

## 2. Unlikely Allies: Students, Feminists and the Party

### THE POLITICS OF THE NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

Recognising the rise of what have commonly been called 'new social movements' during the 1960s in Western societies is crucial to an understanding of the major political events that took place during this period. These included opposition to the Vietnam War, the May 1968 events in Paris, what has been called the 'hot autumn' of industrial and political unrest in Italy in 1969, the black consciousness movement in the US, and the early campaigns of second wave feminism. Historians and sociologists have explained the significance of the new social movements in different ways. Some, like Marcuse, saw them as a new revolutionary force, by virtue of their being on the margins of 'one-dimensional' industrial societies, the traditional working class having become incorporated into the dominant value systems and structures.<sup>1</sup> Touraine has suggested that the outbreak of student activities was brought about by the crisis in the nature of industrial societies, which led to expectations and aspirations that could not be fulfilled other than by radically changing society.<sup>2</sup> Undoubtedly there was a global context, with students in many different countries taking action from the mid-1960s in movements that were distinctive from traditional political parties and trade unions. Indeed the new social movements drew their strength from opposing the traditional form of politics, preferring for example the 'sit-in', the 'demo' and occasionally the 'teach-in', while, as Tarrow suggests in the case of Italy, their demands were of a different nature, seeking more rights rather than increasing the extent of economic redistribution.<sup>3</sup>

The disparate social movements had a particular significance for the left, as many of their demands diverged from those of orthodox left strategies. As many have pointed out, the nature of their demands – such as the acceptance of new sexual freedoms, respect for difference, or new forms of participatory democracy – while aimed at the 'Establishment' or the capitalist state, were also a critique of the forms and practices of the left. These included the party system and culture itself: traditional parties were regarded as part of the problem for many

of the movements during that time. This raised important questions for the left, including the British Communist Party. Could the demands of these groups be accommodated by the party or would they remain outside as separate autonomous organisations? What changes in culture and ethos as well as political strategy were needed by the parties if they were to win over these new generations?

The previous chapter explained how the CPGB was confronted at an early stage of these changes by the radical outlook of the YCL. It went on to assess the ways in which the YCL challenged the party's very specific political culture and identity. It suggested that the party's ethos, its prioritising of class over other forms of stratification, and its organisational structure, would make it difficult to accommodate the new movements. However the previous chapter also indicated that the party did become aware of the need to encourage the new generation and adapt, albeit in limited ways. This chapter will explain how the new social movements that were attracted to the CPGB – notably feminists and students – provided a further challenge to the party. It will also assess the attempt by the party to accommodate these groups, and the significance the resulting conflicts held for the party's future political direction. It will argue that the tensions between the party leadership and the student and feminist groups were often creative, for example in the development of the CUL, the transmission of new Marxist ideas, most notably, those of Gramsci and Althusser, and a more advanced cultural politics. Above all it will show how the new movements contributed fundamentally to the party's political strategy, especially through the development of a new generation of intellectuals and party activists.

### **THE CP AND THE NEW STUDENT MOVEMENT**

Party students were left behind by the events of 1968, mainly remaining in the background of disputes at the London School of Economics and other campuses. The leadership of the students under Fergus Nicholson was critical of much of the activism and tactics adopted, and preferred to maintain the more traditional route of working through the National Union of Students (NUS), while for intellectual inspiration they relied on the orthodox texts of Marx, Engels and Lenin. It was not until the early 1970s under the leadership of Dave Cook that party students became a strong force both in the organised politics of the NUS and in their broader cultural and ideological activities, a decade or so after the YCL, in 'street' rather than 'seminar' politics, had embarked on a similar path. It was in these spheres of student politics that much of the Gramscian analysis was first applied in a strategic way to politics by communists, as the CPGB played a pivotal role in directing the political and democratic alliances that made up the Broad Left that dominated student politics in the 1970s. The activities of the student cohort in the CPGB were to have long-term implications for the ideological direction of the party, as they provided the initial intel-

lectual spaces for the dissemination and discussion of Gramscian and Eurocommunist ideas, an analysis of the importance of new social movements, and a shift in intellectual emphasis towards cultural agendas. However, while it will be shown that the 1970s saw the CPGB eventually reap the benefits of the changes associated with the politics of the student generation of 1968 – such as a more libertarian socialism, the growth of a national student *movement*, the proliferation of new revolutionary perspectives – in the early years of the student movement the party was left behind events; it was isolated to a large extent from both the activism associated with 1968, and the ideas that were espoused.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, there was a marked distinction between the slow response of the CPGB student leadership, which, under Fergus Nicholson's direction since 1962 had remained aligned to communist tradition and orthodoxy, and that of the YCL, with its appropriation of often heretical directions. Where the YCL leadership therefore sought to widen the sphere of politics through 'cultural struggle', and a positive endorsement of the shift in moral, political and social values of the decade, the student leadership in the same period (1964-1968) was dominated by conservatism and Marxist orthodoxy, regarding the new student movement with suspicion, in particular its demands for autonomy as a specific social group.<sup>5</sup> The challenge to this conservatism and orthodoxy in the leadership of the communist students did not have a major impact until the 1970s. In 1968 communist students were isolated from the important political events. Indeed it will be argued here, in contrast to other accounts which have interpreted the 1968 peak of student activity as having favourable impact on communist students, that the communist student leadership was in crisis between 1967-1972, no longer able to offer leadership and direction to the student movement and unable to develop the enthusiasm of local communist student branches.<sup>6</sup> This situation would only be reversed by the replacement of Fergus Nicholson by Dave Cook as student organiser in 1972, and the subsequent 'high tide' of communist student politics in Britain between 1972-74, when CP student influence was strongest in the organising role it established in Broad Left and the intellectual role that communist students played in the renaissance of Marxist ideas, notably through the CUL and local student forums.

#### **LEFT BEHIND: COMMUNIST STUDENTS IN CRISIS 1968-1972**

Communist students were ill-prepared for the events that took place in 1968. Historically, the Communist Party had supported the extension of student rights and conditions, and the widening of access to university, in a way that mirrored its commitment to representing the interests of other groups, such as women or black people. It did this in a way that maintained the centrality of class; student activism was to be encouraged as a way of influencing and drawing people into Marxism, linking intellectuals to the working class. Communists had in earlier periods played

a leading role in representative student bodies; in the 1930s, for example, national student leaders included Brian Simon and George Matthews, both leading influences within the party during the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>7</sup>

A similar concern to be in the forefront of student politics resulted in a strong communist input into the first broad student organisation of the 1960s, the Radical Student Alliance (RSA), formed in the autumn of 1966, and drawing 400 students from 108 universities and colleges to its first national convention of that year. The leading communists in the RSA were Martin Jacques and Alan Hunt, who would both later become key players in the development of the Gramscian and Eurocommunist currents within the party. But at that time they were in the minority on the National Student Committee of the Communist Party. The RSA's declared objectives in its founding manifesto were for a 'programme necessary for the interests of students, for the removal of barriers to a full and democratic education, and for the greatest contribution of students to society and social progress'. On wider issues it talked of the need to build a students' movement, one which 'must be able to take collective action on matters of general social concern'. It noted that 'lack of militancy and perspective have so far prevented student organisations achieving these aims', and proposed structures and organisational forms to encourage activity and participation.<sup>8</sup>

The RSA, which included Labour and Liberal as well as communist students, was an early example of the broad left alliances that were to dominate student politics in the 1970s, with the objectives of building a mass student movement. Nevertheless the scale and depth of student radicalism went much beyond the objectives of the RSA, suggesting a whole new meaning of student power.<sup>9</sup> Though Jacques, Hunt and other communist students were profoundly affected by the events of 1968, the communist student leadership remained in the hands of more traditional custodians, who had been absent from the RSA and were reluctant to recognise the autonomy of the student movement. Fergus Nicholson, the National Student Organiser (NSO), along with allies Brian Filling and Phil Goodwin, remained unreceptive, at times hostile, to the new movements that were emerging and the ideas of liberation they espoused, preferring to concentrate their activities on the more limited agendas of improving conditions of students through the traditional politics of the NUS. Goodwin, for example, rejected the view that students were an autonomous group, separate from the working class. On the contrary, he argued, they were destined to 'acquire a body of knowledge and skills which will subsequently be used either for the production of profit as skilled labour power, or for employment by the state as teachers, doctors and so on'.<sup>10</sup> He therefore rejected the view that students should be seen as 'intellectuals'; they should not be given special status; the labour movement would throw up its own intellectuals without the need for them to 'come from without'.<sup>11</sup>

This view of the new student movement led inevitably to the notion

that student initiatives should be secondary to those of the labour movement, reaffirming the more traditional perspective that class should remain at the core of the party's outlook. However it also meant that the party was unable to adapt to the new situations that were occurring within the student movement.

There were criticisms of this position, however. Indeed, to others on the National Student Committee, the events of 1968 represented a defining turning-point. Martin Jacques had been profoundly influenced by the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia and the events in Paris in May, the culmination of which he later described as his 'political birth'.<sup>12</sup> Jacques had been elected to the Communist Party's EC in 1967 (where he was to remain until 1991), on the back of what he saw as 'patronage', in effect headhunted by the leadership as a promising young member of the new generation. It was his organisational as much as intellectual contribution that impressed; it was his role in the RSA and as a student activist at Manchester University that first drew him to the attention of the leadership.<sup>13</sup>

There were many other communist students who identified positively with the events of 1968. For many the Communist Party's decision to condemn the Soviet 'intervention' in Czechoslovakia was a crucial factor in remaining in, or deciding to join, paralleling in many ways similar decisions by feminists.<sup>14</sup> It was the scale of the other major development of 1968, the May events in Paris, that transformed student politics in Britain, as elsewhere, with the emergence of new organisations such as the Revolutionary Socialist Students Federation (RSSF); and the general growth of Trotskyist groups, notably the International Socialists, provided new focal points of radical identification which challenged the hitherto leading role communists had enjoyed in the student body. The 'Red Bases' strategy was denounced by the CPGB leadership, though they allowed individual communists to affiliate to the RSSF if they so wished, as long as they did not promote the ideals of that organisation.<sup>15</sup> The mistrust of Trotskyist student groups had led to a special party committee, set up as early as 1964 but at its most active in the late 1960s.<sup>16</sup> The extent of the party's isolation from the dynamics of the moment of 1968 has been confirmed by leading communist activists at the time. According to Digby Jacks, a member of the NSC and later communist NUS President in 1971: 'In 1968 it became suddenly harder to be a communist in student politics. I had the feeling that things were passing the party by'.<sup>17</sup> To Mike Prior, a communist student active at Essex in 1968, 'Being a communist was just about on the edge of left-wing respectability'.<sup>18</sup>

This failure to be at the heart of student politics in 1968 led to growing divisions within the NSC and regular disputes between the factions around Fergus Nicholson and Martin Jacques. The CPGB leadership for its part was also concerned that the party remained in touch with the fast-moving events in the wider student world, which included the

new enthusiasm for Marxism, albeit in new forms. The intellectuals in the leadership, such as Brian Simon, thought that a new generation of intellectuals was needed if the party was to remain in touch.<sup>19</sup>

One major outcome of this need to increase the communist influence amongst students was the decision to start the Communist University of London (CUL) in 1969, to provide an intellectual forum whereby students could effectively be socialised into the political positions of the CPGB. It was motivated by the need to try and wrest the initiative from the rising Trotskyist groups and to give some political leadership to the student movement. The first CUL was held at University College London in the summer of 1969, advertised as 'a series of intensive courses in Marxism-Leninism'.<sup>20</sup> It was a traditional Marxist forum of study which, despite appealing beyond the party, closely followed a traditional curriculum, and depended on a select group of tutors, comprising of party organisers – such as Jack Woddis, Bert Pearce and Ron Bellamy – and party intellectuals – notably James Klugmann, editor of *Marxism Today*, Andrew Rothstein, Brian Simon, Chair of the party's Cultural Committee, and Maurice Dobb, the party's leading economist. The attendance at the first CUL, of 159, was a tenth of that of the peak years of 1977-78 (though it was twice the estimated figure), and was made up overwhelmingly of party members, who chose from ten specialist courses on offer, ranging from Imperialism and National Liberation, Student Movement and Socialist Revolution, to Philosophy and Art and Revolution. The simple format perhaps reflected the party's political priorities, in discussing key political issues in the morning, followed by a theoretical underpinning, through the texts of Marx, Engels and Lenin, in the afternoon. The organisers' reports confirm the political pragmatism of the approach, which attempted to link theory and practice in an unproblematic way, rather than seeking out new Marxist thinkers, or the New Left influences; the tone and emphasis of the reports remained convinced of the party's theoretical superiority in providing intellectual leadership to the student movement, through the classical thinkers. The aims of the first CUL were to make inroads into student politics by offering 'revolutionary theory' in order to challenge the 'reactionary ideology which holds sway' in the universities. The cultural events which took place in the evenings stood in stark contrast to those of the YCL, or wider counter-cultural initiatives of the period, and included a visit to the *Morning Star* Film Show and a 'student-worker talk-in'.<sup>21</sup>

The CPGB leadership launched the CUL initiative as part of its wider commitment to intellectual renewal, reflected in its earlier *Questions of Ideology and Culture* statement in 1967,<sup>22</sup> and in two other conferences in 1969, one on the role of intellectuals and the other the 'socialist scholars conference'. At the same time there was continued unease with the ineffectiveness of the student leadership, which was also drawing criticism from within the student and university sections of the

party. This reached a climax in May 1970, when the EC decided to dispense with a full-time National Student Organiser (NSO), a position which it had maintained since 1945, officially, according to Reuben Falber, because of the party's 'serious financial difficulties'.<sup>23</sup> Correspondence between the EC and NSC members indicates that there was a lot of opposition from the NSC to the decision to relinquish a full-time student organiser.<sup>24</sup> Digby Jacks, the communist President of the NUS, regarded the decision as 'one of the utmost seriousness to the party and to the student movement generally'. Without a National Student Organiser, Jacks argued, 'the quality and quantity of our work in relation to the new overall situation, a bigger and wider movement with more struggles to be fought, will degenerate'. He concluded his letter to John Gollan, CPGB General Secretary, with the warning: 'I fear for the future of the party in the student movement. I would further fear for my own position in the National Union'.<sup>25</sup>

Despite the support of communist students in raising the necessary finance to keep the NSO on a part-time basis, events continued to confirm the inability of the party to make inroads into the student movement. Increasing communist influence in the labour movement in the same period, the subject of a following chapter, was not reflected in student work. The student membership had not expanded in any significant way, nor did the party seem to exert much intellectual influence amongst students. The CUL, though showing a gradual increase for its second meeting in 1970, encountered further problems in attracting participants in 1971; its courses retained the image of a 'party finishing school', isolated from new Marxist works or the new ideas associated with feminism. Fergus Nicholson himself acknowledged the weaknesses of the party's student work, noting in March 1971 'the very real weakness in our ability to speak directly to students, to move them politically, to evoke a response to our policy, our meetings or our publications'.<sup>26</sup> This was also the view of the Executive Committee, which authorised a statement on 'Further and Higher Education for the 1970s', recommending a series of radical changes such as mass expansion; the abolition of the binary system; grants for Open University students; the opening up of Oxford and Cambridge; the lengthening of degree courses; and the expansion of research funding.<sup>27</sup> This crisis reached its climax in 1972, with the replacement of Fergus Nicholson by Dave Cook as National Student Organiser.

#### **THE BROAD LEFT AND ORGANIC INTELLECTUALS: THE COMMUNIST STUDENT BREAKTHROUGH 1972-1974**

In 1972 the CPGB's student organisation remained peripheral to the party's machine. Individual communist students who wanted a more innovative strategic and ideological politics had not succeeded in wresting control away from Nicholson and his supporters. It was the EC in fact which precipitated the rejuvenation of the student organisation, by its

decision to appoint Dave Cook as full-time student organiser. It was now felt by the party leadership that the NSC was not functioning very effectively; officially, Nicholson left by 'mutual consent',<sup>28</sup> but his attempts to nominate his successor failed and he was clearly unhappy at the decision.<sup>29</sup> At the same time the decision to appoint Cook was initially met with almost unanimous opposition from existing NSC members, on the basis that the latter was not a recent student, and had been appointed without consultation with the NSC.<sup>30</sup> An NSC motion was passed rejecting Cook's nomination, but the EC reaffirmed its decision on the grounds that 'the most essential qualities for the leadership of our student work are political understanding and capacity, all round political experience and the ability to organise and fight for our policy'.<sup>31</sup> Cook had already shown these qualities in his work in the YCL. According to the leadership he had helped to 'unify the YCL', by leading 'an exemplary fight for the party's policy'. Therefore Cook, like his subsequent close ally Martin Jacques, was appointed to a leading position in the party through forms of patronage. This suggests that there was concern in the leadership to select and develop a new generation of communist political leaders.

Cook's role as National Student Organiser was instrumental in revitalising the party student organisation. It became, under his leadership, the fastest growing section of the party between 1973 and 1974, and he helped re-shape its direction in two fundamental, related ways. Firstly, it won and consolidated political successes as the leading group within Broad Left, and secondly it strengthened its growing intellectual and cultural presence, which was to help transform the Communist University of London. Under his leadership the student membership reached a peak of nearly a thousand members in February 1973, increasing from 619 in November 1972.<sup>32</sup> The qualitative shift in the political profile of communist students, however, was even more far-reaching.

The first area of revival was in the role communist students began to play in the Broad Left, set up officially at a conference in Leeds in 1972. The Broad Left consisted of Communists, Labour students and the non-aligned left. Rejecting both what it saw as the 'revolutionary vanguardism' of the Trotskyist left and the narrow electoralism represented by Labour students, it called for the 'active involvement of the mass of students in campaigns and activities ... as the only basis for politicisation to a socialist perspective on a wide scale'.<sup>33</sup> Its purpose was to go beyond the narrow work of NUS politics, something which party students under Fergus Nicholson had never sought, and to help extend democratic and participatory power to the student body, a strategy which included alliances with feminist and anti-racist movements, with some active feminists such as Sue Slipman being among leading Broad Left activists. The strategy of communist students from this time on became merged with the Broad Left as a whole, and thus removed both their pretence of 'theoretical superiority' and the subordination to working-class agendas. Broad Left meetings were advertised at

communist student gatherings and communist students stood on Broad Left platforms and as Broad Left candidates. Dave Cook's pamphlet *Students* (1973) was similar in tone and emphasis to the Broad Left in stressing the need for alliances between sections of the left and new social movements. It was also significant in identifying students as a new distinctive mass grouping, whose position had been transformed by the social changes associated with contemporary societies and the economic constraints of monopoly capitalism. 'The experiences of mass action', wrote Cook, 'lay the basis for shifts in their consciousness and assist in developing a correct relationship with the working class'.<sup>34</sup> Cook envisaged a new ideological role for students, as intellectuals who would challenge bourgeois ideology and attempt to foster intellectual leadership in the working class.

Though Cook did not refer to Gramsci in his pamphlet (and indeed may not have encountered Gramsci's work in depth at this time), the writings, forums and articles of communist students active at the time referred increasingly to Gramsci's work, giving a theoretical justification to politics, notably in the strategic areas of alliances.<sup>35</sup> The pursuit of broad alliances was not new to communist politics – indeed this was evident, for example, in the popular front and Broad Left groupings that had been up and running in the trade unions since the mid-1960s. What was different about this approach – and this was a consequence of the renaissance of Marxism in the politics of the left – was the application of Gramsci's ideas in a strategic way. Notably, this included the need to develop a prefigurative politics whereby broad alliances would go beyond tactical positions to constitute in embryo the alternative hegemonic bloc. Great emphasis was placed on democracy as providing a common thread in order to unite all progressive movements. The wider availability of Gramsci's work in English from 1971 helped provide the intellectual underpinning of the Broad Left strategy of extending democracy to areas of higher education, while it also provided a theoretical justification for different kinds of alliances between the working class and new social movements. As one of the new political forces that were being created beyond the traditional class profile of the party, students were no longer prepared to defer to the organised working class, even though communists maintained a commitment to forming alliances with the wider labour movement. As one leading communist student put it later, the key role for the CPGB within the Broad Left was to be 'an innovator of strategy and theory, unifier of democratic forces and the transforming agent of political forces'.<sup>36</sup> Significantly, the CP students had moved towards a pluralist politics of broad alliances some years before the party's own adoption of a 'broad democratic alliance' at its 1977 Congress.

The second major development amongst communist students was their capacity to engage with and help facilitate the intellectual renaissance of Marxism. There was great interest in the newly available writings on Gramsci, and these, together with a number of other writers, notably

Althusser, became the basis for a range of critical forums and reading groups, the most important of which was the transformation of the CUL from an orthodox party education school to a heretical site of intellectual ferment. Not only was there an increase in numbers of students attending from 1972 (with a resulting rise in expectation and publicity), but also there was a qualitative change, with a broader range and scope in the topics being discussed – which even extended to Archery and Archaeology – as well as a stronger focus on political strategy, including more critical examinations of the party's own history. It became a forum for both party and non-party intellectuals, including such thinkers as Stuart Hall, Raphael Samuel and the younger Althusserians Paul Hirst and Barry Hindess, as well as Gramsci scholars like Anne Showstack Sassoon; and it raised the possibility of some reconciliation between the lost generation of communist intellectuals who had left in 1956 and the younger post-1968 generation. The CUL reflected, to many of the participants, the unlimited creative possibilities of the new interest in Marxism. As Ken Spours, one of the CUL organisers, put it:

When you can stuff a university with 1500 people and more professors per square inch than anywhere else ... When you can put on courses with a Marxist interpretation of virtually every living thing, then what you've got is a theoretical perspective which has shown a lot of confidence; it's saying 'actually we have an alternative way of understanding the world'.<sup>37</sup>

The CUL helped to put intellectual work at the centre of the party's concerns, reflected not only in the increase in enthusiasm and greater publicity for the party, but also in a new role for the intellectual, no longer conceived of as a specialist in a particular academic or cultural area, but as someone who sought a more political, strategic and public role: in Gramsci's terms an 'organic intellectual'.<sup>38</sup> This was apparent in the intentions of the CUL leaders themselves, who sought 'to create a different type of intellectual, not a detached and aloof professional, but one who is organically linked to the working-class struggle for socialism'.<sup>39</sup> The new role was also indicative of the strategic importance intellectuals started to assume in the party from the mid-1970s. This new importance was not one the party had tried to instigate directly; rather it had endorsed it pragmatically, and in this it was indirectly helped, as will be shown in following chapters, by the renewed input from older party intellectuals.

## THE ORIGINS OF THE FEMINIST CRITIQUE

In the previous chapter it was argued that there was a contradiction between the party's cultural ethos, which reflected in some measure the patriarchal family structure of wider society, and its early commitment to improving the position of women, as evidenced by its support for

birth control, the extension of women's rights on pay and conditions, and a greater involvement by women in trade unions. By committing itself to a 'class before gender' position, the party saw the interests of women as bound up with the interests of the working class as a whole; women's oppression was a feature of capitalist societies and would ultimately be resolved with socio-economic transformation. This analysis did not, as we have seen, prevent communists calling for an improvement in women's position within the existing society. It was rather that there was no extended analysis into the pervasiveness of women's oppression beyond the workplace and the 'public sphere' generally, or within the institutions of the labour movement.

These omissions included a failure to be critical of the role of women in the Communist Party itself, where their status was usually some way below that of their husbands. A generation of communists who grew up in the 1960s have testified to the unspoken sexual division of labour in the party. There was an inherent contradiction in this division. On the one hand, party women were recognised as having an important role in the party as branch activists, with the party maintaining in its pamphlets that the position of women in society needed to be changed. On the other hand, women took responsibility for specific supporting roles – organising socials and *Morning Star* bazaar committee work, for example, while the men often took on more significant time-consuming activities. This led to an 'absent father' problem, with its own particular communist meaning.<sup>40</sup> Long meetings and time spent away from the family (particularly for full-timers) was justified on the grounds of political importance, in much the same way as sacrifices in other forms of work were justified. As one communist child growing up in the 1960s recalls: 'If that (i.e. party) work is going to improve the whole world in their eyes then letting their families down has some justification'.<sup>41</sup> Men, for their part, in commending the supportive role of their partners, often managed to combine it with condescension and cultural conservatism.<sup>42</sup>

The emergence of second-wave feminism in the 1960s, and the development of the Women's Liberation Movement, following its founding British conference in 1970, brought new challenges to the Communist Party, as it did to other traditional forms of left politics. What was distinctive about second-wave feminism was the extent of the ideological interrogation of 'patriarchy', including the public-private axis of power, and the search for more autonomous ways of organising and the transformation of left-wing practice.<sup>43</sup> It is also necessary to stress that in the two dominant strands within second-wave feminism – socialist feminism and radical feminism – it was the former that took on most significance in Britain, becoming part of the debates over the future of left politics, while radical feminism was the most influential aspect of the movement in the United States.<sup>44</sup> One of the features of the way in which feminism influenced the political direction of the CPGB was its gradual

movement beyond the Marxist tradition, to encompass a wider theoretical underpinning, which included not only the works of neo-Marxists like Althusser but also, for example, psychoanalytical theory. This was made easier because of the alliances formed within the Women's Liberation Movement between radical, Marxist and other feminists. It will be shown that a cumulative result for the party of these developments was a challenge both to its political ways of organising among women, and to its overall political strategy.

It is also necessary to distinguish between the 1960s, which saw the publication of some of the key feminist texts, as well as formative moments of transformation in the role of women – including the increase in women's paid employment, and the arrival of contraception on a wide-scale, and the legalisation of abortion – and the 1970s, which saw the development of the Women's Liberation Movement. This distinction is important in understanding the nature of the impact of feminism on the CPGB. Like other sections of the left and society generally, the Communist Party in the 1960s remained relatively unaffected by feminism. The *May Day Manifesto*, a rallying call issued by the key thinkers of the first New Left, first written in 1967, omits any reference to feminism, despite feminists being involved in the discussions that led to the publication of the document.<sup>45</sup> Many feminists have also testified to the low priority given to the role of women by the movements in the forefront of the events of 1968, despite the creative, grassroots and anti-hierarchical values that were espoused by the new movements. For many of the Trotskyist movements, feminism was a diversion from the class struggle – a form of class reductionism that actually exceeded the CPGB's own cultural conservatism.<sup>46</sup> The party at one level reflected other left groups in being slow to take on board the demands made by new feminist thinking. However, another reason for its conservatism was its dependence on traditional assumptions about the nature of work, notably the deference to the industrial skilled (male) workforce. A survey of the minutes of the National Women's Advisory meetings throughout the 1960s shows a very traditional analysis of women's oppression, and a commitment to traditional forms of work amongst women, as well as a highly gendered approach to targeting women as potential recruits to the party. In January 1966, for example, there is a report of an education school for party women ('Women and the Fight For Socialism'), at which serious reading of classical works of Marx and Engels was encouraged, around such questions as 'What are the differences between socialist and communist society', and 'How can we win more Women for the Fight For Peace?'.<sup>47</sup> In the same year, the National Women's Advisory's recommendation to the Editorial Board of the new *Morning Star*, when it succeeded the *Daily Worker*, was that in addition to establishing a regular 'Women's Page', party women might like 'to arrange supper or tea parties' to help raise the profile of the paper.<sup>48</sup> In the activities

expected of communist women, there is little sign throughout the 1960s of any fundamental change in the sexual division of labour; women were allocated what were definitely supporting roles – such as organising amongst housewives, on issues to do with the cost of living. A pragmatic feminism co-existed with an uncritical or implicit acceptance of traditional roles of women in the party. The *Morning Star* itself seemed to maintain the cultural baggage of the *Daily Worker*, and continued to reflect this contradiction; at one level there was a campaigning tone on improving the lives of women; at another there was a reassertion of the role of the male trade union activist.

Nevertheless, the long-standing commitment by the Communist Party to improving the conditions of women, together with the fact that the party had maintained a National Women's Advisory Committee and a National Women's Committee, provided some potential spaces for discussion amongst feminists. The feminist impact on the party began in 1968-1970. The dates are important in two fundamental respects. Firstly, evidence from interviews suggests that many of the women who joined the party after 1968, and who went on to become leading feminists, did so for a distinctive set of critical reasons in respect of the party's traditions; these included its more critical stance towards the Soviet 'intervention' in Czechoslovakia,<sup>49</sup> its more critical intellectual work, related to student activity, and its other less dogmatic perspectives as compared to Trotskyist groups. According to one feminist who joined the party in the early 1970s, in comparison to other sections of the left there was a higher 'degree of honest debate': 'My respect for the CP was increased not because it was saying the right things but because it was so honest in its difficulty with changing from a traditional male dominated gender-blind left party'.<sup>50</sup>

As discussed above, this turning-point was also responsible for the decision of many students to join the party at this time. This should not imply that a new generation of feminists all converged on the party after 1968, however. Some leading activists, like Beatrix Campbell, came from party families and saw their political development evolve out of a more traditional acceptance of Marxism-Leninism; others had encountered some of the issues – such as sexual liberation, autonomy and the politics of personal lives – in the YCL in the preceding decade. Others such as Mikki Doyle, who wrote the women's column in the *Morning Star*, asserted a more class-based feminism, which put at the forefront the experiences of women in the workplace.<sup>51</sup> It is also the case that some older women who had been in the party for many years, like Gladys Brooks and Florence Keyworth, found a strong identification with the younger generation; therefore simple generational conflicts cannot be assumed, though there was a distinctive current of feminism amongst younger feminists, often derived from prior involvement with the Women's Liberation Movement before joining the party. The important point to note in these developments was that

the commitment to feminism became a priority for the new generation; it was not relegated by, or subordinate to some higher goal; it was a crucial part of redefining socialism.

Donald Sassoon's description of the wider impact on the left of second-wave feminism holds good for the CPGB. Feminism, he writes

... invited the organised left fundamentally to recast its own ideological framework, abandoning the unspoken axioms that the socialist movement was a movement of men which women could join on men's terms and, in exchange, receive men's support ... This new movement of universal emancipation required a demasculinised politics, a socialism for women and men.<sup>52</sup>

Secondly, the feminist input was given a very specific strategic impetus by the work of a dissident clandestine group of young party intellectuals, known initially as the Smith Group and subsequently re-named the Party Group. This was set up in 1970 by university lecturer Bill Warren, and based in London. The group circulated clandestine discussion documents and focused on what it perceived of as weaknesses in the party's theory and strategy. The wider significance of the group will be discussed in later chapters, but one primary objective was the need to pursue a feminist agenda. One of the group's leading members was Beatrix Campbell, a journalist on the *Morning Star*, who was to play a leading role in the attempt to transform the party's relationship to women, and in arguing for the necessity of it adopting a feminist agenda. Campbell, in documents circulated within the group, described the position of a feminist within the CPGB as akin to 'an oppositional fifth column', in terms of raising issues about women's oppression, including those of women party members. 'The politics of sexual oppression has been significant only for its absence in Communist Party women's work. It has taken disaffected radical women and feminists in the Women's Liberation Movement to document the politics of sexism for us'. She also noted the 'curious reaction among some leading comrades to the Women's Liberation Movement'; it received 'almost overwhelming opposition from the National Women's Advisory, which seemed to hope that if the new movement was ignored it might go away'. She was particularly critical of the way women's issues were considered as 'the smaller things of life', unconnected to 'real politics', and ignored as 'special' 'sectarian' issues, while those concerning men were seen as 'universal' and 'human', a distinction she attributed to the work of the radical feminist Shulamith Firestone. While she acknowledged that the party had been involved historically in important struggles of particular interest to women, such as the fight for child care and equal pay, she argued that it was the wider issues that remained to be confronted.<sup>53</sup>

The height of the Party Group's attempt to influence the party's strategy culminated in an alternative motion to the one presented by

the National Women's Advisory at the party congress of 1971. The official motion, moved by Rosemary Small, the National Women's Organiser, was entitled 'Women in Society', and repeated the party's traditional analysis of the role of women. It defined 'the subjugation of women' as originating from the division of society into classes ...

... with the class owning the means of production exploiting others. The ruling classes have always sought to divide and weaken the exploited classes. They have therefore instilled prejudices of male superiority and female inferiority which are now deeply rooted amongst people in our society.

It gave a cautious welcome to the Women's Liberation Movement, on the basis of 'the contribution of these movements to bringing women into action on some important social questions and in raising the issue of women's role in society'. However, it argued that the WLM should seek 'closer association' with the labour movement, and that the 'solution' to the problems of women was 'consistent class struggle in which both men and women participate'. The practical measures it proposed as its 'programme for action' included equal pay, removal of legal inequalities, equal opportunity for training, free nursery education and free advice on abortion and family planning. These measures were necessary 'to make inroads into the power of the monopoly capitalist interests'. With regard to the status of women in the party, the motion recommended that more women should be brought onto the leading committees, and more energy directed at 'increasing numbers won to read the *Morning Star* and become members of the Communist Party and the Young Communist League'.<sup>54</sup>

Though the presence of the motion in itself indicated that the party was responding to the feminist challenge to the party, there was little in its substance that differed from previous resolutions at earlier Congresses. Even on the National Women's Advisory (from where the motion had emerged), there was only muted enthusiasm. According to a report submitted to its meeting two months prior to the Congress, the proposed resolution was 'not an inspiring document ... [while there was] ... much excellent and thought provoking material in it ... it did not reflect the excitement of the movement'.<sup>55</sup>

For the feminists in the Party Group, the issues were much more fundamental. The alternative motion, which had been previously circulated within the group as an article for discussion, was critical both of the limited theoretical analysis offered by the party on the position of women in society, and of the party's own failure to come to terms with the extent of patriarchy in its own ranks. It read:

The Communist Party reflects the general situation; we concede to women's equality but then do not analyse the reasons why they stand the

test so badly, why they are so passive, why they are so capable of pursuing party policy (maintaining, interpreting) but at the same time are so incapable of setting (making) it.<sup>56</sup>

The motion argued that the party, together with the wider labour movement, 'divorced' issues of equal pay from 'the fight for free contraception and free abortion on demand'. Indeed what the alternative motion described as the 'social aspects of women's oppression' were 'regarded with suspicion by the party', which prevented a theoretical engagement with the 'complex of social, psychological and sexual oppressions'. This reflected to some degree the wider theoretical critique the Party Group had made of the economism at the heart of the party's strategy, the focus of the later Gramscian critique and the subject of following chapters. Here it is sufficient to point to this earlier critique as one which objected to the way the party's official analysis ignored different levels of oppression, which were rooted in a range of value systems, cultures and practices. These included the party's own values and structures, and the alternative motion pointed out the need to confront 'male chauvinism, which hinders the work of the party at all levels within the party'; it operated at branch level, where 'paternalistic attitudes', lack of crèches, and the allocation of 'organisational' rather than 'political' tasks to women relegated 'women's issues' to the bottom of the agenda. The motion condemned the 'dangerous chauvinistic attitudes expressed by our top leadership', and in the pages of the *Morning Star*, and noted that there remained a 'taboo' in the party on discussions of private life. It concluded that an 'ideological battle' must be waged in the party in order to transform the party's values, a process that would only be achieved by constant discussion at national, district and branch level on the problems of women, 'with constant self-criticism and examination of our work in this area'. All members were urged to 'consider their position with relation to housework'; and it was argued that practical measures should be taken, such as the provision of crèches, 'special education for women to raise their consciousness', the setting up of a monthly women's paper, and even party medical centres to provide 'birth control and abortion facilities'.<sup>57</sup>

The alternative motion was rejected at the Congress and the official motion passed with only four votes against.<sup>58</sup> However the Party Group's alternative motion marked the start of a more assertive ideological feminism within the party, which was to become much more critical of the party's existing social and cultural practices, and to seek more independence in ways of organising, applying a feminist critique to the party's overall political strategy. Beatrix Campbell, along with some other feminists – some younger and some from an older tradition – went on to put into practice one of the recommendations of the alternative motion, by founding a monthly paper.

### THE IMPACT OF RED RAG

Party feminists were not prepared to confine their energy to official publications, or to organise in a clandestine way, particularly in light of the party's previous record. The decision to set up *Red Rag* by party feminists in London, with the support of feminists outside the party, was evidence of the growing rift between the concerns and priorities of the feminists and those of the party leadership.<sup>59</sup> While party members were encouraged to join with other progressive forces in day to day work, such as in the Women's Liberation Movement, the party expected its members to follow the general direction of the party's policy, which was based on official Congress decisions, and to accept the decisions and organisational leadership of the National Women's Advisory Committee. Party rules, supported by democratic centralism, did not allow for the promotion or dissemination of unauthorised journals within the party. *Red Rag* was set up without any authorisation, and although it did not project itself as an official party journal, it was clearly identified with the work of party feminists, and was distributed widely within the party as a way of influencing debate over the party's policy on women. The ideological direction of the magazine, which first appeared in 1972, served to broaden the gulf between the party's official positions and that of dissident feminists.

Such developments should be seen of course in the context of the wider activities and impact of feminism, as well as the impact of new Marxist writers, notably the importance given to ideology by Althusser; these were factors which combined to provide a strong impetus for the new journal. *Red Rag* identified itself as an explicitly marxist-feminist journal, in which the oppression of women was seen in the context of the development of capitalism, and which sought the achievement of an alliance between the Women's Liberation Movement and the working class. Yet the range of subject areas covered – sexuality, lesbian politics, domestic violence – went much beyond the usual parameters of the workplace and the trade union, though these were also covered extensively. Within the journal too there was not only a dialogue at times between feminists of different left groups, but also a theoretical discussion which examined sympathetically some of the work of radical feminists. It was therefore 'first and foremost a feminist journal, because feminism is the political movement which emerges as women's response to their own oppression'.<sup>60</sup> This illustrated the more audacious, uncompromising stance of the new feminist generation. Furthermore, as a joint initiative of party and non-party feminists, the priority was clearly to wield an influence beyond the party – though it also sought to alter the party's priorities on feminism. According to its 'Declaration of Intent', *Red Rag*, while seeing itself as existing within the Marxist revolutionary tradition, took up an explicitly critical position of the existing practices of the labour movement, a viewpoint clearly at odds with the party's own views: 'The trade union

movement is virtually silent about the discrimination which excludes women from many jobs'.<sup>61</sup> It also rejected the view dominant in the party's mainstream outlook, that the interests of women could be dealt with by the labour movement 'in general': "'in general", we've been getting trodden on for a very long time'.<sup>62</sup> 'In general', of course, was a reference to the way in which the party had used class as the organising principle for an understanding of the oppression of women – and for its likely solution – the 'class before gender' analysis; the implication being that the solution to women's oppression could not be divorced from that of the working class, and that strategies to overcome it would not succeed through independent feminist activity. In contrast to this, the *Red Rag* 'declaration of intent' continued: 'we are in no mood ... to wait for socialism to bring us liberation. We are interested in liberation now and in wrenching from capitalist society every advance we can get'.<sup>63</sup>

The organisational and ideological nature of *Red Rag* was of great concern to the party leadership, and the Executive Committee made the decision to call in those members of the editorial collective who belonged to the CPGB, and to instruct them not to publish further issues. Correspondence between the EC and the *Red Rag* collective illustrates the degree of difference that existed at this time. According to Reuben Falber, then Assistant General Secretary, 'no prior knowledge of intention' had been given about its publication, and, according to him, the first the EC got to hear of it was a 'letter informing us that the first issue would soon be out'. He went on: 'this is contrary to the norms of party practice where comrades who, whether in association with other party members only, or with non-party members, wish to publish a party journal first approach the party for a discussion on the matter and seek agreement'.<sup>64</sup>

After meeting with those party members who were on the editorial collective of *Red Rag*, it was clear to the EC members who had been delegated to deal with the matter (Reuben Falber and Gerry Cohen, London District Secretary), that the journal was not going to accede to the pressures exerted by the party leadership. Refusals to provide the names of leading members of the collective to the EC was followed by a determination to carry on the publication of *Red Rag*. Gladys Brooks, a feminist from an older generation on the *Red Rag* collective, informed the EC that *Red Rag* would continue publication despite the EC's instructions, confirmation of the extent to which feminists were prepared to go in keeping to their principles.<sup>65</sup>

The publication of *Red Rag* was in breach of party rules which, based on democratic centralism, required that permission be granted from the EC before the publication of any journal by party members. However, as in the case of the YCL cohort discussed above, the party fell short of disciplining the people who were challenging the party's ethos as well as its organisational structure. Instead it made a decision to go ahead with its

own women's journal, *Link*, that would reflect the party's policy, and would 'of course, be produced by Marxists, the Marxists who are responsible to the party and will work on the basis of the decisions of our Congress. The new journal will, wherever necessary, take into account the decisions coming up in the Women's Liberation Movement'.<sup>66</sup>

### FEMINISM COMES IN FROM THE COLD

Despite the growing rift between the official policy on women and the more robust approach of *Red Rag*, the decision to tolerate the unofficial magazine allowed an ongoing discussion to take place and ensured that the party remained part of the feminist debate. An important example of this debate, and illustrative of the theoretical differences between the two positions, was a discussion on 'Marxism and the Family' which took place within the pages of *Marxism Today*, initiated by an opening contribution from Rosemary Small in December 1972. Small reiterated a very standard outlook, still based on the writings of Engels, and noting positive developments in the Soviet Union. In response, *Red Rag* contributors and supporters, such as Maria Loftus, pointed out the article's theoretical limitations, notably the 'tendency to separate the economic aspect of existence from social institutions and ideologies': 'She has grossly underestimated the family as an institutional site for particular forms of social consciousness, as an institution which is itself (partially) determined and cemented by ideological pressures'.<sup>67</sup> Here, the Althusserian influence is evident, with the family viewed as an ideological state apparatus, rather than as merely reflecting in a more passive way the economic division of labour. Such an analysis, which was common amongst socialist-feminists beyond the CP, started to interrogate in a more direct way the nature of family life; and this included for party feminists the nature of the communist family. Sexism and chauvinism among party members also became more contested by feminists, with letters to the EC, and 'sexism in the party' becoming the main topic at one National Women's Advisory, leading to a recommendation to the EC that it addressed the matter.<sup>68</sup> The topics of discussion at the National Women's Advisory meetings during 1973-74 broadened in range to include sexuality, lesbianism, and a more positive attitude towards the WLM.<sup>69</sup> The intensification of interest in feminism, which reflected the peak years of the feminist movement in Britain, led to more '*Red Rag* feminists' writing for the party's official paper *Link*, and by 1975 (which also saw a major increase in the number of women delegates to party Congress), leading feminists such as Beatrix Campbell and Sue Slipman were influential figures at the National Women's Advisory meetings.<sup>70</sup> Thompson's statement that the contribution of the feminists 'was accepted virtually without public opposition as the official CP standpoint'<sup>71</sup> could perhaps be seen as an underestimation of the level of ideological struggle and campaigning that had taken place, but it is

apparent that the party was beginning to face up to challenges from its new sections. Feminists, like the young communists and students, had established themselves as an important constituency, whose influence in the party looked likely to increase.

### Notes

1. H. Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, Routledge 1964.
2. A Touraine, *The Return of the Actor*, University of Minnesota Press 1988.
3. S. Tarrow, *Democracy and Disorder: Protest and Politics in Italy 1965-1975*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1989.
4. It was difficult to talk of a 'student movement' prior to 1967, for two reasons. Prior to the expansion of higher education in the 1960s, students were mainly middle- and upper- class. Following the Robbins Report of 1963 and the expansion of the polytechnic sector, initiated by Tony Crosland in the Labour Government of 1964-1970, the numbers of students rapidly increased mirroring similar, sometimes larger, increases in other European countries. Secondly, while there had been other periods of student political activity, notably during the 1930s over the 'humanitarian' struggles such as the Spanish Civil War, being so few in number, their narrow class background and relative isolation from the working class and labour movement prevented any cohesive 'mass' movement from developing. In the 1960s, both the expansion of higher education and the politicisation of students on a mass scale, evidenced by the rise of JF Kennedy, the issues played out at Berkeley and the civil rights movement in the US and Anti-Vietnam War Movement, provided a new focus for a student movement. Different arguments have been offered over the origins of this radicalism. Sassoon in *One Hundred Years of Socialism*, (op cit, pp383-4) has suggested that the student movement represented the renewal of ideological politics following the 'end of ideology' consensus which had prevailed in the 1950s. Hobsbawm in *Age of Extremes* (op cit, p444-446) has stressed the importance of seeing the student protests as occurring at the 'very peak of the great global boom', as much a direct global response to the nature of the materialistic consumer driven modernised society. This contrasts with Marwick in *The Sixties* who saw the student movement as symptomatic of a wider drive for modernisation. For Lacqueur the implosion of student movements had a more specific context as a protest against the lack of reforms and conservative hierarchies of higher education, a point of view at least supported by the immediate causes of much of the unrest. See W. Lacqueur, *Europe Since Hitler: The Rebirth of Europe*, Harmondsworth 1982, pp292-294.
5. Interviews with NSC EC members Willie Thompson and Martin Jacques.
6. The weakness of this analysis is implied by over-generalisations about the relationship between the communists and the wider student movement and suffers to a large degree by lack of in-depth attention; see W. Thompson, *The Good Old Cause*, op cit, and J. Callaghan, *The Far Left in British Politics*, op cit. F. Beckett's more journalistic account *Enemy Within* (op cit, pp167-168) is more accurate on this.
7. See N. Wood, *Communism and the British Intellectuals*, op cit, for an extended discussion of these issues.
8. RSA Founding Statement 1966, NSC File CP Archive.

9. The classic statement of this can be found in A. Cockburn and R. Blackburn, *Student Power*, Harmondsworth 1969.
10. P. Goodwin, 'Student Perspectives', *Comment*, October 1969.
11. *Ibid.*
12. M. Jacques interview.
13. M. Jacques interview.
14. Sue Slipman, M. Jacques, interviews.
15. F. Beckett, *Enemy Within*, op cit, pp167-68.
16. Under Betty Reid's direction, the 'Trotskyism Study Group' encouraged research and articles on the new phenomenon. The founding article was B. Reid, 'Trotskyism in Britain Today', *Marxism Today*, September 1964.
17. D. Jacks, interview with Francis Beckett, *Enemy Within*, op cit, p167.
18. M. Prior, interview with author.
19. A meeting was held in 1969, under the auspices of the party's Cultural Committee, on 'the role of intellectuals today': Martin Jacques presented a paper – 'Notes On Intellectuals' – a version of which was later to appear in *Marxism Today* in October 1971. Reflecting on the event, Bill Carritt, Cultural Committee member, wrote to Brian Simon (24.6.69) that '... the party is lagging behind in the field of ideological work' and that there was a '... need to develop a clearer approach to the intellectuals in the party' (Cultural Committee minutes, CP Archive).
20. *Comment*, 31.5.69.
21. There are extensive organisers' notes of the annual CULs, held in the two CUL boxes in the CP Archive, from which a range of information on CUL sessions and speakers can be found.
22. See following chapter for in-depth discussion of this.
23. R. Falber, explaining the reason in a letter to Brian Durrans, University College Branch, CP 11.6.70, NSC Box, CP Archive.
24. NSC Box, CP Archive.
25. Digby Jacks, letter to John Gollan, 7.7.70, NSC File, CP Archive. Jacks had been elected NUS President on the back of an alliance of communist and Labour students that pre-dated the Broad Left.
26. F. Nicholson, 'NSC Notes', March 1971, NSC Box, CP Archive.
27. NSC Box, CP Archive.
28. Letter from Reuben Falber to NSC, 16.3.72, NSC Box. More precise evidence of the reasons for his departure is not available. However there were complaints that the National Student Committee was not functioning effectively by not consulting regularly with districts, and evidence shows some branches had become moribund. See letter from John Attfield to EC, 7.3.72. In addition, according to former NSC members Willie Thompson and Martin Jacques, there were strong dissenting positions over the political direction taken by Nicholson. NSC Organiser's notes 1972, CP Archive.
29. Interviews with R. Falber and W. Thompson.
30. At the NSC meeting of 29.30 April 1972, the decision to appoint Cook was opposed by 13 out of 14 members present, with one abstention. This led to a motion asking the EC to 'rescind' its decision to appoint Cook. Reuben Falber on behalf of the EC replied reaffirming the latter's decision. R. Falber, letter to NSC, 17.5.72, NSC Organiser's notes, May 1972, CP Archive.

31. R. Falber letter to NSC, 17.5.72, CP Archive.
32. Figures taken from records in NSC box, CP Archive.
33. 'What is the Broad Left?', Broad Left Student Box. No date, CP Archive.
34. D. Cook, *Students*, CPGB, 1973, p21.
35. K. Spours, Jon. Bloomfield, Jude Bloomfield, S. Hibbin; interviews with author.
36. K. Spours, 'Students, Education and the State', *Marxism Today*, November 1977.
37. K. Spours, interview with author. The transformation began with CUL 4 in 1972, where there was a 100% increase over the previous year. The party gave it greater attention by appointing a full-time organiser to work closely with the National Student Organiser; this was to have a profound effect on the party's strategy. CUL Box 1, CP Archive.
38. For Gramsci's concept of the organic intellectual see A. Gramsci, *Selections From Prison Notebooks*, Lawrence and Wishart, 1971, pp3-14; Anne Showstack Sassoon, *Gramsci's Politics*, Hutchinson, 1987, (Postscript).
39. K. Spours, 'Students, Education and the State', *Marxism Today*, November 1977, op cit.
40. This was a recurring issue in the interviews with children of communist parents conducted by Phil Cohen in his *Children of the Revolution*, Lawrence and Wishart, 1998.
41. Jackie Kay, quoted in P. Cohen, *Children of the Revolution*, op cit, p36.
42. On returning home from work each evening Frank Watters, Midlands District Secretary of the party in the 1960s, was 'comforted' by the thought that 'the door would still be open and a welcome waiting with a cup of tea and a sandwich or cheese and biscuits, or sharing a late fish and chip supper, as I poured out my inner thoughts' (*Being Frank: The Memoirs of Frank Watters*, Askew Printing, Doncaster 1992, p45). The mixture of support and condescension is evident in Frank Jackson's letter to *Comment*, 6.1.68, where commenting on the 1967 Congress he wrote: 'I was impressed by the contributions of our women comrades. No despairing note here; all proud of what they had done ... Our Party need never despair while we can attract such beauty, such lively discussions with such a political grasp of things as was shown by our women comrades who came to the rostrum'.
43. For a discussion of the rise of second-wave feminism see J. Mitchell – for example, *Women: The Longest Revolution*, Virago, 1984; A. Coote and B. Campbell, *Sweet Freedom*, Basil Blackwell, 1987; S. Firestone, *The Dialectic of Sex*, Paladin, 1971.
44. Liberal feminism was a third type; which had longer origins in the work, for example, of Mary Wollstonecraft, John Stuart Mill, and the Suffragettes.
45. D. Sassoon notes this in *One Hundred Years of Socialism*, op cit, p407.
46. See Sheila Rowbotham et al, *Beyond the Fragments*, Merlin Press, 1979, p35, for discussion of the International Socialists and the relatively pro-feminist International Marxist Group.
47. CP/CENT/WOM/1/11.
48. CP/CENT/WOM/3/4.
49. Sue Slipman, interview.

50. Joanna de Groot, interview.
51. Doyle's brand of feminism was much admired by Elizabeth Wilson and Angela Weir. Interviews with author.
52. D. Sassoon, *One Hundred Years of Socialism*, op cit, p422.
53. All the quotations here that pertain to the Party Group are from the papers of Mike Prior, a leading member of the group, who made his documents available to the author. Campbell's discussion document cited here was not dated, but its date is most likely to be 1970. Campbell's critique was also informed by a broader theoretical engagement with radical feminist writers – witness her favourable reviews of Firestone's *The Dialectic of Sex* ('quite the most radical and daring book to come out of the Women's Liberation Movement') in *Comment*, 5.6.71, and of Millett's *Sexual Politics* (*Comment*, 22.5.71) – another indication of the drift away from Marxist-feminist orthodoxy among party feminists.
54. Congress Report, *Comment*, 18 December 1971. A longer version of Small's analysis appeared in R. Small, *Women: The Road to Socialism and Equality*, CPGB, 1972.
55. CP/CENT/WOM/3/5.
56. 'Alternative Motion to Women in Society', Party Group Journal 2, Mike Prior papers, no date but 1970/71.
57. Ibid.
58. Congress Report, CPGB, 1972.
59. *Red Rag*'s collective and regular writers included non-party members Sheila Rowbotham and Audrey Wise. In addition to the younger party feminists such as Beatrix Campbell and Sue Slipman, it also featured articles from members of an older generation, such as Florence Keyworth and Gladys Brooks, with the latter doing much of the editorial work.
60. 'Declaration of Intent', *Red Rag*, No 1, no date but early 1972.
61. *Red Rag*, No 1, 1972.
62. Ibid.
63. Ibid.
64. R. Falber, letter to D. Homer (Secretary, Cheltenham branch), 14.11.72. In an interview with the author Falber denied *Red Rag* was published in breach of party rules; the documents suggest otherwise, however. EC Box, November 1972.
65. This correspondence can be found in CP/CENT/WOM.
66. R. Falber; letter to D. Homer cited above.
67. *Marxism Today*, April 1973.
68. CP/CENT/WOM/3/5.
69. Ibid.
70. CP/CENT/WOM/3/5. The minutes show that Campbell and Slipman amongst others were attempting to push the committee in the direction of the more mainstream feminist movement on questions related to patriarchy, sexuality and political autonomy.
71. W. Thompson, *The Good Old Cause*, op cit, p165.