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## **Harry Pollitt, Rhondda East and the Cold War collapse of the British communist electorate**

**Kevin Morgan**

Visiting Britain a few weeks before the 1945 general election, the French communist Marcel Cachin summarised one conversation: 'H. Pollitt: 22 candidates in England, 6 MPs anticipated.'<sup>1</sup> Pollitt, secretary of the British communist party (CPGB), was not for the first time overly optimistic: of the twenty-one communist candidates who went to the poll, only two were returned to parliament. Immediately there were feelings of deflation, and against the backdrop of Labour's victory this has even been seen as a dismal performance.<sup>2</sup> In a longer perspective, however, it stands out as the closest Britain's communists ever came to a small-scale electoral breakthrough. If one includes the expelled Labour independent D.N. Pritt, whose programme and local electoral machinery were provided by the communists, twenty-two communist-sponsored candidates across a national spread of constituencies secured on average some 14.5 per cent of the poll.<sup>3</sup> This may not compare with the emergence of the communist parties of Italy, France and Finland as the predominant national formation of the Cold War left. Nevertheless, in a parliamentary system seemingly geared to a two-party or dominant-party model, this was arguably the strongest UK-wide fourth-party showing of the entire twentieth century.<sup>4</sup>

Viewed from the perspective of Cold War Wales, what is more remarkable is how quickly this support was dissipated. At the following general election in February 1950 the CPGB stood a hundred candidates. Three alone secured even the one in eight votes needed to retain their deposit, compared to nine in 1945. Not one (including Pritt) reached the earlier benchmark of 14.5 per cent. The results indeed were so bad that Lord Vansittart thought them a ruse 'to throw dust in the public eye' while the communists set about their undercover activities.<sup>5</sup> Behind the comprehensive nature of the defeat were nevertheless important local and regional specificities. In some constituencies, the communists' higher vote in 1945 had represented a delayed expression of the wartime 'movement away from party', and of the temporary enthusiasm for communism so evident in the period of the Anglo-Soviet alliance.<sup>6</sup> In the otherwise staunchly Conservative London suburb of Hornsey, a local schoolteacher achieved the highest ever communist vote in an English constituency, of which fully ninety per cent evaporated in 1950.<sup>7</sup> Inconceivable except in the circumstances of Britain's wartime mobilisations, it is the unprecedented vote in 1945 that in these cases needs explaining, and Cold War setbacks may to some degree be seen as a return to the status quo ante.

Where the communists performed best in 1945, however, this more typically represented accumulation of political capital over a much longer period. Phil Piratin's victory in Stepney Mile End has thus been identified with a form of ethnic mobilisation associated with the tradition of East End anti-fascism established in the 1930s.<sup>8</sup> Other seats fell in areas of declining staple industry devastated by the inter-war depression. In the coalfield seat of West Fife, William Gallacher secured a fifth of the poll in as early as 1929 and had already been returned to parliament in a three-way contest in 1935. In the Clydeside shipbuilding seat of Greenock, the communists' poll of around a sixth of the vote in 1945 was actually less than the figure secured in each of the five general elections between 1922 and 1931. The phenomenon of localised inter-war militancy in areas of beleaguered heavy industry has been admirably evoked

in Stuart Macintyre's labour history classic *Little Moscows*.<sup>9</sup> Britain may never have had a mass communist electorate. Nevertheless, in areas like this the communists' vigorous minority activism struck a chord with a pool of potential voters extending well beyond the party's own rather sparse ranks.

Though none of Britain's communist parliamentary victories were achieved in Wales, a double-figure percentage vote-share was achieved in all but one of the constituencies it contested between the wars. Almost at the party's foundation, Bob Stewart secured a tenth of the poll at Caerphilly in 1921. For most of the 1920s, the CPGB then refrained from contests against the Labour Party, and with the resumption of an independent electoral challenge in 1929 the initial results included derisory polls in both Caerphilly and Ogmore. In 1931, however, polls in excess of fifteen per cent were achieved both in Ogmore, in a by-election occasioned by the death of Vernon Hartshorn, and in both Rhondda divisions in the same year's general election. Though three years later the unemployed workers' leader Wal Hannington just failed to secure a tenth of the poll in a Merthyr by-election, even this represented some achievement in the unusual, but depressingly characteristic, circumstances of a three-way battle for the constituency's militant left-wing vote.<sup>10</sup>

There are no fixed criteria for evaluating such results. In Cook and Stevenson's well-known account *The Slump*, Hannington in Merthyr is said to have polled 'disastrously', but in the same breath the authors describe an identical performance elsewhere by the communist leader Pollitt as 'spirited' and 'creditable'.<sup>11</sup> Though settled criteria may thus elude even the authors of a single text, one can in a few cases measure relative performance over time. One such case was Rhondda East, a division figuring prominently in Macintyre's account in the shape of the 'red' pit village of Mardy. Along with West Fife – also featured in *Little Moscows* – Rhondda East was the only division contested by the communists in every general election from 1929 until constituency reorganisation in the 1970s. Not only was the communist poll there consistently of an order unmatched elsewhere else in Wales; both in 1935 and 1945, Pollitt as communist candidate actually achieved a larger share of the poll than the victorious Gallacher in Fife. Pollitt himself conceded the disappointment within the party at his not having achieved his object. 'So many comrades', he grumbled, 'seem to have the opinion that all I had to do was wave a magic wand ... and the thing was done'.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, his post-war poll of 45.5 per cent represented the CPGB's third highest ever vote-share and what Chris Williams has rightly described as an 'extraordinary result'.<sup>13</sup> Given that those exceeding it in one case had no Labour opponent and in the other fought a constituency hugely depleted by the effects of war,<sup>14</sup> Pollitt's was arguably the most impressive demonstration of electoral support in the whole of the CPGB's history.

It was certainly never to be repeated. Within the emerging post-war discipline of psephology, the durability of voters' initial party allegiance over successive elections was identified as a sort of residual cohort factor.<sup>15</sup> As far as 1945, the evidence from the Rhondda provides some suggestive support for such an argument. Until his election as miners' agent in the anthracite district at the end of 1933, Mardy and Rhondda East provided the home and political base of the most prominent communist in the coalfield, Arthur Horner. When Horner was first came forward as candidate in 1929 his Labour opponent was the veteran miners' agent Dai Watts Morgan, a figure nearly thirty years his senior. Already in a four-way poll Horner achieved a 15.6 per cent vote share that it makes more sense to regard as creditable than disastrous. Two years later, in a straight fight against Watts Morgan, he more than doubled this, gaining comfortably the highest communist poll in the country.

Further modest increases followed in a 1933 by-election, occasioned by Morgan's death, and in the 1935 general election, when Horner made way for Pollitt in order to safeguard his position within the South Wales Miners' Federation (SWMF or 'Fed'). In every contest the communists gave particular attention to younger voters, suggesting that they too may have had an inkling that these were easier to win over than those already settled in their allegiances. Indeed those yet to reach the voting age of twenty-one also figured prominently in the communists' public manifestations, and more than likely cast their votes accordingly when the chance arose.

If this steady, almost Fabian-like advance seems consistent with the incremental impact of new voting cohorts, its overnight reversal in 1950 exposes the limitations of such analyses as well as the tenuousness of the communists' wider credibility. As Pollitt's share of the poll slumped from nearly half to just an eighth, thousands who had previously voted communist, or who in nearly every case must have known of workmates or family members who had, delivered a political rejection of communism that would have destroyed a party based more on electoral calculation. As with the proverbial Sisyphean boulder, communists in the Rhondda Fach were back to worse than when they started in 1929.

Stock communist rationalisations emphasise external factors like the first-past-the-post electoral system and the tremendous media hostility to communism.<sup>16</sup> Both clearly worked to the communists' disadvantage, and Cachin from his French perspective was quick to note the specific problem posed by the first if not the second.<sup>17</sup> These were not, however, Cold War innovations, and even the red-scare election of 1924 had seen substantial communist polls and Saklatvala's return to parliament. At the same time, the contraction of the communist vote should not of course be viewed in isolation. By 1951, the post-war two-party system had reached its apogee, and between them the two parties of government had the support of an extraordinary 96.7 per cent of the voters and four-fifths of the total electorate. As the Liberal vote collapsed mainly into the Conservative Party, and as Labour established a formidable electoral legitimacy epitomised by its five-figure majorities in many parts of Wales, Cold War Britain saw the simplification of party alignments into a basic left-right cleavage in which the political and geographical peripheries were peripheral indeed. The massive rejection the communists now experienced tells us something about the politics of the Cold War. In a longer perspective, it also raises questions as to the strength and resilience of the independent political attraction they had exercised even in what once appeared their electoral strongholds.

It is a measure of their limitations that explanation must begin with the candidate. Annie Kriegel in her work on French communism commented that in no other organisation did the individual at local level count for less.<sup>18</sup> The argument is harder to sustain in the British case, where figures like Horner and Lewis Jones in the Rhondda built up an impressive personal political capital through the performance of local tribune functions.<sup>19</sup> In respect of parliamentary elections, there was in any case no shortage of available national-level figures as the CPGB's national political presence far outstripped its electoral base. Stewart, Hannington and J.R. Campbell in Ogmore were obvious examples. Pollitt, of course, was another, and of his four previous election campaigns two had been fought against the Labour Party leaders Ramsay MacDonald (at Seaham in 1929) and Arthur Henderson (at Clay Cross in 1933). It was similarly as a figure of national and even international stature that Pollitt was first presented in the Rhondda. Describing his union standing and experience as 'second to none of the country', Horner urged that point: it was 'time, also, that in the Parliament of Britain – the birthplace of the International of Marx and Engels ... the

voice of our Communist Leader – Harry Pollitt, should be heard in defence of the unity of the Working Class on a National and International scale ....<sup>20</sup>

Standing in the way of his ambitions was Morgan's successor as miners' nominee and sitting Labour member, W. H. Mainwaring. In a contest of personalities, Mainwaring was certainly no match for Pollitt; indeed, he was said to be rather unwelcoming and uncharismatic and his campaigns could never match the verve and spirit of his communist opponents.<sup>21</sup> After a creditable campaign at Clay Cross in 1933, the communists had drawn the lesson that too much of their fire had been directed at Henderson as an individual and too little at the responsible leader who embodied 'the whole practice and policy of reformism'.<sup>22</sup> By 1935, however, the communists' general commitment to working-class unity and the return of a Labour government meant that little distinction could be made at the level of programme and ideology. Reformist 'practice and policy' was thus targetted only in the localised form of Mainwaring's record as miners' agent and Labour's claimed deficiencies in running the local authority.<sup>23</sup> There was also vigorous criticism of a more personal character, alleging political cowardice and careerism on grounds of Mainwaring's defection from the CPGB when it failed to support him as prospective national Miners' secretary in 1924.<sup>24</sup> A persistent complaint within the Labour camp was that at no point in the campaign was the basic issue of Labour or communism placed squarely before the electors.<sup>25</sup>

It was nevertheless Mainwaring who was ultimately on the stronger ground, and it was telling that his own literature showed no disinclination to personalise the communist challenge. What Mainwaring possessed instead of charisma was the mandate not only of the Labour Party but, more crucially, of the Miners' Federation. Will Paynter's assessment of the centrality of the miners' lodges to coalfield affairs is familiar, and he saw that this produced 'a loyalty to the Union so strong and primary that the Union is regarded as a substitute for a political organisation'.<sup>26</sup> Even in general terms, the communist Palme Dutt had earlier warned against 'trotting round the same small handful of "national" figures from place to place, instead of letting each get roots somewhere and closeness to the workers'. If the danger, according to Dutt, was of appearing as 'one of the "stunt" carpet-bagging organisations from London', it must have been the more acute where the claims of self-representation were strongest – as manifested in the Rhondda's strong local tradition of syndicalism.<sup>27</sup> A Lancastrian by birth and upbringing, Pollitt's own 'strongest local ground', according to Dutt, was East London, where he had played a prominent role in the Thames-side shop stewards' movement and where in 1931 he achieved what was hitherto his best election result in Whitechapel and St George's.<sup>28</sup>

Pollitt's challenge to Henderson had been justified as what Dutt called a 'national fight of leader against leader'.<sup>29</sup> In the Rhondda, however, Pollitt himself at first expressed strong opposition to his coming forward in Horner's place; 'rather than an outsider', he urged, the communists might look to the erstwhile candidate in Rhondda West, Jack Davies, who like Mainwaring had a record of local activity stretching back to the pre-war Unofficial Reform movement.<sup>30</sup> Even after contesting the seat, he expressed continuing diffidence about standing again and now suggested Lewis Jones as a possible alternative.<sup>31</sup> Defeat in 1935, against initial expectations of success,<sup>32</sup> must obviously have been a consideration. Just as importantly, it was to his outsider status that Pollitt returned in seeking to explain make a bigger impact immediately after the election. 'One of the biggest things we had to break down', he told the CPGB's central committee:

was that I wasn't a miner and a Welshman. It was tremendously difficult. There was a loyalty to the Federation that was amazing. ... Everywhere in Porth I was tackled by somebody saying 'We recognise that you are the best man but not a Federation man.'<sup>33</sup>

Conflated here were the issues of occupational and national otherness, to which one might add the perception of a geographical apartness that was registered in social rather than national or ethnic terms. Varying in weight and precedence over Pollitt's three Rhondda campaigns, the triple obstacle of his outsider status meant that national claims were successfully rebuffed on the basis of embedded exclusory identities which ultimately had the edge over intermittent charisma.

Occupationally, the miners' tradition of self-representation was expressed in the well-known phenomenon of miners' seats, and in the claims unavailingly put forward to have miners' representatives assume responsibility for the industry on the two occasions between the wars on which Labour took office.<sup>34</sup> Locally, even Horner had suffered from Mainwaring's sponsorship by the Miners' Federation.<sup>35</sup> Pollitt, of course, had no roots in the industry at all. 'Rhondda East is admittedly a Miners' seat', he was roundly challenged on his first incursion in 1935. 'Would it not be strange to find them adopting a Boilermaker? It would be almost as absurd as for the Boiler-makers Union to select a fisherman to represent them.'<sup>36</sup> The communists in response were constrained by the recent adoption of the popular front, and where Pollitt might once have countered localism with the highest interest and loyalty of class, he now invoked the notion of 'principle' exactly as Labour's middle-class candidates tended to. It was reasonable to retort that the miner Keir Hardie had set Labour on the road to power by representing the 'boilermakers' of West Ham. It was accurate, though perhaps less helpful, to recall that the 'woollen man' Turner and the Glasgow tailor Shinwell had had responsibility for the mines in the two MacDonalld governments. To invoke the old Etonian Dalton's selection for a Durham miners' seat, on the other hand, was little short of desperate and a virtual extolment of carpet-bagging.<sup>37</sup> If communists stopped short of mentioning MacDonalld himself in Aberavon or in Seaham, like him they were confronted with what he saw as the narrow corporate bias of the 'party of checkweighmen'.<sup>38</sup>

A syndicalistic argument of industrial self-representation thus worked to Mainwaring's advantage, as it might have done to Horner's, but never could to Pollitt's. Pollitt, moreover, did not even come the coalfield. 'Rhondda East needs a Leader!', proclaimed a communist leaflet detailing his personal biography and record of struggle.<sup>39</sup> The Labour Party scathingly seized upon this as 'The Greatest Discovery of the Ages!!!' and allowed themselves the obvious retort: 'South Wales and the Rhondda breed Leaders.'<sup>40</sup> Pollitt's own literature registered his political apprenticeship as 'a well-known speaker and agitator in the North of England'. Mainwaring's literature, on the other hand, depicted his opponent as a Londoner who would have done better to find a constituency closer to the capital.<sup>41</sup> In a strongly proletarian constituency like the Rhondda, this link with the privileged south-east carried clear implications of a social as well as geographical interloper.

Over the course of the 1930s Pollitt had begun to demonstrate a considerable gift for gradually replacing the CPGB's Russian subventions with more traditional forms of material support and patronage reflecting the unevenly distributed resources of the British class system.<sup>42</sup> As with earlier practitioners of such a form of politics like George Lansbury, a base in the capital was indispensable to such an enterprise.<sup>43</sup> In the Rhondda, however, it brought with it symbolic liabilities as well as practical

advantages. A world apart from establishment England, but easily reached by those with the time and money to do so, the Rhondda was perhaps more susceptible to the traditional social prerogatives of electioneering than was distant Fife – though only a comparative study could show how far similar issues were raised in the two constituencies.<sup>44</sup> Where just a few years previously it might have been flooded with authentic young proletarians returning from the Lenin School, Mainwaring's supporters could now call on a time-honoured rhetoric of labour independence in denouncing Pollitt's 'proletarian props':

Doubtless when Election Day comes the Rhondda Unemployed will once again be impressed by the Oxford invasion, with cars and other paraphernalia.

How these 'bright young things' enjoy the incursions amongst the workers, and what a 'thrill' to work for a Communist!

That it need not be taken seriously is indicated by the absence of information that any of them has as yet been spanked by his Capitalist father.

The Paters probably regard it as a delightful way for the young dogs to expend their surplus energy.<sup>45</sup>

There is a suggestion here that the phenomenon had already surfaced in Horner's earlier by-election campaign. By 1935, however, 'Posh Cars' and bright young things could also be linked politically with the communists' more diffuse appeal to a 'motley crowd' of shopkeepers, doctors, teachers and technicians.<sup>46</sup> Indeed, by 1945 Pollitt was to be presented as the candidates whose 'whole time will be at the service of ALL the people of Rhondda East'.<sup>47</sup> Whatever the rationale for the popular front nationally and internationally, one may wonder whether in the Rhondda this was worth the abatement of the communists' proletarian credentials.

Pollitt's greatest asset in response to allegations of invading the constituency was his endorsement by Horner.<sup>48</sup> Anxious as he was to exploit it to the full, Horner himself nevertheless set as great a store by the official responsibilities he now exercised within the Fed, and in each of Pollitt's campaigns the faltering nature of his support seemed if anything implicit testimony to the Labour refrain of loyalism. Pollitt certainly made no secret of his discontentment after the 1935 campaign, whose very worst aspect, he reported, were the 'big differences' exposed between the CPGB and its most prominent standard-bearer in South Wales:

We wrote to comrade Horner for a message two weeks before the election. We did not hear from him. He said he could not be under two fires at once. We said we wanted this statement particularly. I, myself, had to write the message. We arranged for him to come in for two meetings on Sunday. On Saturday we hear he is speaking for the Labour Party in Oxford. We telephoned to Oxford and asked him to come back and stop until the end of the fight. He came in on Sunday, He did not come out with the loud-speaker on Tuesday and Wednesday. ... We had streamers "Horner for Pollitt". One of the strongest Labour Party areas is Penygraig, and I had to say Horner was a member of the Communist Party.

There was even an interview in the *Porth Gazette*, which Horner denied having given, suggesting that Pollitt was 'not a miner and stands as much chance as the next man'.<sup>49</sup> Pollitt may have intended having the matter out with Horner; but even the sole election meeting addressed by the latter was enough to bring calls for disciplinary

action from certain sections of the Federation.<sup>50</sup> Caught between two fires, Horner knew which of them posed the greater danger to his personal prospects and political ambitions, and so, with the empty threat of 'straight talking', implicitly did Pollitt.

That Pollitt was not a Welshman was not in itself at this time an issue. There was of course a significant radical-nonconformist element in the constituency: in 1929 and 1933 it helped Liberal candidates to around a quarter of the vote, and in their absence transferred easily to the sometime Lib-Lab Morgan and to even the former syndicalist but Welsh-speaking and latterly respectable Mainwaring. Nevertheless, it was to the religious issue that Pollitt felt compelled to respond, and not the issue of nationality as such.<sup>51</sup> Conceivably it may have been more of an issue in 1945. Pollitt had not in the intervening years devoted much time to the constituency. By 1939 there was no expectation that the communists would contest the election that would normally have fallen the following year.<sup>52</sup> When he was removed as general secretary at the beginning of the war, it was to his native Lancashire that he temporarily returned. Even when he was readopted as candidate towards the end of 1944, there was some suggestion of his 'original opposition to becoming the candidate' as 'affecting his conception as to the time the candidate should spend in the constituency'.<sup>53</sup>

At this point, indeed, the CPGB's Welsh secretary Idris Cox left little doubt that as prospective agent already spending devoting considerable time to the Rhondda he would make a better candidate himself: 'Everyone knows that the candidate is the focus point in British elections and no amount of organised activity can make up for the absence of the candidate.'<sup>54</sup> Initially Cox's proposal to 'reconsider the Welsh miners' seats', in which the only contest envisaged, was that in Rhondda East, had apparently reflected the area's prevalent union loyalism.<sup>55</sup> Horner indeed felt that so keenly that he claimed in his memoirs to have urged the withdrawal of all communist candidates.<sup>56</sup> Unlike Horner, however, Cox was also strongly attuned to Welsh national aspirations and had that same year expounded a vision for South Wales stressing issues of language, culture and identity and asserting Wales's 'full rights of self-government' as a nation.<sup>57</sup> It was thus from within the CPGB itself that at the end of 1944 he expressed the view that it was 'an impossible position to have only one CP candidate in the whole of Wales, and that not a Welshman'.<sup>58</sup>

Pollitt of all people had little regard for celtic sensibilities. Although replaced as agent by Ivor Williams, Cox was given responsibility for the publicity and propaganda of side Pollitt's campaign. Pollitt, however, had no hesitation in again bringing in outside supporters like the avowed 'Cockney' Minnie Bowles, who visiting Wales for the first time observed the blackened faces, ubiquitous sheep and exotic syntax as one venturing into a foreign land.<sup>59</sup> Though Mainwaring's campaign made little of this, the intervention of a Plaid Cymru candidate, though on a distributist programme unlikely to have drawn off communist votes, may have helped focus attention on the national issue. As the *Rhondda Leader and Gazette* put it, while Pollitt could hardly appeal to a residual nationalism rooted in an older Lib-Lab tradition, Mainwaring was 'strongly national, and ... definitely keen on everything Welsh'.<sup>60</sup> Even communists privately acknowledged his commitment to Welsh affairs, and as post-war secretary of the Welsh PLP he was at first a staunch supporter of devolutionary measures.<sup>61</sup>

For Pollitt's narrow failure in 1945, much significance both then and since has been attached to the confused political message by which the CPGB urged the return of a Labour government while opposing its candidates in particular constituencies.<sup>62</sup> There was no such confusion in 1950, and where no communist was standing



communist supporters were given no clear advice.<sup>63</sup> Another perceived campaigning weakness in 1945 was the delay in mobilising the local party membership, so that '[i]n most of the Committee Rooms we had to rely mainly on leading comrades from *outside* to take charge and organise the work'.<sup>64</sup> At least in 1950 there was better preparation of the campaign, and in 1947 Pollitt's fellow Lancastrians Percy and Mary Higgins had been brought into the constituency to look after the organisation full-time.<sup>65</sup> *Note – by 1957 Higgins is back in Crumpsall and acting as secretary of the Robeson Petition Committee – from correspondence in MacDiarmid papers, NLS.*) As if to bear out his claims to an expertise in the mining industry, Pollitt also now began putting his name to key CPGB statements on the politics of coal.<sup>66</sup> Another oversight in 1945 was said to have been the failure to publicise Mainwaring's indifferent parliamentary voting record and failure to support campaigns at constituency level.<sup>67</sup> Again, the issue was put right in 1950, when the CPGB's national election agent produced a detailed breakdown of the derisory activity of the 'Silent Member' whose parliamentary record compared so poorly with those of the two communist MPs.<sup>68</sup>

That the campaign in 1950 was in many ways the best-prepared of the communists' several attempts at the constituency merely underlines the scale of the political setback it suffered. Though Pollitt, as in 1945, received a degree of national media exposure as party leader, it is likely that he had even become something of a liability as a candidate. His age may have been part of the problem. When in 1945 he had been approached to stand for the distinctly inferior platform of the London County Council, Pollitt had objected that he would be '60 years of age at the next election and younger men are wanted'.<sup>69</sup> Despite mounting health problems, he in fact maintained an impressive level of activity in the 1950 campaign, including twelve eve-of-poll meetings in the space of two-and-a-half hours.<sup>70</sup> Nevertheless his public persona by this time was very much that of an older man bearing within him the traditions of the movements 'pioneers' and 'old-timers'.<sup>71</sup> Back in 1933, it was he who had derided Henderson as 'an old and tried upholder' of capitalism 'in whose devoted service he had grown grey'.<sup>72</sup> More subliminally in 1935, he had urged that Mainwaring's return would mean '*no change, no new life, no extra energy for the Labour movement*', and his own, conversely, '*New courage! New determination! More power to Labour's elbow!*'<sup>73</sup> While Pollitt before the war could still embody the sense of a coming generation, already by 1945 this required the surrogacy of an appeal by the Young Communist League and by 1950 took the shape of a 'Harry Pollitt Youth Brigade' that merely underlined that these were no longer Pollitt's own credentials.<sup>74</sup> Like Mainwaring, six years his senior, Pollitt could advertise long credentials of activity within the movement.<sup>75</sup> While the Labour Party had always entertained such claims of seniority through service, their utility for a party of radical challenge to the status quo was perhaps more questionable.

Generation, however, was a matter not just of age but of political identity. Thomas Mann in *Dr Faustus* referred to age as 'the past as presentness', and the CPGB's past as presentness offered a sort of miserabilism-cum-catastrophism informed by ever-present expectations of the coming economic slump. Already by 1950, this seemed as confounded by events as it had been vindicated by them in the 1930s. When towards the end of the year Pollitt's sixtieth birthday occasioned somewhat overblown celebrations in London, Gallacher insisted that none could now claim that Britons were better off than in the past, and in pantomime style asked his audience if they expected to be better off in the year to come. To his great discomfiture, half called out no and the other half yes.<sup>76</sup>

There is no need to infer that the militant collective ethos of the coalfields, or of a communist gathering even in festive mood, had become submerged overnight in a new world of consumerism, individualism and personable disposable income. A sense of anchorage in the bitter experiences of the depression years was eloquently articulated by Aneurin Bevan, for example in his famous ‘vermin’ speech in 1948.<sup>77</sup> Michael Foot, Bevan’s successor as MP for Ebbw Vale, lambasted the snobbery and complacency of a ‘Tory-directed affluent society’ which he set against the immovable Welsh rock of working-class solidarity.<sup>78</sup> Nevertheless, it was precisely this commitment to solidaristic values of welfare and full employment, now identified with the ‘modern’ achievement of the post-war welfare state, that was reflected in the sixty per cent vote-share Labour now registered across Wales as a whole. As the communists resumed an older, more sectarian refrain of hostility to social democracy, at the tail-end of a government which seemed to have redeemed many of the failures of 1931, the electoral costs were plain to see. Pollitt asked electors if they were getting better off, and nine out of ten voted yes. Mainwaring’s only counter-argument, communists alleged, was the appeal for loyalty.<sup>79</sup> In 1950, in the Rhondda, this was more than enough.

Communist electoral strategy to that date had swung erratically between between notions of independent communist leadership and some broader conception of left or ‘progressive’ unity. From 1951, and especially after Stalin’s death (in 1953) and the beginnings of destalinisation (after 1956), there was instead a position of steady-state incoherence. It was in response to the comprehensive setback of the 1950 election that Stalin himself had a hand in the discussions that led the following year to the publication of the long-term programme the *British Road to Socialism*. Through its several updates until the late 1980s, this allowed the perspective both of the CPGB’s projection as an independent electoral force and of a parliamentary road to socialism, whose obvious corollary was of a period at least of Labour government. Although this was not at first made explicit, already in 1951 the CPGB contested only ten constituencies and urged support elsewhere for the Labour Party.<sup>80</sup> The concentration of resources was not the answer either. For the time first ever, standing as a communist meant in every case a lost deposit.

The Rhondda did not exactly buck the trend. Nevertheless, there were again specific patterns of voting that may shed light on the weaknesses of the party’s local electoral base. Following Pollitt’s rejection in 1950, the local constituency machinery appears to have been as vulnerable to his withdrawal as in the case of Labour’s middle-class carpet-baggers in other parts of the country.<sup>81</sup> In 1951 it was reported that communists in the constituency were ‘more seriously affected by political frustration than any part of Wales’, and that despite the party’s continuing ‘mass influence’ in the Rhondda its public meetings were extremely small and generated ‘no real enthusiasm’ even among the party members.<sup>82</sup> The Rhondda was also singled out, along with Glasgow, for the particularly serious decline in communist support in local elections.<sup>83</sup> With Pollitt’s relinquishment of parliamentary ambitions, Cox at last had his chance in the 1951 election. In the words of Gwyn Williams he was ‘strong, well-read even by Communist standards, and ... a man of strongly Welsh temper’, and yet he crept in an ignominious third behind the long-absent Tories.<sup>84</sup> Welshness, it seems, was at most a secondary issue. On the other hand, the election saw a much sharper fall in the communist vote in West Fife and Mile End, where Gallacher and Piratin had also withdrawn. An outsider to the end, Pollitt’s support had seemingly rested on a less substantial basis and by 1950 his personal standing counted for little.

Confirmation of a sort was provided when for the first time since 1933 Annie Powell provided the option of an authentically local communist candidate. Accounting for his victory in Mile End, Piratin had placed the primary emphasis on the communists' local campaigning activities and his own and his family's high standing in the constituency.<sup>85</sup> A Rhondda-born schoolteacher and Welsh-speaker who had joined the CPGB in 1938, Powell was a sometime women's organiser for the CPGB in Wales and in 1945 had exercised a similar responsibility in Pollitt's campaign in the Rhondda. In stepping into Pollitt and Cox's shoes in 1955, Powell not only restored the communists to second place in the constituency but secured an increased share of around fifteen per cent of the vote. Broadly maintained in 1959, even as her vote fell in 1964 and 1966 she at least held onto second place. She also gained a seat on the Rhondda borough council and famously in 1979 took office as Britain's first communist mayor since the early 1920s.

Powell, of course, was anything but a 'Federation man'. The relative success and longevity of her candidacy suggests that the highly gendered nature of coalfield politics and culture did not preclude women assuming more conventional political roles. According again to Paynter, it was the lodge officers who were regarded – and regarded themselves – as the 'village elders to whom the people went with their worries and woes', the real 'guides, philosophers and friends to a community'.<sup>86</sup> To the extent that this was so, with the union providing a 'kind of working-class party or even a government', then the advancement of women to conventional party or local government responsibilities did not necessarily cut across the 'welfarist' roles which Chris Williams has described as characteristic of the local political women's sections.<sup>87</sup> The strength of this syndicalistic commitment to the pre-eminence of the union over other institutions also offers a final insight into the deterioration of the communists' electoral fortunes, which might be represented as an adjustment of communist campaigning priorities responding to and reinforcing the verdict of electors.

The late Nina Fishman once traced this back as far as 1932: Pollitt and the CPGB, she stated, at this point 'vacated the political arena voluntarily' to concentrate on activities in the unions.<sup>88</sup> Pollitt's several Rhondda campaigns must throw doubt on that, and the outcome in failure and eventual retreat was involuntary and unwelcome in character. Rather than an elusive coherence of approach, what may however be traced is the development of a separate union career path independent of the CPGB's parliamentary ambitions and potentially at odds with them. It is Horner, that is, who clearly did vacate the political arena, to the manifest detriment of the communists' electoral ambitions in the constituency. Already evidenced in the tensions with Pollitt and the party in 1935, Horner's predicament was to be reinforced by his elevation to national office within both the Fed (1936-44) and then the National Union of Mineworkers (1945-59). Even in 1945, when he and Hannington put their names to a statement in Pollitt's support, rumours were plausibly put about that he was only toeing the line forced upon him by the King Street 'Dictators'.<sup>89</sup> There were, however, no conflicting signals by 1950. '*To send you good wishes for success is unnecessary*', Horner wrote to Pollitt in a private letter. '*You know & everybody in your Constituency know what I desire as the outcome of this Election.*'<sup>90</sup> What is easily obscured in a narrow focus on the 'Hornerism' episode of 1931 is that it was Hornerism that eventually prevailed and not the stifling political direction with which it had come into conflict.<sup>91</sup> Horner's disregard for his party responsibilities by 1950 could hardly have been more overt; but Pollitt by this time would hardly even have risked straight talking.

Contrasting Horner's fortunes with Pollitt's helps in understanding the specificity of the CPGB's Cold War predicament. Kenneth O. Morgan has described Pollitt's poll in 1945 as the communists' 'last significant political effort ever in Wales'.<sup>92</sup> There can be little dispute with that electorally speaking, and it is by this yardstick that the fortunes of British political parties are most often measured. Whatever the particular features of the Rhondda, Wales or Britain, this, moreover, was an international phenomenon of the Cold War; for other Europe's other smaller European communist parties, for example that in the Netherlands, electoral support also fell sharply in the same period.<sup>93</sup> Comparison with the Netherlands, however, also reveals the specificity of the case; for while in the Netherlands the party membership too had by the late 1950s fallen to below its pre-war peak, in Britain communist party membership remained at some five times the level of the early 1930s even after the haemorrhaging party crisis of 1956-7. By 1964 it had recovered to a figure twice the highest obtained between the wars; and against Kenneth Morgan's judgement must be set that of John Callaghan, who has even described the CPGB as in this period 'probably the most successful far left organisation in Britain since the socialist revival of the 1880s'.<sup>94</sup>

Without seeking to reconcile those judgements here, it is clear that Cold War Wales, like the UK as a whole, poses the specific issues of a dramatic, disproportionate and largely irreversible shrinkage of the communist electorate. If a more positive evaluation of communist activities in this period is possible, it reflects the displacement of communist activities into those areas of intellectual, cultural and – above all in regions like south Wales – industrial work in which their most effective interventions had always been made. If instead of plotting communist electoral support and the spatial configurations of the little Moscows, one measured communist strength by the number of trade union officers, the trend in Britain might not look so very different from that in post-war France or Italy. 'Les *shop-stewards* sont communistes', commented Cachin, who did not fail to record similar advances among the minerworkers in registering the discrepancy between the CPGB's trade-union influence and parliamentary weakness.<sup>95</sup> Failing to achieve electoral breakthrough even in the Rhondda had its lessons for the CPGB's 'empirical proletarians', and helped producing a distinctive variant of the west European communist party with a pronounced trade-union base and labour movement orientation.<sup>96</sup>

Cold War Wales was welfare-state Wales and full-employment Wales. This arguably was the key to the communists' electoral marginalisation, which has since proved irreversible. If these results were 'dismal' or 'disastrous', how, for example, is one to describe the failure recently to reach even half a percentage point in a favourable constituency by the general secretary of one of the CPGB's claimed successor bodies?<sup>97</sup> For nearly half a century now, the two-party system has been unravelling.<sup>98</sup> However, by the time that electoral spaces began to open up at least on the scale of the inter-war years, the communists had neither the candidates, the activist resources nor even perhaps the political will and identity to provide a vehicle for the disillusioned or newly radicalised. The Labour establishment had another shock in a Rhondda West by-election in 1967; but it was now Plaid Cymru that delivered it, not the communists. When the industrial radicalism of the South Wales miners resurfaced around the time of the miners' strikes of the early 1970s, both detractors and supporters discerned the active contribution of communists centred on the Rhondda and the militant central area of the coalfield.<sup>99</sup> Nevertheless, even Annie Powell's accession to Rhondda's mayoralty was registered more as a recognition of past struggles than as a harbinger for the future.

Coal had never quite figured in a British general election as it did in that of February 1974, when famously Edward Heath posed the question of ‘Who governs?’ The outcome on a national scale was inconclusive; only Jimmy Reid of the communist candidates had even the slightest profile beyond his own constituency. Nevertheless, as Powell’s successor fell to an ignominious fifth place in the newly unified Rhondda constituency, at least one small subplot in British electoral history was coming to an end.

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<sup>1</sup> Denis Peschanski, ed., *Marcel Cachin: Carnets 1904-1947*, vol. 4, Paris: CNRS Editions, 1998, p. 771, entry for 25 April 1945.

<sup>2</sup> Andrew Thorpe, *The British Communist Party and Moscow 1920-1943*, Manchester University Press, 2000), p. 272.

<sup>3</sup> The average of the vote-shares of individual communist candidates. The aggregated average was lower (11 per cent, excluding Pritt), this reflecting the achievement of the communists’ poorest results in the large English rural constituencies of Abingdon and Sevenoaks.

<sup>4</sup> For arguments and evidence, see Kevin Morgan, ‘Away from the party and into “the party”’, *Socialist History*, 37, 2010, pp. 73-95.

<sup>5</sup> ‘I am sure the Kremlin will think the results well worth £30,000’, he wrote of the lost deposits. Vansittart papers, Churchill College Archives, Cambridge, VNST 1/43, Vansittart to W.J. Brown, 27 February 1950.

<sup>6</sup> See Morgan, ‘Away from the party’; Steven Fielding, ‘The Second World War and popular radicalism: the significance of the “movement away from party”’, *History*, 80, 1995, pp. 38-58; Paul Addison, *The Road to 1945. British politics and the Second World War*, Quartet edn, 1977, ch. 5.

<sup>7</sup> For background see Kevin Morgan, Gidon Cohen and Andrew Flinn, *Communists in British Society 1920-1991*, London: Rivers Oram, 2006, pp. 30-1.

<sup>8</sup> Henry Srebrnik, *London Jews and British Communism 1935-1945*, London: Valentine Mitchell, 1995.

<sup>9</sup> Stuart Macintyre, *Little Moscows. Communism and working-class militancy in inter-war Britain*, Croom Helm, 1980.

<sup>10</sup> Namely Campbell Stephen of the ILP and the Labour victor S.O. Davies, a left-wing socialist generally supportive of the USSR and of many communist causes.

<sup>11</sup> John Stevenson and Chris Cook, *The Slump. Society and politics during the depression*, Quartet edn, 1977, pp. 129, 132. Pollitt had secured 9.6 per cent of the poll in Whitechapel and St George’s in 1930, as against Hannington’s 9.5 per cent in Merthyr. Indeed, Pollitt’s own poll of 10.6 per cent in Clay Cross in 1933 is also grouped with the communists’ disastrous polls, on criteria which are unexplained, subjective and evidently incoherent.

<sup>12</sup> Hull History Centre, Reginald Bridgeman papers, DBN 9/1, Pollitt to Bridgeman, 7 August 1945.

<sup>13</sup> Chris Williams, *Democratic Rhondda. Politics and society, 1885-1951*, Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1996, p. 161.

<sup>14</sup> Respectively Shapurji Saklatvala in North Battersea in 1924 and Piratin in Mile End in 1945.

<sup>15</sup> For the original exposition, see David Butler and Donald Stokes, *Political Change in Britain: forces shaping electoral choice*, Macmillan, 1969. For an early discussion of the limitations of this type of analysis, see Ivor Crewe, ‘Do Butler and Stokes really explain political change in Britain?’, *European Journal of Political Research*, 2, 1, 1974, pp. 47-92.

<sup>16</sup> Noreen Branson, *History of the Communist Party of Great Britain 1941-1951*, Lawrence & Wishart, 1997, pp. 205-9.

<sup>17</sup> *Marcel Cachin: Carnets 1904-1947*, p. 1115, entry for 30 June 1947.

<sup>18</sup> Annie Kriegel, *The French Communists. Profile of a people*, University of Chicago Press, 1972, pp. 13-14.

<sup>19</sup> See the discussion in Morgan et al, *Communists*, pp. 104-12.

<sup>20</sup> LHASC CP/Ind/Poll/10/4, CPGB ‘Rhondda East Special’, 1935.

<sup>21</sup> Williams, *Democratic Rhondda*, pp. 160, 162.

<sup>22</sup> CPGB statement on lessons of Clay Cross by-election, *Daily Worker*, 19 September 1933. See also Palme Dutt’s warning against ‘mere denunciation of Henderson’s record as our main propaganda’, Dutt papers (British Library), Cup. 1262 K4, Dutt to Pollitt, 12 August 1933.

<sup>23</sup> *Rhondda Clarion*, December 1935, editorial board statement, p. 1.

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- <sup>24</sup> LHASC CP/Ind/Poll/10/4, CPGB ‘Rhondda East Special’, 1935; see also Nina Fishman, *Arthur Horner: a political biography. Volume 1: 1894-1944*, Lawrence & Wishart, 2010, pp. 94-7.
- <sup>25</sup> See for example Mainwaring’s comments, *Rhondda Fach Gazette*, 16 November 1935.
- <sup>26</sup> Will Paynter cited Hywel Francis and David Smith, *The Fed. A history of the South Wales miners in the twentieth century*, Lawrence & Wishart, 1980, p. 309.
- <sup>27</sup> LHASC CP/Ind/Poll, Dutt to Pollitt, 12 November 1930.
- <sup>28</sup> Dutt papers, British Library, Cup. 1261 K4, Dutt to CPGB political bureau, 9 December 1930.
- <sup>29</sup> Dutt to CPGB secretariat, 2 August 1933.
- <sup>30</sup> RGASPI 495/100/951, Pollitt to Rust, 27 January 1934. For biographical details of Davies see his ‘What the Communist Party has meant to me’, *Labour Monthly*, August 1940, pp. 441-3.
- <sup>31</sup> LHASC CPGB central committee, 5 March 1938, contribution of Pollitt.
- <sup>32</sup> ‘Pollitt me dit: “Aux prochaines élections deux députés communistes, petite majorité conservatrice à la Chambre des communes”; Peschanski, *Marcel Cachin: Carnets*, vol .4, p. 133, entry for 4 August 1935
- <sup>33</sup> Labour History Archive and Study Centre, Comintern microfilms, CPGB political bureau, 21 November 1935.
- <sup>34</sup> See for example the letters to Ramsay MacDonald of the miners’ MPs Duncan Graham (25 January 1924) and James C. Welsh (26 November 1924), MacDonald papers (National Archives) 30/69/1168.
- <sup>35</sup> CP/Ind/Fag/1/5, Hymie Fagan, unpublished autobiography, p. 94. Fagan assisted in the 1933 and 1935 campaigns and in 1945 was the CPGB’s national election agent.
- <sup>36</sup> LHASC CP/Ind/Poll/10/4, *Rhondda Clarion*, 4 November 1935.
- <sup>37</sup> LHASC CP/Ind/Poll/10/4, ‘It is principles that count. Pollitt is the miners’ man!’, CPGB election leaflet, Rhondda East, 1935.
- <sup>38</sup> Kevin Morgan, *Labour Legends and Russian Gold. Bolshevism and the British left part one*, Lawrence & Wishart, 2006, pp. 138-9, 142-51.
- <sup>39</sup> LHASC CP/Ind/Poll/10/4, ‘Rhondda East needs a Leader! Pollitt’s the Man’, CPGB election leaflet, Rhondda East, 1935.
- <sup>40</sup> ‘Rhondda East “Election Clarion”’, Labour Party election broadsheet. Rhondda East, 1935.
- <sup>41</sup> *Rhondda Clarion*, 4 November 1935.
- <sup>42</sup> Morgan, *Labour Legends*, pp. 255-60.
- <sup>43</sup> Morgan, *Labour Legends*, pp. 100-5.
- <sup>44</sup> Though a Scotsman and standing for the third time in 1935, Gallacher like Pollitt was a metalworker by trade. ‘Many comrades came in from outside to help and every one of them was an asset’, he wrote after the 1935 campaign. ‘Eight or nine cars were brought in by friends from outside, without which we would have been at a terrible disadvantage.’ (Gallacher, *Revolt on the Clyde*, London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1940 edn, p. 283.)
- <sup>45</sup> *Rhondda Clarion*, 4 November 1935.
- <sup>46</sup> ‘Rhondda East “Election Clarion”’; also LHASC CP/Ind/Poll/10/4, Pollitt, election address.
- <sup>47</sup> LHASC CP/Ind/Poll/10/6, ‘Prominent Leaders urge support for Harry Pollitt’, CPGB election leaflet signed Horner and Hannington, 1945.
- <sup>48</sup> Fishman, *Arthur Horner: Volume 1*, pp. 299-301.
- <sup>49</sup> LHASC, CPGB microfilms, CPGB political bureau, 21 November 1935, Pollitt’s contribution.
- <sup>50</sup> Francis and Smith, *The Fed*, p. 308; Fishman, *Arthur Horner: Volume 1*, p. 301.
- <sup>51</sup> LHASC CP/Ind/Poll/10/4, ‘Communism and religion’, CPGB election leaflet, 1935.
- <sup>52</sup> Dutt papers, British Library, Cup 1262 K4, ‘First draft re election policy (Feb 1938)’, sent CPGB 4 March 1938; CPGB central committee, 5 March 1938, contributions of Pollitt, Dutt and Cox; LHASC CP/Ind/Poll, ‘First draft of plan and proposed report to 16<sup>th</sup> party congress’, 1939.
- <sup>53</sup> National Archives KV2/1040/515, CPGB Welsh committee to CPGB political committee, 5 December 1944.
- <sup>54</sup> CPGB Welsh committee to CPGB political committee, 5 December 1944.
- <sup>55</sup> LHASC CP/Cent, CPGB executive committee minutes, 14-15 October 1944.
- <sup>56</sup> Arthur Horner, *Incorrigible Rebel*, London: MacGibbon & Kee, 1960, pp. 174-5.
- <sup>57</sup> Idris Cox, *Forward to a New Life for South Wales*, CPGB South Wales committee, 1944, pp. 12-13 and passim.
- <sup>58</sup> NA KV2/1040, summary report on Pollitt, entry for 28 December 1944.
- <sup>59</sup> Minnie E. Bowles, ‘Four election campaigns in Wales’, typescript account provided by the late George Matthews.
- <sup>60</sup> ‘Tit-bits’, *Rhondda Leader and Gazette*, 9 June 1945.

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- <sup>61</sup> CP/Ind/Poll/10/7, Hymie Fagan to Pollitt, 9 February 1950; R. Merfyn Jones and Ioan Rhys Jones, 'Labour and the nation' in Duncan Tanner, Chris Williams and Deian Hopkin, eds, *The Labour Party in Wales 1900-2000*, Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000, pp. 249, 253.
- <sup>62</sup> See Morgan, 'Away from the party'; Neil Redfern, 'Winning the peace: British communists, the Soviet Union and the General Election of 1945', *Contemporary British History*, 16, 1, 2002, pp. 43-8.
- <sup>63</sup> Pollitt, 'We can save Britain. Why you should vote for communists', *Daily Worker*, 22 February 1950; *Daily Worker*, 23 February 1950 (lead article).
- <sup>64</sup> 'Report on the election campaign in Rhondda East', 2 August 1945.
- <sup>65</sup> LHASC CP/Ind/Poll/10/6, 'Report on the election campaign in Rhondda East', 2 August 1945; CPGB executive committee *Report to CPGB twentieth national congress*, 1947, p. 23.
- <sup>66</sup> Pollitt, *Plan for Coal*, CPGB, 1947; *The Miners' Next Step*, CPGB, 1948.
- <sup>67</sup> 'Report on the election campaign in Rhondda East', 2 August 1945.
- <sup>68</sup> LHASC CP/Ind/Poll/10/7, Fagan to Pollitt, 9, 13, 15 and 16 February 1950; 'Comparative summary of parliamentary activities 1945-1949'; Patrick Goldring, *Daily Worker*, 15 February 1950 (press cutting).
- <sup>69</sup> National Archives KV 2/1041, intercepted telephone call, Ted Bramley to Pollitt, 21 November 1945.
- <sup>70</sup> LHASC CP/Ind/Poll/10/7, 'Programme of meetings, Monday February 20<sup>th</sup> to Wednesday February 23<sup>rd</sup>'.
- <sup>71</sup> Kevin Morgan, *Harry Pollitt*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993, pp. 157-61.
- <sup>72</sup> *Daily Worker*, 16 August 1933.
- <sup>73</sup> LHASC CP/Ind/Poll/10/4, 'Pollitt stands for unity', CPGB election leaflet, 1935.
- <sup>74</sup> LHASC CP/Ind/Poll/10/6, *The Best Man to fight for the Young Miners*, Pollitt election leaflet, 1945; CP/Ind/Poll/10/7, *Daily Worker*, 6 and 20 February 1950 (cuttings).
- <sup>75</sup> LHASC CP/Ind/Poll/10/7, 'For wages, homes, jobs and peace', Pollitt election address, 1950.
- <sup>76</sup> National Archives reference.
- <sup>77</sup> See Michael Foot, *Aneurin Bevan 1945-60*, Granada Publishing, 1975 edn, ch. 6.
- <sup>78</sup> Mervyn Jones, *Michael Foot*, Gollancz, 1995 edn, p. 252.
- <sup>79</sup> *Daily Worker*, 18 February 1950.
- <sup>80</sup> The original version of *The British Road to Socialism* (CPGB, 1951) states the objective of a People's Democracy and People's Government, strongly contrasted with the current Labour government. Nevertheless, while fighting to expose both the Conservatives and the 'dominant Right-wing Labour leaders', the CPGB's advice in 1951 was to vote even for the latter where no communist was standing (see CPGB central committee statement of 2 October 1951 in *Report of the Executive Committee to CPGB twenty-second national congress* (CPGB, 1952), pp. 56-7).
- <sup>81</sup> See the discussion in Morgan, *Labour Legends and Russian Gold*, ch. 5.
- <sup>82</sup> LHASC CP/Cent/Org/11/1, 'Welsh district report to the Political Committee', covering May 1950-April 1951.
- <sup>83</sup> CPGB central committee statement of 31 May 1951 in *Report of the Executive Committee to CPGB twenty-second national congress*, pp. 49-51.
- <sup>84</sup> Gwyn A. Williams, *When Was Wales? A history of the Welsh*, Harmondsworth: Penguin edn, 1985, 274-5.
- <sup>85</sup> Phil Piratin, *Our Flag Stays Red*, Thames Publications, 1948, pp. 79-84. Piratin himself enjoyed evoking the ironies of his position. He described how on one occasion a business acquaintance walked past him selling the *Daily Worker* outside Mile End tube station. Retracing his steps, he quizzed Piratin in bafflement: 'How much exactly do you make doing that?'
- <sup>86</sup> Citations from Hywel Francis, tribute to Paynter, *Llafur*, 4, 2, 1985, 7.
- <sup>87</sup> The argument here is taken from Morgan, *Communists*, p. 65 where a fuller discussion can be found.
- <sup>88</sup> Nina Fishman, *The British Communist Party and the Trade Unions 1933-45*, Aldershot: Ashgate, p. 341.
- <sup>89</sup> 'Report on the election campaign in Rhondda East', 2 August 1945. The CPGB's national offices were in King Street, Covent Garden.
- <sup>90</sup> LHASC CP/Ind/Poll/10/7, Horner to Pollitt 18 February 1950.
- <sup>91</sup> See the discussion in Kevin Morgan, *Against Fascism and War. Ruptures and continuities in British communist politics 1935-1941*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989, pp. 134-46.
- <sup>92</sup> Kenneth O. Morgan, 'Power and glory: war and reconstruction, 1939-1951' in Tanner et al, *Labour Party in Wales*, p.174.
- <sup>93</sup> See Gerrit Voerman, "'Away with all your superstitions!'" The end of communism in the Netherlands', *Journal of Communist Studies*, 7, 4, 1991, p. 462, fig. 1.

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<sup>94</sup> John Callaghan, *Cold War, Crisis and Conflict: the CPGB 1951-68*, Lawrence & Wishart, 2003, pp. 303-4. The membership was 17,756 in 1939, 34,281 in 1964. The low point of 24,670 in 1958 may be compared with reliable figures of around 5-6,000 in the early 1930s. Where the CPGB was again distinctive, as compared, for example, with the French and Dutch parties, was in the absence of any significant boost to recruitment during the crisis of the 1970s and the advent of Eurocommunism.

<sup>95</sup> *Marcel Cachin: Carnets 1904-1947*, p. 1115, entry for 30 June 1947.

<sup>96</sup> The empirical proletarians was a phrase used by the late Neal Wood in an article in *Political Science Quarterly* in 1959.

<sup>97</sup> Robert Griffiths in Cardiff South and Penarth obtained 196 votes or 0.4 per cent of the poll.

<sup>98</sup> See the early commentary by H.M. Drucker, 'Two-party politics in Britain' in idem, ed., *Multi-Party Britain*, 1979.

<sup>99</sup> Francis and Smith, *The Fed*, pp. 462-9.