to women's health and organising regular education classes. And yet should there not be some recognition for the new set of women activists in this decade? Despite all the family ties and the Party history there may have seemed less attraction in joining the Communist Party. There was a high level of employment in

Scotland and many advances seemed more possible than ever before in housing , education and employment. Therefore to find a new generation as keenly committed as we do in the sixties is , in many ways, admirable, because they attempted to square the circle of seeing communist politics as being relevant in an age of affluence. Also, they succeeded in that the Party experienced growth after the disasters of 1956. More economic power on the shop-floor was reflected in the confidence of the trade union movement and a solid industrial base of support for the Communist Party. Yet not having been motivated towards socialist politics from a work environment many women had a more 'rounded' political perspective. They had been converted from a young age through family influences, the Socialist Sunday School or the Co-operative movement and so the conversion was directly political and social rather than limited to the shop-floor where strong CP organisation often did not transcend economism.

From the sixties it seemed concessions could be won from capitalism and this gave rise to an optimistic vision that brought a new energy from a small group of young communists. Much selfless and time consuming activity was done in the cause of peace, Vietnam, against youth unemployment with young men and women devoting their energy towards the Party, sometimes as full-time officers. Often the link between older CP members, often family, were seen as too important and relevant to be broken. During the interviews there was no doubt that many women had been destined to join the Party without an ounce of regret. They could not be forced or even 'expected' to join but they *wanted* to join. The communist politics they heard, the explanations they received and the relevance of these ideas all seemed to make sense from when they were young. Until the late seventies it seemed as if socialism was not only possible but probable in the decades ahead.

One major reason for such optimism was the role of the Soviet Union which , to most CP women, was living socialism. It is hard now, in the late 1990s, to understand how crucial and pivotal the socialist countries were seen to be in determining a positive outcome in the class struggle. From 1945 there was more reason to believe that the forces of change were on the side of the left despite the apathy of much of the working class in Britain. Right-wing politics were greatly discredited, independence movements moved towards their goal and there were more

socialist countries in the world. Even during the Cold War there was revolution in China and the rise of the Non-aligned Movement, which all seemed to be going away from capitalism in some way. Thus many of the women felt that the immediate post-war period was a time when socialism was becoming stronger and more influential world wide and as communists they were a part of this movement. Despite admiration for the Soviet Union, there were criticisms from many of the women that were more pertinent and revealing than expected. Many were critical of certain aspects of Soviet society whilst still believing that it was going in the right direction. They were not blind to its economic deficiencies or the shortcomings of the leadership. There was strong defence of the socialist countries in the international context against often identifiable Western aggression. No one should underestimate the soul searching that went on or indeed the disquiet about aspects of Soviet rule although admittedly many testimonies on this issue were only forthcoming because of the collapse of the socialist countries. The Soviet Union seemed increasingly unattractive to some women and there was limited support for it in the labour movement in Scotland. Yet there was support here for much of its peace initiatives and its support for newly independent countries and national liberation movements. In contrast to the better living standards achieved in the West, it would do well to remember that those living in countries in debt to the West or under ultra-right wing regimes often saw the Soviet Union in a totally different light than their counterparts in the West:

I went with Marka [Burns] in Nineteen Eighty-two , her and I went and I saw a lot of things to impress me. We went to this hotel in Moscow and it hadn't occurred to me before that the eastern countries like Vietnam , China and the Africans, the hotel was full of people like that , students, well that sort of age group ,all there for various different things and it occurred to me that that was where the Soviet Union had such a big influence of power because of course they were helping out, they were in a position to , well, whether they were in a position or not they were doing it. They were helping the small African emerging countries and there was these Africans there and Vietnamese and Indians, you got the

feeling that the Soviet Union was bigger in every sense than the USA in a good sense.⁴

Here women were given a different perspective from workers in other countries. The problems of Soviet socialism might well have appeared minor to those workers who had little or no economic, social or political rights in the world. Thus the aspects of Soviet society that may have seemed to restrict certain freedoms in the advanced capitalist countries were not necessarily benefits that other workers had experienced elsewhere. There was less hostility towards the socialism of the Eastern Bloc and a strong identification with that of Cuba and Vietnam in the under-developed and exploited third world.

The seventies appear to be the decade when women seem to have fully established themselves in the Party in Scotland. Women were working in the labour market in greater numbers than ever before and they were also becoming more organised. In Britain there were noticeably trade union victories especially from 1969-76 though increasing weaknesses from 1977 onwards. After the 1979 Conservative victory there were dramatic changes affecting unions and the strength and influence of the labour movement and consequently the CP's base. There were two major changes that permanently changed the Party. Firstly there was industrial decline and the loss of Party members, many of them men who had been in industry. Secondly there was the ideological divide that split the Party that was so unified previously during difficult periods. The Party might have survived one, it could not survive both. The women interviewed were split over the direction the Party should take and they reflected the deep divisions in the Party from the late 1970s. Originally it seemed that the new politics of feminism were one reason to blame for diverting the Party but in truth these politics gave it a new impetus for a brief period and were a riposte to the neglect of women's oppression as well as a reaction to disillusionment with certain events in the sixties. This was not lost even to some opponents of those politics:

...like internationally, you can see that's where the seed of Eurocommunism lies and a reaction to Stalinism and I think most of the

leading theoretical lights within British Eurocommunism emerged out of student politics of the Sixties and the time particularly for events in Czechoslovakia had a big influence on that generation within the Party. So I don't think they were sort of plants or people who were against the Party, a lot of them had grown up in the Party, came from party backgrounds, had a long record of work but I think that their views were wrong, they were reformist, but I can understand how those views developed.⁵

There were also the reforms won by the feminists that would not have been adopted by the CP but for the influences of the Women's Liberation Movement and which had kept some women in the Party.⁶ There was a problem though. The new ideas of the late seventies and eighties did not attract working class people to the Communist Party nor enough people from various other backgrounds in society to stall the Party's decline. What had given the Communist Party its strength was a strong core of working class activists committed to the class struggle. By identifying with feminist politics one could say the Party was merely redressing an imbalance towards a much neglected area, previously it does not seem to have used much the works of Communists like Kollantai or Zetkin when educating Party members. However by the eighties it seemed that one was either 'for' feminism and the broad democratic alliance or one was 'for' a centralised or Leninist type Party. The two sides, among others in this troubled equation, seemed incompatible in the one Party.

The politics of Eurocommunism had much in common with Labour Party social democracy of the eighties that had returned to the right after the formation of the SDP and the defeat of 'Bennism'.⁷ The politics of the traditionalists had more in common with the Labour Party left-wing but there was not much joint work with each other until the split over the *Morning Star* in Scotland. Therefore the role the Communist Party played in the depression of the 1980s was totally different from that it had played in the 1930s when many women who joined in Scotland had seen it as a distinctly left-wing body that was against the National Government and that fought for fundamental change in Britain or abroad. It was this distinctiveness and the Party's

intense activity through the decades that attracted many of the women, they knew they were joining the most active political party on the left and there was a definite commitment when one joined the CP:

It was the Party that really went out campaigning, lets face it, the Labour Party is not a campaigning party and we were the Party that got people out in the streets of Glasgow with leaflets, we were the Party that could be relied on to get the area covered with leaflets etc., and getting them to London; organising trains etc., I must give credit to the leadership in Scotland, John Kaye, Jack Ashton and these people, they really did a tremendous job and now that there is no Communist Party of Great Britain in Scotland, it shows.⁸

It was this distinctive role that the women respondents most admired. The CP led the fight against closures⁹, legislation restricting union practices, wage restraint and so highlighted the inadequacies of Labour government policy and the right wing views of its leaders. Had the Communist Party *not* existed one should wonder how many reforms attributed to action by the labour movement would have been achieved. It was this aspect that made so many of the women remain in the Party, it always did more than any other body on the left in Scotland even if it seems they were aware that little real inroad was being made into becoming a mass party.

In its last decade members had been unprepared for the devastating events of 1989-91 which wiped out decades of socialist advance and left communists in a different world environment in the subsequent years:

They've not been easy , they've been very depressing and also we certainly under-estimated the power of imperialism, capitalism and monopoly capitalism to hang on and find new ways of screwing people's lives, we did, we made a very faulty analysis there.¹⁰

It would be unusual were one not to find people disillusioned and unsure about the future. The period since 1979 and seventeen years of Conservative rule certainly changed many women's perspectives, some fundamentally so:

Because I now believe that the Marxist view, that it is the class struggle that moves society forward, I reject totally and utterly, absolutely. That is not what is the engine of change in society, the resolution of that contradiction is not the primary contradiction that has to be resolved and I now am not a Marxist at all.¹¹

Most graphically in this study the women who were in the Socialist Sunday School and also the Woodcraft Folk were part of a socialist culture where there was genuine equality at an early age. More equality than would ever be found in the family, trade unions or even in the Communist Party. They had become militant socialists in their childhood, and aware of the mass poverty and injustices they faced they believed in a vision of a better world. As Margaret Hunter commented: 'When we sang "we are the young Red Guardsmen of the proletariat" we really meant it because we experienced the brutal attacks of the capitalists in our lives and felt the need to strike back'.¹² In all decades there were young women who could not accept the inequalities of capitalism and sought an organisation that was doing something to challenge the monstrous contradictions that confronted them. These young women were not to become transient left-wing socialists. They were not involved only when there was greater optimism. They had been active from their childhood, proudly atheistic, a tiny minority who went to a 'different' Sunday school then on to the YCL and the Communist Party. Today many are still fighting for fundamental change as communists. Still believing in their socialist politics they are also aware of the receding chances of seeing in their lifetime the society that appeared to be nearer, not so long ago:

...I do have in my mind that we used to have real ding dongs with comrades who were friends as well as comrades and then after the

meeting that was it ,we were friends again , we were dealing with , we came to a decision about what would be happening and how we would go about the campaign or whatever we were discussing and that was it, real comradeship there was.¹³

Given the opportunity all the women interviewed were practical and active communists, most of them highly politicised. They were virtually born into socialism as is shown by their continued activity or allegiances, and they want to die as such. They were *always* an essential and integral part of the Communist Party in Scotland. Therefore this study has tried to convey their life in the Party and the events internally and externally that shaped their political consciousness. It has tried to reflect this development as accurately as possible. It is the study of Party women in a country that was the most important component of the CPGB. Its contribution is to have revealed for the first time a Party history from a gender perspective using the oral testimony of those involved throughout its existence in Scotland. By using oral testimony and uncovering one more aspect of the CPGB it suggests that other areas still await deep inspection which will reveal further the history of the individuals , the Party districts and the various groups and campaigns that made up the Communist Party of Great Britain. Communist history from this perspective reveals to a much greater degree the numerous and diverse activities of Party members in such an ideologically class based political party, and the dedication and personal cost involved. Only by continued research involving members of the CPGB can we fully appreciate the role of the party in Britain and its part in the world communist movement.

¹ Barbara Thorpe 31/8/95 and 14/9/95 p.34

² Katy Campbell 25/3/94 and 11/2/97p.29

³ Barbara Thorpe 31/8/95 and 14/9/95 p.31

⁴ Katherine Gallin 13/4/94 p.20

⁵ Susan Galloway 11/10/95 and 1/11/95 p.29

⁶ Maureen Sanders 25/3/94 -...and I don't think pursuing that line brought about the demise of the Party and you've got to think , things that we take for granted now. not take for granted but we don't think a lot of, they've come about because of the feminist debates and struggles. It is quite interesting. I think people forget twenty years ago how things were for women. p.18-19

⁷ *Focus* 18 July 1985

⁸ Marion Easedale 23/3/94 and 17/11/96 p.22

⁹ J. Foster and C. Woolfson. *The Politics of the UCS Work In* (London 1986)

¹⁰ Anna Sardesai 27/8/94 p.39

¹¹ Irene Swan 23/9/95 and 28/10/95 p.49

¹² CP/CENT/PERS/3/06 Submission by Margaret Hunter 21st February 1955 p 1

¹³ Jessie Clark 4/4/94 p.6

Appendix A

Women in the Communist Party in Scotland

| Interview | | | |
|-----------|------------------|--------------------|------------|
| No. | Name | Date(s) | Word Count |
| 1) | Isa Porte | 16/2/94 + 12/12/96 | 11,170 |
| 2) | Jean Mackay | 25/2/94 | 10,278 |
| 3) | Pat Milligan | 15/3/94 + 11/5/94 | 23,639 |
| 4) | Mary Cowan | 16/3/94 | 13,901 |
| 5) | Kathryn Chalmers | 22/3/94 | 18,489 |
| 6) | Effie O'Hare | 23/3/94 + 20/3/96 | 21,264 |
| 7) | Marion Easedale | 23/3/94 + 17/11/96 | 17,169 |
| 8) | Maureen Sanders | 25/3/94 | 11,048 |
| 9) | Katy Campbell | 28/3/94 + 11/2/97 | 17,819 |
| 10) | Jenny Richardson | 31/3/94 | 13,815 |
| 11) | Jessie Clark | 4/4/94 | 14,947 |
| 12) | Marion Henery | 6/4/94 + 17/11/95 | 17,515 |
| 13) | Katherine Gallin | 13/4/94 | 9,956 |
| 14) | Mabs Skinner | 15/4/94 | 19,155 |
| 15) | Marion Robertson | 19/4/94 + 20/10/95 | 28,219 |
| 16) | May Annan | 22/4/94 | 23,065 |
| 17) | Christine Sloan | 24/3/94 + 26/4/94 | 21,699 |
| 18) | Mary Docherty | 14/5/94 + 14/3/95 | 22,067 |
| 19) | Cathy Brown | 29/5/94 | 15,888 |

| | | | |
|-----|-----------------|-------------------|--------|
| 20) | Ouaine Bain | 26/6/94 + 17/8/94 | 28,490 |
| 21) | Noreen Thompson | 28/6/94 | 9,464 |

(cont.)

| Interview | | | |
|-----------|----------------|---------------------|-------------|
| No. | Name | Date(s) | Word Count. |
| 22) | Alice Milne | 10/7/94 | 18,835 |
| 23) | Anna Sardesai | 27/8/94 | 21,966 |
| 24) | Frieda Park | 7/11/94 | 30,001 |
| 25) | Mary Park | 13/12/94 + 14/11/96 | 26,970 |
| 26) | Jean McCrindle | 28/6/95 | 12,956 |
| 27) | Rose Kerrigan | 9/7/95 | 6,379 |
| 28) | Barbara Thorpe | 31/8/95 + 14/9/95 | 20,913 |
| 29) | Irene Swan | 23/9/95 + 28/10/95 | 41,202 |
| 30) | Susan Galloway | 11/10/95 + 1/11/95 | 24,094 |
| 31) | Janey Buchan | 4/10/94 + 21/1/97 | 18,079 |
| 32) | Ella Egan | 17/10/96 + 7/11/96 | 23,390 |

Additional interviews

| | | | |
|-----|------------------|-----------------------|---------|
| 33) | Willie Thompson | 13/6/94 | 22,341 |
| 34) | John Foster | 23/11/94 | 14,017 |
| 35) | Bob Horne | from 8/9/94 to 4/5/95 | 75,494 |
| 36) | Gordon MacLennan | 29/6/95 | 10, 833 |
| 37) | Jimmy Hunter | 18/7/95 | 8,355 |
| 38) | Edith Findlay | 10/9/95 | 13,653 |
| 39) | Douglas Chalmers | 5/12/96 | 18,619 |
| 40) | Jack Ashton | 18/12/96 | 10,048 |

Total = 787,200 Words

Appendix B

Age Gradient

| <u>Name</u> | <u>Year of Birth</u> | <u>Joined YCL/CP</u> | <u>Left</u> | |
|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|------|
| 1) Rose Kerrigan | 1903 | Foundation | 1921 | 1991 |
| 2) Effie O'Hare | 1903 | | 1936 | 1991 |
| 3) Mary Docherty | 1908 | | 1926 | 1991 |
| 4) Marion Henery | 1910 | | 1929 | 1991 |
| 5) Isa Porte | 1911 | | 1930 | 1991 |
| 6) Mabs Skinner | 1912 | | 1941 | 1986 |
| 7) Marion Robertson | 1913 | | 1933/4 | 1991 |
| 8) Mary Cowan | 1914 | | 1941-6 , (rejoined 1965) | 1991 |
| 9) May Annan | 1916 | | 1938 | 1991 |
| 10) Alice Milne | 1922 | | 1938 | 1991 |
| 11) Katherine Gallin | 1923 | | 1943 | 1991 |
| 12) Marion Easedale | 1923 | | 1944 | 1991 |
| 13) Janey Buchan | 1926 | | 1942 | 1956 |
| 14) Jenny Richardson | 1926 | | 1942 | 1991 |
| 15) Jessie Clark | 1927 | | 1946 | 1987 |
| 16) Mary Park | 1930 | | 1950 | 1987 |
| 17) Jean Mackay | 1930 | | 1959/60 | 198? |
| 18) Irene Swan | 1932 | | 1955 | 1991 |
| 19) Ella Egan | 1933 | | 1956 | 1991 |
| 20) Jean McCrindle | 1937 | | 1955 | 1957 |

Age Gradient (Cont.)

| <u>Name</u> | <u>Year of Birth</u> | <u>Joined YCL/CP</u> | <u>Left</u> |
|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|-------------|
| 21) Anna Sardesai | 1940 | 1963 | 1991 |
| 22) Noreen Thompson | 1940 | 1962 | 1991 |
| 23) Ouaine Bain | 1940 | 1963 | 1989/90 |
| 24) Barbara Thorpe | 1940 | 1961 | 1985/6 |
| 25) Maureen Sanders | 1942 | 1968 | 1989 |
| 26) Kathryn Chalmers | 1942 | 1960/1 | 1988 |
| 27) Katy Campbell | 1942 | 1963 | 1987 |
| 28) Pat Milligan | 1942 | 1961 | 1991 |
| 29) Christine Sloan | 1947 | 1966 | 1985 |
| 30) Frieda Park | 1956 | 1974 | 1991 |
| 31) Susan Galloway | 1965 | 1982 | 1988 |
| 32) Cathy Brown | | 1958 | 1987 |

8 of the women joined the YCL/CP before 1939. 7 joined from 1940-50, 5 from 1951-60, 9 from 1961-70 and 2 from 1971,- Mary Cowans' membership lapsed.

Appendix C

Communist Party of Great Britain- Scotland

Secretariat / Executive Committee (9-10)

Scottish Committee
(40-45)

Elected at the Scottish Congress

Advisory Committees

Scottish Women's Advisory Committee

Economic Local Government Industrial Cultural

AREA COMMITTEES

BRANCHES

Local Area Branches

Workplace(and Student) Branches

Both Equal Constitutionally

Areas Existing From the 1960s

Glasgow, Lanarkshire , Renfrewshire, Ayrshire,
Dunbartonshire West Lothian

South of Scotland, Edinburgh, Fife, Dundee,
Aberdeen and Highlands

Appendix D

Women on the Scottish Committee of the Communist Party 1944-91

1943

Isa Alexander, Agnes Maxwell, Mrs Park [3 of 30 = 10%]

1944-6

Isa Alexander, Agnes Maxwell, Mrs Park [3 of 30 = 10%]

1946 -47

Jenny Dand, Rhoda Fraser, Emily Swankie [3 of 30 = 10%]

1947-48

Rhoda Fraser , Marion Robertson , Emily Swankie [3 of 30 =10%]

1948 -49

Rhoda Fraser, Marion Robertson, Emily Swankie [3 of 32 = 10%]

1949-50

Marion Robertson [1 of 31 = 3%]

1950-53

Rhoda Fraser, Anne Moffat, Agnes McLean, Jessie Taylor, [4 of 36 = 17%]

1953-55

Rhoda Fraser, Anne McGowan, Agnes McLean, Marion Robertson,
Jean Both, [5 of 39 = 13%]

Women on the Scottish Committee of the Communist Party 1944-91

(Cont.)

1955-58

May Halfpenny, Marion Henery, Margaret Hunter, Agnes McLean

[4 of 42 = 10%]

1958-60

Minnie Aitkin, May Halfpenny, Marion Henery, Margaret Hunter,

Agnes McLean, Margaret Rose. [6 of 45 = 14%]

1960-62

Minnie Aitkin, May Halfpenny (?), Marion Henery, Margaret Hunter, Agnes

McLean, Margaret Rose. [6 of 45 = 16%]

1962-64

Minnie Aitkin, Hannah Fletcher, Marion Henery, Margaret Hunter*, Agnes

McLean, Margaret Rose, Irene Swan. [7 of 45 = 16%]

*Margaret Hunter resigned from the Scottish Committee and became National Women's Officer during this period.

1964-66

Honor Arundel, Cathie Brown, Marion Henery, Jane McKay, Agnes McLean,

Margaret Rose, Irene Swan [7 of 45 = 16%]

1966-68

Honor Arundel, Cathie Brown, Marion Henery, Agnes McLean, Margaret

Rose, Mabs Skinner, Irene Swan [7 of 45 = 16%]

Women on the Scottish Committee of the Communist Party 1944-91

(Cont.)

1968-70

Mamie McConnell, Pat Milligan, Margaret Paris, Margaret Rose, Mabs
Skinner , Irene Swan [6 of 43 = 14%]

1970-72

Pat Milligan, , Margaret Paris, Mabs Skinner, Irene Swan, Helen Turner.
[5 of 45 = 11%]

1972-74

Pat Milligan, Irene Swan, Margaret Paris, Mabs Skinner
[4 of 45 = 10%]

1974-76

Irene Swan, Marion Easedale, Mabs Skinner, Cathy Dobbie, June Tait,
[5 of 45 = 12%]

1976-78

Cathy Dobbie, Mary Harrison, Jane McKay, June Tait,
Marion Easedale, Irene Swan,
[6 of 45 = 13%]

1978-80

Ouaine Bain, Mary Harrison, Jane McKay, June Tait,
Elinor Dick , Carol Downes, Pat Milligan, Mary McIntosh,
Maureen Sanders [9 of 45 = 20%]

Women on the Scottish Committee of the Communist Party 1944-91

(Cont.)

1980-82

Ouaine Bain, Carol Downes, Mary Harrison, Mary McIntosh,

Pat Milligan, Maureen Sanders, [6 of 45 = 13%]

1982-4

Ouaine Bain* , Irene Brown , Irene Caleary, Katy Campbell*, Marion Easedale, Mary Harrison, Alice-Ann Jackson, Frances Lockhart, Pat Milligan,

Morag Parnell, Anna Sardesai , Monica Tumelty. [12 of 45 = 26%]

*Ouaine Bain and Katy Campbell resigned from the Scottish Committee during this period.

1984-6

Irene Brown, Irene Caleary, Cath Cunningham, Marion Easedale, Ella Egan,

Mary Harrison, Alice-Ann Jackson, Frances Lockhart, Grace McFall, Pat Milligan, Morag Parnell, Anna Sardesai, Yvonne Strachan, Monica Tumelty.

[14 of 45 = 31%]

1986-88

Elsbeth Cameron, Jackie Carruthers, Cath Cunningham, Marion Easedale, Ella

Egan, Jackie Gulstead, Lorraine Hamilton, Mary Harrison, Alice-Ann Jackson,

Gillian Keale, Frances Lockhart, Grace McFall, Pat Milligan, Jean Muir , Jo

Nisbett, Moira Scobie. [16 of 45 = 36%]

Women on the Scottish Committee of the Communist Party 1944-91

(Cont.)

1989-91

Irene Brown, Barbara Catt , Marion Easedale, Irene Elliot, Jackie Gulstead, Mary Harrison, Gillian Keele, Sylvia Latham , Jean Muir , Grace McFall, Jo Nisbett, Moira Scobbie, Yvonne Smith, Mhairi Stewart. [14 of 45 = 31%]

1991

Irene Brown, Barbara Catt , Edith Constable, Janice Cornwall, Mary Hamilton, Sylvia Latham , Jean Muir , Frieda Park, Helen Sanders, Mhairi Stewart, Isobel Tait, Louise Tierney, [12 of 45 = 27%]

Appendix E

World Youth Festivals

- | | | |
|------------------|------|--|
| 1 st | 1947 | - Prague, Czechoslovakia |
| 2 nd | 1949 | - Budapest, Hungary |
| 3 rd | 1951 | -East Berlin, German Democratic Republic |
| 4 th | 1953 | -Bucharest, Rumania |
| 5 th | 1955 | -Warsaw, Poland |
| 6 th | 1957 | -Moscow, Soviet Union |
| 7 th | 1959 | -Vienna, Austria. |
| 8 th | 1962 | -Helsinki, Finland |
| 9 th | 1968 | -Sofia, Bulgaria |
| 10 th | 1973 | -East Berlin, German Democratic Republic |
| 11 th | 1978 | -Havana, Cuba |
| 12 th | 1985 | -Moscow, Soviet Union |
| 13 th | 1989 | -Pyongyang, North Korea |

Appendix F

Those who visited the Socialist countries

| | |
|-------------------|-------------------|
| May Annan* | Frieda Park* |
| Ouaine Bain* | Mary Park* |
| Cathy Brown* | Jenny Richardson* |
| Janey Buchan | Marion Robertson* |
| Katy Campbell* | Irene Swan* |
| Jessie Clark* | Marion Henery* |
| Mary Cowan* | Rose Kerrigan* |
| Mary Docherty* | Jean Mackay* |
| Marion Easedale* | Pat Milligan* |
| Ella Egan* | Alice Milne* |
| Susan Galloway | |
| Katherine Gallin* | |

*Indicates those who visited the Soviet Union.

Appendix G

**For and Against the new draft of *The British Road to Socialism*
in 1977**

(As specified in the interviews)

For

May Annan
Ouaine Bain
Kathryn Chalmers
Jessie Clark
Mary Docherty
Marion Easedale
Ella Egan
Katherine Gallin
Marion Henery
Rose Kerrigan
Pat Milligan
Alice Milne
Effie O'Hare
Mary Park
Isa Porte
Jenny Richardson
Marion Robertson
Maureen Sanders
Anna Sardesai
Mabs Skinner
Irene Swan
Noreen Thompson
Barbara Thorpe

Against

Cathy Brown
Katy Campbell
Mary Cowan
Frieda Park
Christine Sloan

Appendix H

For and Against the Communist Party EC list of candidates in the PPPS/*Morning Star* dispute 1983-5

(As specified in the interviews)

For

May Annan
Ouaine Bain
Mary Docherty
Marion Easedale
Ella Egan
Marion Henery
Rose Kerrigan
Pat Milligan
Alice Milne
Isa Porte
Jenny Richardson
Marion Robertson
Maureen Sanders
Irene Swan
Noreen Thompson

Against

Cathy Brown
Katy Campbell
Frieda Park
Kathryn Chalmers
Christine Sloan
Mary Cowan
Katherine Gallin
Jessie Clark
Anna Sardesai
Mabs Skinner
Mary Park

Appendix I

Political Affiliation of Respondents when interviewed

Non-aligned

Ouaine Bain
Pat Milligan
Frieda Park
Marion Robertson
Maureen Sanders
Irene Swan
Noreen Thompson
Barbara Thorpe

Communist Party of Britain

Cathy Brown
Katy Campbell
Kathryn Chalmers
Jessie Clark
Mary Cowan
Katherine Gallin
Susan Galloway
Effie O'Hare*
Jean Mackay
Mary Park
Anna Sardesai
Mabs Skinner
Christine Sloan

Labour Party

Janey Buchan
Jean McCrindle

Democratic Left

May Annan
Marion Easedale
Marion Henery
Effie O'Hare*
Isa Porte

Communist Party of Scotland

Mary Docherty
Ella Egan
Rose Kerrigan
Jenny Richardson
Alice Milne

*Democratic Left is a political association whose membership is open to those in other political parties.

Appendix J

Photographs from Respondents

The following pages contain a few of the pictures collected since interviews for this thesis began. They are a sample, undoubtedly much valuable visual material has been discarded by people over the years and there is a danger that items of great historical interest will be lost. Thankfully some good photographic collections on women's activity in the Party have been traced and this includes much on the 1960s (none of which is included here).

Picture

No.

1. Entrance form for College Sunday School, Glasgow. (date unknown)

Marion Henery (Kirkintilloch) Collection

2. Cambuslang Socialist Sunday School picnic at the Cathkin Braes 1917 (?)
(henceforth MHC) Marion Henery (nee Jenkins) is in this picture.
3. Springburn Socialist Sunday School group 1959
4. Clarion Club outing - Marion Henery (second on the left standing) with friends Cathie Moore, Bill Ferrie and Alex McCrindle (far right) father of Jean McCrindle.
5. Glasgow May day - 3rd May 1933. Communist Party platform. From left to right : Aitken Ferguson (back to camera) , Marion Henery, Rose Kerrigan, unknown, Nell Kelly, Evans (Blantyre), and Hugh McDiarmid.

6. Party Women's School September 1962 at Balloch. The tutor was Jack Cohen. Jenny Hyslop is on the right with the thick fur collar.
7. Party Women's School 1963 at Balloch, Jack Cohen was the tutor again and this weekend, Saturday was in Partick, led him to write a critical report (see page 151.) Marion Robertson is second on the left sitting, Edith Munroe is on the far right standing. Isa Porte is in the group standing at the lowest point, third from the left. Agnes McLean is in the white dress, sitting at the centre.
8. Party Women's School, Ayr, February 1968. Marion Henery is on the far right in the green dress. The tutor, James Klugmann, is barely visible at the back near the right of the doorway.
9. Rose Kerrigan receiving a kiss from Jimmy Reid at a dinner in Glasgow in honour of Peter Kerrigan. Marion Henery and her partner Joe looking on. 1965 (?)
10. Margaret Hunter wearing green next to Marion Henery and her daughter Morag at Marion's home in Kirkintilloch. Probably late 1960s
11. Three cards handed out by Party Women's Groups to attract women to meetings - 'Women's Wages and working conditions'.
12. Ibid. 'Social Services and You'
13. Ibid. 'Vietnam - End this Cruel War'
14. 'Glasgow Communists Celebrate 60 Years of Struggle' 1980- Pat Milligan is in the front row on the left. Marion Henery and Joe Henery are in the third row to the right. In the right hand corner is former Scottish Industrial Organiser Bill Cowe.

Effie O'Hare (Renton, Vale of Leven) Collection

15. The last Parish Council of Bonhill prior to the Local Government Act of 1929 which instituted the new District Council. Dan O'Hare is sitting second from the left , on his right is fellow Communist councillor Hugh McIntyre.
16. Dan O'Hare with his horse and cart leading a demonstration possibly late 1920s.
17. Effie O'Hare sitting with hat on, next to Dan O'Hare with his cap on. Standing on the left is May Annan (nee Halfpenny), 1947.
18. Bonhill Church 1995. David Fishe is the winner of the first Dan O'Hare Prize at Bonhill School. Effie O'Hare was invited to the school for the prize giving.
19. **Marion Robertson Collection** - Congress of the Union of Democratic Women of the People's Republic of Rumania 14-16 June 1950. Marion went as a delegate from the Women's Assembly in Britain which was affiliated to the Women's International Democratic Federation. Women delegates received a full set of photographs with pictures of their delegation. This photograph shows the mass rally at the start of the congress. (reduced picture size). Stalin's portrait is very prominent.
20. Marion Robertson, in the middle, receiving a bouquet of flowers. She is with other British delegates.
21. Inside the Congress Hall.
22. Marion Robertson in the centre with the British delegates.
23. Anna Pauker speaks to the Congress. She was later purged by the Rumanian Communist Party.
24. A picture of the delegates.

25. Visiting a Peasant's Co-operative.
26. **Mary Park Collection** - Mary Park on the cover of the magazine of the Dutch youth movement *Wiekslag*. The Dutch youth are admiring her kilt 1948.
27. **Frieda Park Collection** - Frieda Park visited a Pioneer camp in the German democratic Republic in 1968. This picture shows a rally.
28. A picture of the young British Pioneers, Frieda Park is second from the left in the front row. Her cousin Ann Park is third from the right, back row.
29. **Bob Horne Collection** - Rally at Queen's Park May day 1943.
30. Ibid.
31. R. Horne tutor at a Party Women's School at Carbeth 1957. Bob is on the left at the end of the row, next to him is Hannah Fletcher. On the right at the end is Mrs Hamilton who was very active on the Castlemilk housing estate in Glasgow.

Starting on next page

College Socialist Sunday School.

Entrance Form for Juveniles

Name.....

Address.....

Age..... Date of next Birthday.....

Parent or Guardian might please sign if in favour of attendance.

Signature.....

Civic Press, Ltd., Glasgow.



3



4



5



6



7

8



9



WOMEN'S WAGES and working conditions

Millions of women workers in Britain today are grossly underpaid.
How can equal pay be won?

WE INVITE YOU

to a "tea-and-talk-it-over"

to be held on.....

at.....

The COMMUNIST point of view will be put by.....

**SOCIAL SERVICES
AND YOU**

Social services are very important to family life and happiness. How can they be radically extended and improved in Britain today?

WE INVITE YOU

to a "tea-and-talk-it-over" to be held on.....

at.....

The COMMUNIST point of view will be put by.....

**VIETNAM
END THIS CRUEL WAR**

Women and children are the victims of U.S. military brutality in Vietnam. How can we help to end their suffering?

WE INVITE YOU

to a "tea-and-talk-it-over" to be held on.....

at.....

The COMMUNIST point of view will be put by.....





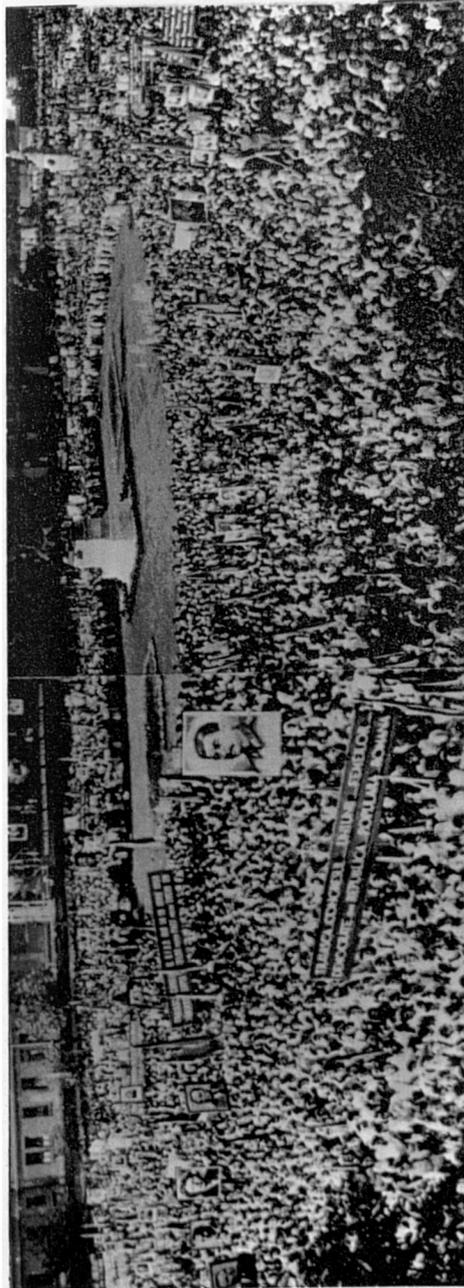
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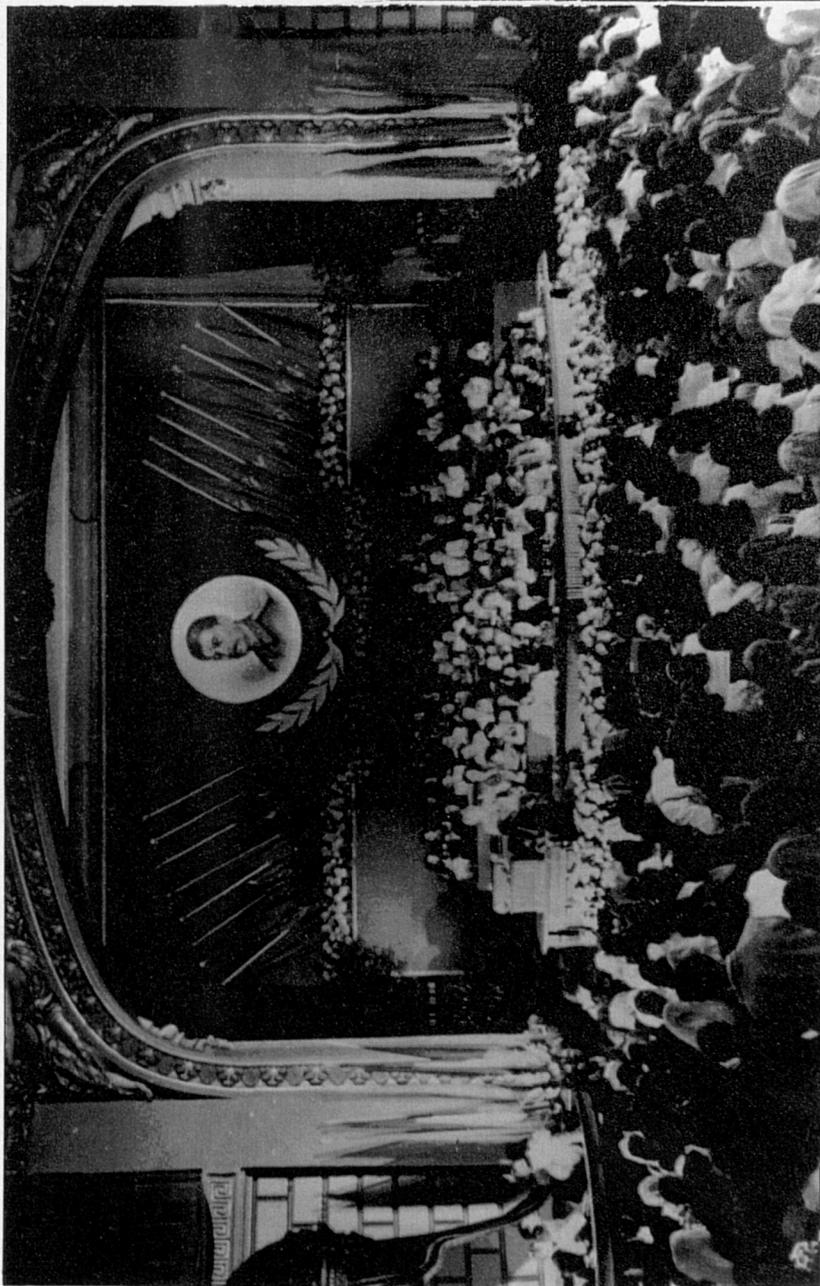
17



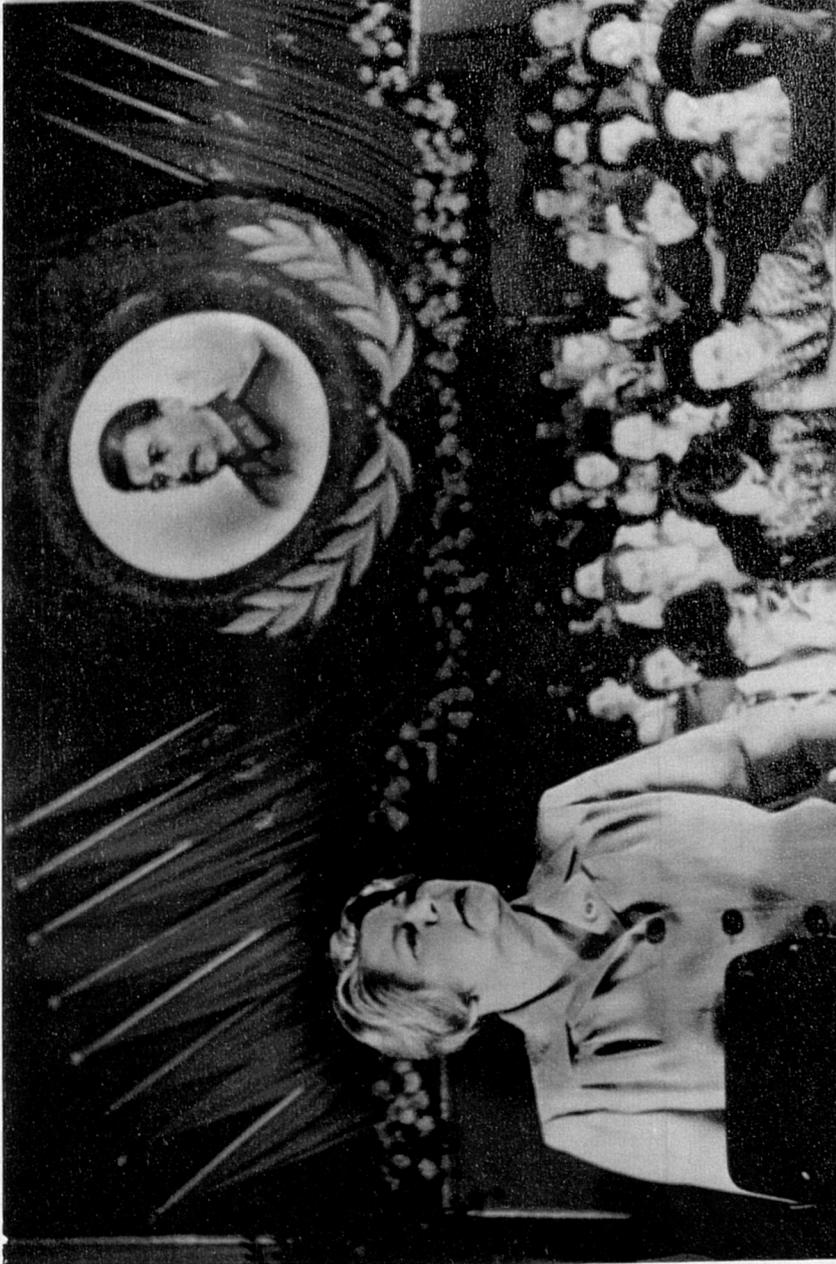




















27



28

29



30



31

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Docherty, Mary

Easedale, Marion

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Findlay, Edith

Foster, John

Gallin, Katherine

Galloway, Susan

Horne, Bob

Henery, Marion

Hunter, Jimmy

Kerrigan, Rose

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Ella Egan

Marion Henery

Effie O'Hare

Bob Horne

Mary Park

Eric Park

Frieda Park

Billy Quin

Marion Robertson

Christine Sloan

Willie Thompson

Barbara Thorpe

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Cogito

Comainche

Comment

Communist

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Link

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Tolpuddle

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