

August 1940 to the mid-1980s is rather more limited: it contains about 1000 entries. These include publications by political organizations, but also a number of Trotsky's classic works (like *Literature and Revolution*, *My life*, and *Stalin*). A number of editions of his collected works have also been published, of which the French *Oeuvres*, edited by Pierre Broué, is the most ambitious.

The quantities are impressive indeed, and the method employed, of strict chronological presentation, with references to later reprints and/or translations, also turns out to be a valuable and useful approach in the 1989 summary, which has three times as many items as its precursor. The frequency with which visitors to the reading room of the IISG library resort to Sinclair's book confirms this. Remarkably, as a result of the publication of the reference works by Sinclair and W. Lubitz,² there is now more bibliographical material available on Trotsky than on Lenin or Stalin.

After nearly thirty years of continued bibliographical research on Trotsky and on the Trotskyist movement of the 1930s³ it must have been a source of great satisfaction to Sinclair to have had the opportunity to round off his work with this Scholar Press edition. Shortly after it was published he died, on 7 July 1990, at the age of 81.

Leo van Rossum

MORGAN, KEVIN. *Against Fascism and War. Ruptures and continuities in British Communist politics, 1935–41*. Manchester University Press, Manchester, New York 1989; distr. excl. in the USA and Canada by St. Martin's Press, New York. viii, 328 pp. £ 40.00.

The political history of the world communist parties at the beginning of World War Two, involving the rapid change in policy towards the acceptance of the imperialist war thesis, has been analysed with varying degrees of thoroughness in different countries. In Europe there has been a considerable polemical literature in France, and a degree of revisionism in Poland for at least the last two decades, but Britain has long been missing a detailed chronology and evaluation. In April 1979 a one-day conference was held in London on the early months of the war, but the transcription of the proceedings was not published until 1984 (J. Attfield and S. Williams (eds), *1939: The Communist Party of Great Britain and the War*). The main reason for the delay in publication, so it was noted in the Preface had been the unsuccessful search for the verbatim record of the minutes of the crucial meeting of the Central Committee of the British Party – that of 2/3 October 1939 – which approved the change of political line to total opposition to the war. It was known that this verbatim account existed but it proved impossible to dig them out of the Comintern archives in Moscow. Noreen Branson published the third volume of the history of the British Communist Party in 1985. Her book, which unlike the previous two

² W. Lubitz, *Trotsky Bibliography. A classified list of published items about Trotsky and Trotskyism. Second totally revised and expanded edition* (Munich, 1988).

³ Louis Sinclair, *Documents & Discussions 1930–1940* (Glasgow, 1981, typescript); Louis Sinclair, *The IS Papers. Source material for the history of the 4th International* (Glasgow, 1984, typescript).

volumes by James Klugman was a serious contribution to Communist history, offered a reasoned analysis of the “imperialist war” period, and in short compass provided the general arguments of the present volume by Dr Morgan. The great merit of his volume lies in the careful marshalling of the detail of a complicated chapter in the history of the British Party, and we have now a history that can be set alongside the parallel volume for the American Communist Party which Maurice Isserman published in 1982: *Which Side Were You on? The American Communist Party during the Second World War*. It should be noted that the verbatim record of the Central Committee meeting of 2/3 October 1939 mentioned above will be published by Lawrence and Wishart, London, the Communist Party publishers, during the year 1990.

The story which Dr Morgan unfolds is extraordinarily interesting. The British Communist Party, after the Comintern had imposed the social-fascist line upon a somewhat sceptical majority of the Central Committee in 1929, had followed the general policy of the International throughout the nineteen thirties. The Moscow trials evoked remarkably little critical appraisal among British Communists, partly the result of the overwhelming mass of political literature which “explained” the trials, partly the absence of any influential grouping on the Left which attacked the trials. There was a principled opposition by socialist intellectuals such as H. N. Brailsford and more discussion in the Left press than is usually recognised, but there was nothing to compare with the debates in France or the United States. The same was true of events such as the Barcelona uprising of 1937. Membership of the Communist Party continued to grow among both manual workers and intellectuals, and the last few years before the outbreak of war in September 1939 saw the beginnings of the implantation of the communist party in the civil society of the United Kingdom.

There are two crucial questions which require to be asked of British communist theory and practice during the period of war before the German invasion of Russia in June 1941. The first relates to the definition of the war, and the second to the political practice of the Party. There were, as will be described, considerable differences between the theory and the practice, and it is this analysis which constitutes the central part of Dr Morgan’s volume.

At the outset of the war it was characterised as “a just war” against international fascism at the same time as the Communist Party called for the replacement of the Chamberlain government by a People’s government. It was a question of the Party fighting simultaneously on two fronts, with the most fervent advocate being the general secretary, Harry Pollitt: a working-class militant of outstanding ability. On the evening of 24 September one of the leading British comrades arrived from Moscow bringing an account of the discussions within the Communist International which now characterised the war as an out-and-out imperialist war which no working class in any country could give support. The Central Committee adjourned until 2 October when R. Palme Dutt now reported on the discussions within the Political Bureau, and presented a majority report endorsing the new line of the Comintern. Only two members were wholly against: one was Pollitt and the other J. R. Campbell, another foundation member of the Party in 1920. Pollitt was removed from the position of general secretary, his place being taken by Palme Dutt who was always the most intransigent in political affairs, at this time as well as in most periods of his career.

It was not difficult for the communist party membership – from which there were relatively few defections – to find reasons for the imperialist war thesis; especially in the months of the so-called “phoney” war: from September 1939 to the beginning of the German *Blitzkrieg* in May 1940. Britain was the largest imperialist power; the Chamberlain government was the government of the Munich settlement and was bitterly anti-Soviet; its closest ally was France, which had closed down the communist press, taken their parliamentary immunity from Communist deputies, and had imprisoned large numbers of Spanish Republicans and other anti-fascists in concentration camps. The high point of anti-sovietism on the part of the Chamberlain government – it was a sentiment that was widespread throughout Britain – was the Soviet–Finnish war of the winter of 1939–1940 when British and French troops were assembled to go to the aid of Finland and when extreme reactionary groups were seeking to “switch the war” to one against the Soviet Union.

Chamberlain was replaced by Churchill in May 1940, and the German army swept through the Low Countries and France. Britain was now confronted with the possibility of a German invasion. During the previous period the Communist Party had supported the peace offer made by Hitler to Britain and France at the end of September 1939, and by the end of the year was beginning to put greater responsibility for the war upon the British imperialists as against the Germans. Palme Dutt came closest to the position of revolutionary defeatism which flowed from the Leninist analysis of war between the great powers in the age of imperialism, but in their practice the majority of Communist Party members fudged the issue. The idea that the war had created or was in process of creating a revolutionary situation was not acceptable, and its militants continued to emphasise the day to day struggles of the workers. Their work in the trade unions continued and indeed was enlarged. Whatever political statements were made by the leadership, those who worked in the mass organisations were notably reluctant to connect local struggles or shopfloor militancy with the wider question of the character of the war. All these matters Dr Morgan documents with exemplary clarity. The *New Propellor*, for example, was the organ of the Aircraft Shop Stewards’ National Council, established by communists in 1935. Communist influence grew rapidly in the years immediately prior to the war, and while the paper was primarily concerned with industrial issues, the struggle for Republican Spain was always emphasised, as was the fight on two fronts at the beginning of the war itself. When the line changed to opposition to the war as an imperialist war, international politics fell out of the journal which now concentrated exclusively upon working conditions, wages and the usual trade-union demands. Perhaps even more striking was the history of Arthur Horner, President of the South Wales Miners’ Federation and the leading communist trade unionist in the whole country. He never accepted the thesis of imperialist war although he never said so in public. What he did was to avoid the politics of the war by concentrating upon his union position and activities; and as far as can be judged the fact that Britain was at war made no difference at all to his industrial leadership of the Welsh miners. And this is what seems to have happened all over the country. The Communist Party developed mass agitations where these were possible around the issues of the lives of working people, at home, in their neighbourhoods and above all at their workplaces. Any other strategy, for leaders like Horner, would have meant

their isolation and possibly loss of position. There was no alternative. The Welsh miners, collectively, supported the war and Horner could not have gone against the stream. He was still prepared to support the Communist Party's general political line, but the division between his occasional public utterances and his daily work as Miners' President was always maintained.

This general approach was greatly strengthened following the German victory in western Europe. On 22 June 1940 the Political Bureau issued a manifesto which underlined "the appalling catastrophe that has befallen the French people". It called for the arming of the workers through a People's Government. There was no more talk of a negotiated peace except that which would not be a peace of subjection. The manifesto was certainly clear on the fascist danger although it still continued to speak of opposition to the Churchill government; and in the months that followed the concentration by the Communist Party was more than ever upon the class character of the governing elites and the grievances large and small, of working people. The culmination of the Party's general approach was the establishment of the People's Convention whose first beginnings were in July 1940 and whose most impressive demonstration was a large-scale conference in January 1941 of over 2000 delegates. The Convention was based on six main points of which only the last called for "A People's peace that gets rid of the causes of war": a very long way from the argument of an imperialist war. The People's Convention was a not inconsiderable success, and it attracted large numbers of ordinary rank-and-file trade unionists because it represented their aims and aspirations at a time when the trade-union bureaucracies and the Labour Party round the country had largely given up serious political and industrial agitation.

There were some interesting consequences of the refusal in practice for communist party members to accept the line of revolutionary defeatism. One was that when the Churchill government introduced new emergency powers, including Regulation 18B under which Oswald Mosley and over 700 British fascists were interned without trial, the Communist Party was left free to continue its political activities. There were a few, a very few, detentions of Communist militants from the shop floor, but although the question of making the Communist Party illegal was seriously discussed within the Cabinet, no action was taken; and it is clear from contemporary documents that the Party was not regarded as a potential quisling force. On the contrary. Arthur Horner for one, and there may have been others became a member of the secret trade-union committee covering South Wales which would have taken control had there been an invasion. A second consequence of the policies of "economism" practised before the Soviet Union entered the war was that it proved very easy for the Communist Party to make the transition to all-out support for the Churchill government, as a result of which communist influence increased steadily during the years from June 1941.

This review is inevitably a highly summarised version of a very detailed and excellently documented volume. Dr Morgan has provided an indispensable guide to a most important period of the history of one national party within the Comintern, and it can be warmly recommended. There are two comments to offer in conclusion. The first is that both in this volume and in the verbatim record of the discussions of 1979 there are statements made by some who were contemporaries in 1939–1941 which are not wholly accurate. We have, in other words, a central problem of the art

of oral history and of the care that needs to be taken with the reminiscences of decades gone by. The second comment I am surprised to have to make. On p. 7 of his book Dr Morgan is discussing briefly the contributions made by Trotskyists to British communist history, and in the middle of his main paragraph he writes that one of the authors he is considering, namely Brian Pearce “deliberately misleads the reader into thinking [. . .]” etc. Now putting aside the fact that this is a libellous statement, no one is entitled to make accusations of this kind in scholarly discussion, and it must be regarded as regrettable and unfortunate. It must also be said that it is quite out of keeping with the civilised tone that pervades Dr Morgan’s volume in general, and certainly not in line with the standards we have come to expect from Manchester University Press. The excellence of the volume remains.

John Saville

PUDAL, BERNARD. *Prendre parti. Pour une sociologie historique du PCF*. Presses de la Fondation nationale des sciences politiques, Paris 1989. 329 pp. F.fr. 190.00.

The decline in the fortunes of the French Communist Party has done little to reduce the temperature in the sauna occupied by those who debate the affairs of that party. Rather more surprising is the fact that analytical studies of the PCF, by both sociologists and political scientists, should be getting richer as the party itself continues on its trend towards marginality in French political life. It was something of a landmark when the journal *Communisme* made its appearance in the early 1980s. Situating the PCF and its history in a comparative perspective, that journal has brought a good deal to a discussion that can never be fully detached, but can at least be scientifically rigorous and broadly-based.

Pudal’s book is written in the same spirit, as far as scientific rigour is concerned. There is no doubt that it will join the corpus of major authoritative works on French communism. The author focuses on the development, during the party’s formative years between the wars, of the “organic intellectual”, the self-taught worker-leaders of the Thorez type, whose attachment to the Stalinist structures and thinking that gave the party its initial force and identity – and provided them with a role, and with jobs – has made it hard for the PCF to adapt to a changing world. The book’s great strength is its attention to biographical detail, assembled from both published records and from interviews, and it is for this sociological contribution that it will be valued.

Pudal’s answer to the problem of objectivity reflects the present state of studies of French communism. He supports the argument that objectivity is an aim to strive for whilst realizing that one’s own words can only be a part of the discussion, but he is at pains to nail the ideological influence of those *entrepreneurs de déclin* who have contributed to the crisis of French communism through the way in which their analysis is presented and through their selection of evidence. But is Pudal not caught in a bind here? Nothing succeeds like success and nothing fails like failure. Analyses and descriptions of the PCF’s sharp decline necessarily tend to confirm that decline –