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Journal: Labor History

Date of Acceptance: 11th April 2021

J. V. Stalin and *The British Road to Socialism*

Abstract

Joseph Stalin exerted substantial influence over the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB), the largest Communist party in the United Kingdom between 1951 and 1991, as well as its intellectual successor, the Communist Party of Britain (CPB), which has operated since 1988. This article explores Stalin's impact upon *The British Road to Socialism (BRS)*, the official programme of the CPGB and CPB. It does so by drawing upon primary documents from the CPGB and Russian State archives- especially the minutes of meetings and letters between Stalin and CPGB General Secretary Harry Pollitt between 1950 and 1951. These documents reveal that Stalin was not only instrumental in changing the scope of CPGB strategy, from short term electoral platforms to a long-term programme. He was also influential in determining the content of this programme, which became *The British Road to Socialism*. Stalin clarified which policies were essential, and he proposed several amendments in their formulation. All of his suggestions were implemented in the programme when it was published in 1951. Stalin's ideas were inherited by later editions as well. Although some of them were revised in 1958 and 1977, his core policies have returned in the most recent edition of the *BRS*, published by the CPB in 2020. This indicates that Stalinism is alive and well in the Communist Party of Britain.

Introduction

Joseph Vissarionovich Stalin exerted substantial influence over the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB), the largest Communist party in the United Kingdom between 1951 and 1991, as well as its intellectual successor, the Communist Party of Britain (CPB), which has operated since 1988. During Stalin's leadership of the Soviet Union, his domestic and international policies, which came to be known as 'Stalinism', were promoted by the CPGB in both theory and practice.

There is some disagreement over the nature of the relationship between Stalinist Russia and the CPGB. Some allege that the CPGB became subordinate to Moscow, and slavishly followed its line (Black, 1970; Newsinger, 2006; McIlroy, 2013).¹ Others allege that the Party remained somewhat autonomous, but that the majority nevertheless supported many of Moscow's policies (Branson, 1985; 1997; Thorpe, 1998a; Fishman, 1995).² Although there are nuanced differences between the various portrayals, studies routinely use the terms 'Stalinist' and 'Stalinism' to understand the CPGB's official policies, from around 1928, when Stalin secured his power, until his death in 1953.

Even after Stalin's passing, however, studies continued to examine the CPGB through the lens of Stalinism (Beckett, 1995; Deery, 1999; Socialist Worker, 2020; Black, 1970; Bridges, 1977). One reason for this is that the CPGB maintained its support for the Soviet Union and the other Communist regimes based on Marxism-Leninism. Some commentators describe these regimes as Stalinist, because they retained the political system that Stalin created. Another reason for the CPGB's continued association with Stalinism is that its Party programme, the *British Road to Socialism (BRS)*, was initiated, drafted in part and personally

approved by Stalin himself prior to its publication in 1951 (Black, 1970 pp. 286-287; Mathews, 1991; McIlroy, 2013, p. 600).³ In recognition of this fact, a research organisation published a book called *The British Road to Stalinism* (IRIS, 1958), with the book title being a clear reference to the *BRS*. Although this programme underwent several subsequent revisions, these could not deflect the charge of guilt by association. Since the *BRS* retained the same name and origins, no amount of change could undo the perception that it was a Stalinist document (Chaffin, 2018). This link is so strong that ever since the CPGB dissolved in 1991, its largest splinter organisation, the Communist Party of Britain, has also been described as Stalinist, precisely because it has maintained the *BRS*.⁴ The CPB general secretary Rob Griffiths confirmed this in 2018, when he lamented that the Party still received ‘the usual “Stalinist” insults’ (Smallman, 2018). The *BRS* has been a key document in enabling commentators to link both the CPGB and CPB to Stalinism. And since Stalinism became a pejorative label during the Cold War, it has been used to undermine and discredit British Communists ever since.

For a long time scholars did not show how Stalin himself personally influenced the *BRS*. Although some knew that he instigated, edited, and approved the document in 1951, the details of Stalin’s interventions were not explored. This situation changed in 2007, when the Marxist scholar Vijay Singh drew attention to some key documents located in the Russian State Archive of Social and Political History: the minutes of meetings and letters between Stalin and the CPGB general secretary Harry Pollitt, between 1950 and 1951. The documents consist of:

- i) A summary of letters and meetings between Pollitt and Soviet statesman Mikhail Suslov, dated 23rd May 1950.
- ii) Minutes of a meeting between Pollitt and Stalin on the 31st May 1950.
- iii) A letter from Pollitt to Stalin from the 11th July 1950.
- iv) Stalin’s reply; signed ‘your co-discussant’, from the 28th September 1950.
- v) Pollitt’s response, written in Bucharest on 18th October 1950.
- vi) A transcript of a meeting between Pollitt, Stalin and Molotov on the 5th January 1951 (Stalin, 1950-51).

In addition to the documents highlighted by Singh, there are also the following CPGB documents in the Labour History, Archive and Study Centre:

- i) Harry Pollitt’s notes of his meeting with Stalin, dated June 1950.
- ii) A report to the CPGB Political Committee, ‘For A People’s Parliament and a People’s Britain’ dated 19 September 1950.
- iii) A Draft Outline for Long-Term Programme dated 1 October 1950.
- iv) A Draft of a Party Programme dated November 1950.
- v) A Revised Draft Programme dated 9 November 1950.
- vi) A Draft Party Programme [‘copy before amendments’] dated December 1950.
- vii) A Draft Party Programme dated January 1951.

Although these two sets of documents have been available for many years, no-one has offered a detailed analysis of their content and significance. This is unfortunate, because as this article shall argue, these documents offer unique insights into Stalin’s views of the CPGB and Communist political strategy in Britain. They also demonstrate his decisive influence upon the CPGB’s policies and ideology, as manifested in the *British Road to Socialism*.

In order to showcase the historical significance of Stalin’s impact upon the *BRS*, the first section briefly examines his relationship with the CPGB from the time he began his rise to

power in 1924, until his first meeting with Pollitt in May 1950. This section argues that the CPGB adhered to Soviet, but not always Stalinist policies during this period (Branson, 1987; 1997). The Party faithfully adhered to the Communist International, otherwise known as the Comintern or Third International, but this organisation did not always promote Stalin's preferred policies, and he gave limited specific guidance to the CPGB. The second section argues that this state of affairs changed in May 1950, when Stalin met Pollitt and intervened directly in CPGB policy making. From then until January 1951 Stalin was instrumental in changing the scope of CPGB strategy, from short term electoral platforms to a long-term programme. He was also influential in determining the content of this programme, which became *The British Road to Socialism*. Stalin clarified what policies were essential, and he proposed several amendments in their formulation. The third section of this article argues that all of Stalin's suggestions made it into the first edition of the *BRS*, published in 1951. Finally, the fourth section explores the extent to which subsequent editions of the *BRS* retained Stalin's proposals. Although some of them were revised in 1958 and 1977, his core policies have reappeared in the most recent edition of the *BRS*, published by the CPB in 2020. This indicates that Stalinism is alive and well in the Communist Party of Britain.

I. Stalin and the CPGB: 1924-50

Founded in 1920 by the merger of several leftist parties, the Communist Party of Great Britain gained the support of socialist organizations and workers' committees after World War I and the 1917 October Socialist Revolution. The Party membership peaked at 60,000 in 1942, and in 1945 two of its MP's won seats in the general election. As the Cold War developed the Party's association with the Soviet Union contributed to a decline in popularity and membership numbers. At the time of Stalin's death in 1953 the membership was 35,000, and it continued to drop from then on. In 1977- in response to the rise of a reformist trend called 'Eurocommunism' within the Party- a hard-line faction under the leadership of Sid French left to form the New Communist Party of Britain (NCP), which takes an anti-revisionist stance on Marxism-Leninism. Eleven years later, in 1988, more CPGB cadres left to launch the Communist Party of Britain, when they thought that the CPGB leadership had completely abandoned Marxism-Leninism. As indeed it had. Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, the CPGB's Eurocommunist leadership dissolved the Party, establishing the Democratic Left think tank, a left-leaning reformist organisation. The NCP and CPB survive to this day. The CPB is a larger and more prominent organisation, recording a membership of just over a thousand as of 2019. It is the CPB, moreover, that has maintained the *British Road to Socialism*, and as such it can rightly claim to be the true intellectual successor to the CPGB.

As for Stalin, he began his ascension to power in 1924, following the death of V. I. Lenin, the founder of the Soviet Union and Russian Communist Party. Almost immediately Stalin attempted to cement his leading position over the Soviet State and Communist International. Stalin did not achieve control immediately, however. It took him some time to consolidate his power and position as Lenin's successor. During the 13th Party Congress in May 1924 'Lenin's Testament' was revealed, containing criticisms of Stalin. In response to this Stalin offered his resignation as a tactical way of retaining power. This suggests that the 'man of steel' was not dominant enough to impose his will upon the 'Draft Programme of the CPGB to the Comintern', which was published in *The Communist Review* in June 1924. This short-term electoral programme took its lead from the seizure of power by workers in the Soviet Union in 1917. A similar path to socialism was envisaged in Britain: 'The proletariat ... cannot hope to attain power through the democratic apparatus of the capitalists, and has no

alternative other than to seize power, destroy the bourgeois state and create its own apparatus of class political power'. This would include Soviets or Workers' Councils (CPGB, 1924).

According to McIlroy (2013, p. 600), 'the CPGB was Stalinised during the Third Period of ultra-leftism, 1928-1933', when 'the Comintern became a bureau of the Soviet state'. McIlroy claims that Stalin controlled the soviet state, which in turn controlled the Comintern, which in turn directed the CPGB. Branson, however, has suggested that Stalin's influence in this period manifested itself less in the line adopted than in the methods of carrying it through (Branson, 1985, p. 30). For example, during these years the Comintern promoted a 'Class Against Class' line, which urged Communists to oppose all the other parties as being essentially fascist, including the social-democratic parties. While there is certainly evidence that Stalin agreed with this line, there is little proof that he was responsible for initiating it (Branson, 1985, p. 29). The CPGB endorsed this policy in its short-term General Election Programme *Class Against Class*, published in 1929. Its implementation coincided with the establishment of a new pro-Moscow leadership in the Party, as represented by Rajani Palme Dutt and Harry Pollitt. *Class Against Class* recognized 'the impossibility of the working class capturing and utilising the capitalist State apparatus'. It had to instead establish its own organs of proletarian power, 'Workers' Councils'. The Labour Party, the biggest social-democratic party in England, was denounced by the CPGB as an 'auxiliary apparatus of the bourgeoisie' and a promoter of 'social-fascism' (Branson, 1985, p. 31; CPGB, 1929). The official party line repudiated all attempts at forming an alliance.

Throughout the 'Third Period' the CPGB praised Stalin's Russia as a glorious workers' state, one that granted the working-class true democracy, equality and liberty. Newsinger claims that the Party was 'wholeheartedly committed to what can best perhaps be described as "gulag denial"'. During this period the CPGB presented the country as a proletarian paradise, 'where a new society of justice, freedom and plenty was being built' (Newsinger, 2006, pp. 567, 568). Branson has noted, however, that as early as 1935 there were misgivings among some Party members, including Dutt, about 'the cult of excessive adulation of Stalin' (Branson, 1985, p. 108). These concerns were raised by the CPGB delegation to the Seventh World Congress, which led to a prolonged argument with the Comintern leaders.

The 'Class Against Class' line was revisited at the Seventh Congress of the Communist International in July 1935. According to Branson, Stalin at that time was still attached to this line (Branson, 1985, p. 124). At the Congress it was not openly acknowledged that the policy had been wrong. Rather, it was suggested that this line had been wrongly interpreted because the expected 'rising revolutionary upsurge of the masses' had not materialised. In any case, the world situation had changed following Hitler's rise to power, and the Comintern abandoned the 'Class against Class' line of the 'Third Period' in favour of a new line, the 'Popular Front'. This encouraged Communists to form broad cross-party coalitions in the struggle against fascism. This new line was significant in that it was interpreted by some as a retreat from the commitment to world revolution and class-warfare and a shift towards reformism and class-conciliation. According to Newsinger (2006, pp. 563, 562), Stalin made 'the final decision' to implement this policy. 'Without the consent of the Russian leadership the Popular Front would never have been launched'. Nevertheless, Branson (1985, p. 241) argues that 'Stalin was persuaded only with great difficulty of the need for the world Communist movement to change direction'.

The CPGB's short-term electoral programme, *For Soviet Britain* (CPGB, 1935), suggested that if a socialist society was to come about, the existing parliamentary structure would have to be abolished and replaced by 'British Workers' Councils (Soviets)'. The CPGB was based on 'the revolutionary science of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, developed and enriched both in theory and practice by Lenin and Stalin'. The CPGB was 'the only Party that can lead the working class to victory – the Party of Lenin, of Stalin and of Dimitrov – the International

Party of the revolutionary working class'. The need for such a party had been made clear by Stalin: 'An army at war cannot do without a General Staff unless it wishes to be beaten. Very much more so the working class cannot do without one unless it wishes to deliver itself, bound hand and foot, to its enemies. But where is this General Staff to be found? Only in the revolutionary party. Without it the working class is an army without a leader' (CPGB, 1935).

In 1939, a month before the Second World War broke out, the Soviet Union signed a non-aggression pact with Nazi Germany under Stalin's orders. The CPGB immediately changed its line. Respecting the Soviet Union's neutrality, it portrayed the conflict as an imperialist struggle, one that it should not endorse. Pollitt opposed this line and as a result he was relieved as Party leader in October 1939. When Nazi Germany invaded Russia in 1941, however, the CPGB supported the British and Soviet war effort and Pollitt was reinstated as Party leader.

In 1943 the Comintern Executive Committee issued a declaration to all sections of the International calling for the dissolution of the Comintern. Its reasoning was that the internal situation within the various countries had become complicated, making it necessary for parties to adopt their own lines. Like the adoption of the 'Popular Front' eight years previously, the Comintern's dissolution was interpreted by some as a further shift from revolutionary to reformist rhetoric in the international communist policy of the Soviet State. Stalin supported the dissolution. In his view, it helped to dispel the notion that Moscow sought 'to intervene in the life of other nations and to "Bolshevize" them' (Stalin, 1943). The CPGB responded in kind. In 1944, the idea that Parliament must be abolished was discarded in the Party's programme *Britain for the People*, in which it was argued that the aim should be to change parliament and to democratise the state machine (Branson, 1997, p. 232).

After the end of World War II the CPGB continued to support Stalin's Russia and extoll its achievements. Following Moscow's lead, the Party supported Stalin's denunciation of Tito's Yugoslavia as a deviationist regime, and it promoted the 'People's Democracies' of Eastern Europe. At the same time, the CPGB began to understand that the mechanical application of Soviet experiences and methods to Britain was not practical. It was recognized that a combination of parliamentary and extra-parliamentary action was required. The object must be to transform and democratize the state machine, and to change the parliamentary system, not to replace it. Work began on a different concept: that of a 'British Road to Socialism'. This term was used by Harry Pollitt as the title for a chapter in *Looking Ahead* (1947), which set out the CPGB programme at that time. While *Britain for the People* had been chiefly concerned with immediate post-war problems, *Looking Ahead* raised the possibility of 'transition to socialism by other paths than those followed by the Russian Revolution'. The British road to socialism would be determined by local conditions. *Looking Ahead* contained many of the policies that later appeared in *The Socialist Road for Britain* (CPGB, 1949).

In September 1947 Stalin initiated the Cominform (Communist Information Bureau) as a means of unifying the leading European Communist Parties behind his policies. The CPGB was not represented in the Cominform and Pollitt was privately annoyed that it had not been asked to participate (Branson, 1997, p. 157). However, there is no doubt that CPGB policies would be influenced by the attitudes taken up by the Cominform. In October 1947, for example, the Cominform called for the strengthening of the forces of peace and democracy in the struggle against American imperialism. This position was reflected in *The Socialist Road for Britain (SRB)*, the draft of a General Election Programme, which was issued by the Executive Committee of the CPGB at its 21st Congress in August 1949 (CPGB, 1949). The *SRB* also reflected a position taken by the CPGB at its 20th Congress in February 1948 regarding 'the full scale of the drift to the right of the Labour Government'.

In summary, from 1924 to 1950 the CPGB adopted a Soviet, but not always a Stalinist line, as manifested in its 'Class Against Class', 'Popular Front' and 'Imperialist War' policies, as well as its support for the USSR and 'People's Democracies'. The Party lauded Stalin's leadership and presented him as a hero – the man who had led the Soviet people to victory in the anti-fascist war. On the occasion of his 70th birthday in 1949 the CPGB's 21st Congress passed a resolution paying tribute to Stalin as the 'greatest living exponent of Marxist-Leninist theory', praising his 'unswerving devotion to the cause of the proletariat'. Crucially, however, Stalin himself rarely intervened directly in the CPGB's strategy and policies in this period. There is also little evidence of him directly influencing the Party's successive programmes: the 'Draft Programme of the CPGB to the Comintern (1924), *Class Against Class* (1929), *For Soviet Britain* (1935) and *Britain for the People* (1944). As was noted above, Stalin did not always dictate Comintern positions, and he did not invite the CPGB to join the Cominform. This suggests that Stalin did not directly influence the CPGB. This was to change in the years 1950-1951, when the *British Road to Socialism* was born.

II. Stalin and the origins of *The British Road to Socialism*: 1950-51.⁵

On the 23rd February 1950 the United Kingdom held a General Election, the second since the Second World War. The incumbent Labour Party government won a majority for a second time, though its lead over the Conservative Party was reduced in comparison with 1945. Following this, the Labour Party called another election for 1951. On 23rd May 1950, B. Grigoriyan, the Soviet Chairman of the Foreign Political Commission, wrote to Stalin enclosing a letter from Harry Pollitt who 'requested advice on the tactics of the Communist Party during the coming elections to the Parliament that in his opinion may take place during the fall of the current year'. On the 31st May 1950 Pollitt met Stalin in Moscow to discuss these issues in person. Pollitt's main concern was to hear Stalin's thoughts regarding the Party's plan – as laid out in the CPGB's short-term General Election programme *The Socialist Road for Britain* (CPGB, 1949) - which was to try and keep Labour in power. Stalin approved of this plan, since he agreed that a Tory victory would be a setback for the working class, despite Labour's shortcomings. But Stalin was not only interested in talking about the CPGB's electoral strategy. His main concern was the CPGB's Party programme.

Stalin argued that the CPGB needed a long-term programme. Without such a programme, he explained, the Party could not grow and gain more working-class supporters. In his view, Communists in Anglo-Saxon countries tended to concentrate their forces on everyday issues and not look far ahead. This short-sightedness weakened them. They had to offer the masses a long-term perspective.

Stalin's other direct intervention was to suggest what the CPGB should include in this long-term programme. Firstly, Stalin argued that the CPGB took a soft and unprincipled stand towards the Labour Party. The programme had to identify the Labourites as the 'left wing of the Conservative Party'. It had to say that under Labour the capitalists were doing well and were making profits. This would show that Labour was not building socialism.

Secondly, Stalin discussed the goal of nationalization. In the UK, he argued, the workers wanted to manage the enterprises nationalized by the Labour government, and yet they were unable to do this. The capitalists continued to direct the economy and acquire huge profits. For the Soviet people, by contrast, nationalization meant that the capitalists were removed and replaced by working class manager-representatives. That is what true socialist nationalization meant. Stalin urged the CPGB programme to convey these ideas. Whilst the Party still had to try and secure a Labour victory in the 1951 election, the programme had to criticize Labour's capitalist nationalization from a socialist standpoint. This would impress the workers, who would see that Labour's nationalization benefitted the capitalists and not

them. It was impossible, Stalin argued, for capitalist profits to grow while workers conditions improved. If profits increased, then conditions deteriorated. The CPGB programme had to make that point.

Stalin then turned his attention to the question of state power. He observed that the CPGB had been accused of wanting to create a 'Soviet power' in England. In the Soviet Union, the parliament was dismantled and replaced with a system of workers' councils called soviets. The Bolsheviks also outlawed the other parties, thereby establishing a one-party state. In order to refute the CPGB's association with the Soviet political system, its programme had to emphasize that it did not want to weaken parliament, and that the UK would reach socialism in its own way, and not the Soviet way. Specifically, the UK would follow the path of 'People's Democracy', like the socialist states of Eastern Europe. People's Democracy maintained the parliamentary system, though it replaced capitalist rule with representatives of peoples' power. In the UK, the people's government would consist of a multi-party coalition led by the working class, consisting of working intelligentsia, urban lower classes, and farmers. The CPGB had to declare that this power would act through parliament.

In Stalin's view, the programme had to emphasize that only a socialist parliamentary coalition could guarantee peace and wage increases, as well as a supply of raw materials for British industry and a market for British goods. If the CPGB made these points, then the best workers would return from Labour to the Communists.

The programme also had to respond to the accusation that Communists wanted to destroy Britain. It had to argue that the Labourites and Tories were the real destroyers. The programme had to argue that Communists wanted to strengthen Britain, by ending the unequal relations with the subjects of the British Empire. Stalin explained this point by pointing to Russia, which also had colonies. After the October Socialist Revolution, he explained, the USSR established a new relationship with its nationalities, one based on friendship, equality and democracy. Stalin claimed that as a result of this new relationship none of the nationalities wanted to leave the Soviet Union.

Stalin's proposals in his first conversation with Pollitt give a unique insight into his views on British communist strategy at the time. In particular, they show that Stalin was deeply interested in the CPGB and its programme. Nevertheless, Stalin's proposals did not represent a radical departure from the CPGB's current policy. Many of his proposals were contained in *The Socialist Road to Britain*, published in 1949. Stalin's novel contribution was to advocate the path of 'People's Democracy' and begin the transformation of this short-term election platform into a long-term programme that was calculated for a significant period of time. Besides this, he also clarified which policies were essential to such a programme. Pollitt left this meeting with a picture of what a long-term Communist Party programme should look like. According to Pollitt's notes of this meeting, dated June 1950, the CPGB would produce a 'Programme in One Month' (Pollitt, 1950). On the 8th July 1950 he spoke in a meeting of the CPGB Executive Committee (EC), outlining the necessity of a long-term Party programme. In this meeting, Pollitt put forward the political formulations that he had discussed with Stalin on the 31st May 1950. The Party discussed Pollitt's July speech, and at the end of August the majority of members supported the policies. A commission was tasked with preparing a Party programme calculated for a long period of time. On the 11th July 1950 Pollitt sent a letter to Stalin, asking for his personal advice and comments on this draft programme which had been sent to him. This programme, 'For A People's Parliament and A People's Britain', was drafted in July and presented to the CPGB Political Committee (CPGB, 1950a).

Stalin sent Pollitt his views on this draft programme in a letter dated 28th September 1950. In Stalin's view, the draft programme failed to accurately implement four of the suggestions that he identified in their first meeting. It offered an insufficiently critical view of the Labour

Party leadership; it didn't adequately explain that the CPGB sought to establish friendly democratic relations with the colonial peoples; it failed to adequately emphasize the Party's support for parliament; and it failed to adequately distinguish socialist from capitalist nationalization. With regards to correcting these issues, Stalin reiterated what he told Pollitt in their first meeting.

In addition, Stalin proposed two additional amendments to the programme. Firstly, the programme insufficiently underlined the Party's struggle to obtain England's national independence from American imperialism. It had to show that the Communists were the real defenders of the British peoples' national interests, as they forcefully and persistently exposed the exploitative politics of the Labourite leadership, which sought to subordinate the country to American capital. The programme had to say that even the Conservatives did not have such a strong alliance as the Labourites with the Americans. Labour was subordinated to American imperialism and openly betraying Britain's national interests.

Secondly, Stalin argued that the CPGB programme needed to identify the conditions for obtaining a prolonged and stable international peace. It had to explain that the politics of the arms race and the conversion of Britain into an American front for a third world war opposed Britain's national interests and had serious consequences for the British people. The programme had to show that the attainment of socialism was inseparably linked with the struggle for peace and against the threat of a new war.

On the whole, Stalin felt the draft programme still resembled a short-term election platform rather than a programme calculated for a long period of time, one that could provide direction to the masses. Pollitt got the message. A 'Draft Outline for Long Term Programme' (CPGB, 1950b) was produced just three days after Stalin's letter was received, and on the 18th October 1950 he sent a letter to Stalin, thanking him for his advice and help. Pollitt promised to read and study Stalin's letter closely. He said that Stalin's comments would help improve the form and content of the programme. The 'Draft of a Party Programme' (CPGB, 1950c) was followed by a Revised Draft Programme (CPGB, 1950d). Another version of this 'Draft Party Programme' (CPGB, 1950e) was discussed by Pollitt and Stalin on 5th January 1951.

During this meeting Stalin proposed further amendments. He began by targeting the formulation endorsing the equality of nations within the British Commonwealth. Whilst using the language of equality of nations was fine in the press or public speeches, this language was too un-scientific for a Communist Party programme. It was more accurate to speak of the equal right of nations, not the equality of nations. Stalin gave the example of Britain's Malayan colony to explain this point. Irrespective of what concessions Malaya may get from Britain, it would not be equal with Britain because of its lower cultural level. By this, Stalin was referring to the lower levels of mass formal education and scientific and technological expertise in the country. Stalin argued that Britain also had a better prepared Communist Party cadre than Malaya did, and so it was more advanced politically as well. Consequently, countries could not give other countries equality, but they could give them equal rights, that some would use better than others.

Stalin argued that the Draft Programme's treatment of nationalization remained unclear. It suggested that all property owners would be nationalized in the agricultural regions. However, in order to establish a broad coalition of classes - a prerequisite of People's Democracy - it would be a mistake to nationalize small-landed property. There was nothing dangerous about leaving these elements with their private property, Stalin explained, since the Peoples' Democracies did not nationalize small holdings and were still flourishing. In connection with this, Stalin also questioned the issue of compensation for nationalized property owners. The draft did not visualize compensation, with the exception of those owners who struggled financially. Stalin suggested partial compensation for owners loyal to

the government, and none for those who resisted it. Moreover, in the section of the programme titled 'Socialist Nationalisation', where it was stated that small shopkeepers and managers would be freed from the limitations imposed by the monopolists, Stalin suggested that after the word, 'small shopkeepers and managers', it was necessary to add the words: 'and also the small property holders in agricultural regions'.

Stalin wanted the programme to emphasize that the British bourgeoisie would not surrender their property and profits for the benefit of the British people. It had to say that the bourgeoisie would resist the decisions of the people's parliament and would fight with all means to preserve their privileges. The British people and government, therefore, needed to be ready to defend their gains with all means necessary.

In the section titled 'Social Service' where it advocated equal pay for men and women, Stalin suggested that the words pay 'for equal labour' be added. The programme had to clearly establish that pay would reflect the amount of labour performed and would therefore be unequal.

At the end of the Draft Programme, where the establishment of a free and happy Socialist Britain was mentioned, Stalin suggested the substitution of the word 'Britain' for 'Great Britain', since the former suggested that the CPGB renounced the dominions and other British ownerships. Stalin then agreed with Pollitt's suggestion that the words 'Britain and Commonwealth of Nations' be used instead.

Lastly, Stalin turned to the section 'National Independence of the English People and of all the Peoples of British Empire'. Here it said that:

All relationships between the peoples of contemporary empire that are based on political, economic and military domination should come to an end and be transformed into new relationships based on complete national independence and equality. This requires the recall of all military forces and of English administrative personnel from the territories of the colonial and dependent countries, handing over of sovereignty to governments freely elected by the people and return of the wealth and of the natural resources to the people of these countries that have been appropriated by industries, traders and by monopoly banks.

Stalin suggested the removal of the words 'and return to the people of these countries their wealth and natural resources that were appropriated by industries, traders and bank monopolies'. It would be impossible to fulfil this aim, because the UK had already consumed many of the resources appropriated from the colonial and dependant countries, and Britain would lack the funds to provide immediate full compensation. Pollitt agreed with all of Stalin's amendments.

In the conclusion of their talk Stalin said that the Draft Programme was well prepared. In his view, the appearance of the Programme of the CPGB occupied a turning point in the history of the working-class movement of the Anglo-Saxon countries. This Programme was in its essence a suitable document for the Communist Parties of USA, Canada, Australia and other Anglo-Saxon countries.

All of Stalin's suggestions and amendments were incorporated into the final 'Draft Party Programme' (CPGB, 1951a). Harry Pollitt sent a copy of this to Stalin on the 19th January 1951, with a cover letter:

I enclose the final proof of the new Long-Term Programme which we will issue to the people on February 1st. I have made many changes in it since I had the pleasure of meeting you, but you will find that these changes are in the nature of making the document read more simply, and in better English. The changes do not in any way alter the political

formulations which remain as they were with the exception of putting them into the best English.

Pollitt told Stalin that he would also send 'an explanatory letter and copies of the Programme to our brother Parties in the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand'.

III. Stalin and *The British Road to Socialism*: 1951

All of Stalin's suggestions and amendments that he outlined in his meetings and correspondence with Pollitt in 1950 and 1951 were included in *The British Road to Socialism* (CPGB, 1951b), which was published in January 1951. Stalin's influence can be seen throughout the programme. Sometimes the exact words that Stalin used in his conversations with Pollitt appeared in the text:

- 1) The *BRS* presented a long-term perspective. The foreword stated that: 'this programme is not an immediate election programme. It is a programme which charts the future'.
- 2) The *BRS* exposed the Labour Party as a capitalist party. Its 'outlook and practice reflect that of the Tories and the wealthy ruling class whose interests they serve, and not the aims of the working people. They are in reality only a left-wing of the Tories'. Paraphrasing Stalin, the *BRS* claimed that the capitalists 'have done exceptionally well under the Labour Government; indeed, they have never been better off'.
- 3) The *BRS* warned that the British parties were subordinating the UK to American imperialism. The Labour Party 'joined hands with the Tories and the American big capitalists in an imperialist foreign policy which is ruining Britain'.
- 4) The *BRS* distinguished between socialist and capitalist nationalisation. 'Socialist nationalisation completely eliminates the capitalists and their representatives. The Governing Boards are composed completely of the workers and technicians'. After saying that 'small shopkeepers and businessmen' would be free from the restrictions imposed by the monopolists, the *BRS* included Stalin's suggestion to include the 'small landowners and farmers in the countryside' amongst the beneficiaries. The *BRS* also said that 'there will be partial compensation to those who do not resist the policy of the People's Government, but no compensation to those who resist the People's Government'.
- 5) The *BRS* proclaimed that Britain would not take the Soviet road to socialism. Instead, it would take its own road, the path of 'People's Democracy', like the Eastern European countries. The British people would also 'establish a People's Government on the basis of a Parliament truly representative of the people'. The essential condition for establishing such a people's power was the building of 'a broad coalition or popular alliance of all sections of the working people: of the organised working class, of all workers by hand and brain, of professional people and technicians, of all lower and middle sections in the towns, and of the farmers in the countryside'.
- 6) The *BRS* called for workers' wage increases as an immediate demand. In the section titled 'Social Service', which endorsed equal pay for work to men and women, the *BRS* included Stalin's clarification that it supported 'equal pay for equal work'.
- 7) The *BRS* warned that the capitalists would not surrender their freedoms and privileges voluntarily. On the contrary, 'It would be more correct to expect them to offer an active resistance to the decisions of the People's Government, and to fight for the retention of their privileges by all means in their power, including force'. The people and government needed to prepare to 'rebuff such attempts'.
- 8) The *BRS* aimed at a 'lasting peace' and the 'equal rights of all nations', rather than the equality of nations. With regards to the peoples of the British Empire, the *BRS* used similar

language to Stalin: 'The Communist Party would put an end to the present abnormal relations of colonial war and repression between the British people and the peoples of the Empire by establishing durable friendship with them on the basis of equal rights'. Following Stalin's suggestion, the *BRS* omitted the passage from the draft, saying that it would return to the colonial countries their stolen wealth and natural resources. The *BRS* also included the formulation, agreed upon by Pollitt and Stalin, that the UK would seek to establish 'a free and happy, strong and powerful Socialist Britain in free association with the Commonwealth nations' (CPGB, 1951b).

As Stalin predicted, the publication of the 1951 *BRS* was a historical milestone in the development of the CPGB. Over 200,000 copies were sold to workers in Britain. The programme bore Stalin's personal imprint. He instigated its development, endowed it with a long-term perspective, and clarified its key policies.

IV. Stalin and *The British Road to Socialism*: 1952-2020

Stalin's influence cannot only be seen in the 1951 *BRS*. His suggestions were inherited by subsequent editions as well. There were, however, some revisions to his formulations. This section provides an overview of the main ones.

The first revisions arrived with the third edition of the *BRS*, published in 1958. Nikita Khrushchev had become the new leader of the Soviet Union, and in February 1956 he denounced Stalin's rule during the CPSU's 20th Congress. Later in the year, however, workers' protests in Poland and Hungary were put down by the communist authorities. In the case of Hungary, the Soviet military intervened directly in order to suppress the mass uprising. Some observers interpreted these events as evidence that Stalinism was alive and well in the Soviet Union and eastern Bloc nations, despite Khrushchev's claim to the contrary. These developments reverberated throughout the communist movement. The CPGB officially supported the 'Stalinist' intervention in Hungary, but in doing so it experienced a large drop in membership. The Party leadership learned an important lesson from this: that explicit associations with Stalinism would do the Party no good. As a CPGB working paper explained several years later:

The new existing draft of the British Road, produced in 1958, was in turn, influenced by the events of the 20th Congress, the revelations concerning the violations and crimes associated with Stalin and the events in Poland and Hungary. The main changes introduced in the 1958 draft from a programmatic point of view were to get rid of the 'new, close fraternal relationship' with the ex-colonies; to replace the People's Government by Socialist Government, and to include a rather lengthy section on socialist democracy. For the first time, the latter included the formulation about other political parties. 'At the same time the rights of the other political parties to maintain their organisations, party publications, and propaganda, and to take part in elections, will be maintained provided that these parties conform to the law' (CPGB, 1967, p. 7).

To clarify the changes outlined here, the 1958 programme deleted Stalin's suggestion that Britain would be unable to return the resources and wealth stolen from its colonies and dependent nations. The programme now said that 'all natural resources and assets owned by the Crown or British capital in the former colonies must be handed over to their peoples'. Whereas the 1951 programme spoke of replacing the 'abnormal relations' between Britain and its colonies with new relations based on equality, the 1958 programme made a more explicit commitment to 'the right of all subject peoples to self-determination, and the necessary measures to guarantee this'. It endorsed 'the complete independence and right of

self-determination of all countries in the Empire'. This was a more explicit defence of self-determination than the 1951 programme. In connection with this, the 1958 programme no longer advocated the establishment of a happy Great Britain and Commonwealth of nations. It now omitted reference to the Commonwealth, in order to remove all residual notions of empire (CPGB, 1958).

As for the change from 'People's Democracy' to 'Socialist Democracy', this signified the CPGB's attempt to distance itself from the Eastern Bloc 'People's Democracies' described as Stalinist, particularly in light of events in Poland and Hungary. A notable feature of these regimes is that they were de facto one-party states, more or less identical to the Soviet Union. Although they featured multiple parties and parliaments, the Communists reigned supreme within the governing coalitions, and they could not be challenged. No new parties could be formed, and the existing ones could not compete with the Communists for power. Competitive multi-party elections were non-existent. By therefore introducing a new and extended section on socialist democracy, one highlighting the maintenance of a multi-party system, the 1958 programme sought to dispel fears that the CPGB sought to emulate the People's Democracies (CPGB, 1958).

There was another more subtle revision to Stalin's suggestions: the programme was less critical of the Labour Party. Instead of denouncing it as the left wing of the Conservative Party, its only criticism was that 'reformist Labour governments have not brought about any real social changes'. The programme announced more explicitly that its aim was to transform the Labour Party into a socialist organisation and help it come to power. Whereas the 1951 programme sought to develop a broad left-wing coalition, the 1958 programme gave the Labour Party a central place within this coalition. The CPGB now hoped to officially affiliate with the Labour Party as part of a broad united front to bring about socialism (CPGB, 1958).

Further revisions to Stalin's proposals arrived in the fifth edition of the *BRS*, published in March 1977. In terms of Stalin's core argument about building a working class led coalition, the *BRS* broadened previous definitions to include 'professional sections like architects, lawyers, doctors, writers and artists, who are self-employed ... New areas of struggle have been opened up by the growth and activity of such sectors as teachers, civil servants, scientists, technicians, journalists, local government and social workers'. The programme was aimed at members of the 'middle class' who were 'objectively part of the working class'. It suggested that a broad democratic alliance should be formed between the working class and elements of the capitalist class (small employers) and the intermediate strata (family businesses, small shopkeepers, small farmers, professionals). This alliance would include 'movements and groupings which may not belong to a major class (for example, students) or embrace people from different classes and strata (for example, black, national, women's, youth, environmental, peace and solidarity movements)' (CPGB, 1977).

The 1977 programme decisively repudiated the political system of People's Democracy. For the first time, it confirmed that a socialist government could be elected out of office:

We hold the view that the struggle to achieve and build socialism should take place in conditions of political pluralism. That is, all democratic parties, including those opposed to socialism, should be guaranteed political rights and the right legally to contend for power in elections ... The declared position of the Labour movement, including the Communist Party, is that it would respect the verdict of the electors, and that a left government would stand down if defeated in an election (CPGB, 1977).

The 1977 *BRS* was the CPGB's last programme. The revisions it made essentially reflected the rise of Eurocommunism within the Party. For Sid French and his Stalinist faction these revisions were a breaking point. They accused the programme of abandoning Marxism-

Leninism, and they left to form the anti-revisionist New Communist Party of Britain in July 1977 (International Socialism, 1977). The NCP did not, however, attempt to maintain the *British Road to Socialism*, and this in turn symbolised its intellectual rejection of the CPGB.

In subsequent years the CPGB experienced increased infighting, with even more of its members accusing the leadership of abandoning Marxism-Leninism for Eurocommunism. This culminated in the Party's dissolution in 1991, when it was succeeded by the reformist Democratic Left think tank. In 1988, however, some cadres formed the Communist Party of Britain (CPB) in order uphold what they saw as the CPGB's founding Communist principles. As a symbol of this commitment the CPB published the sixth edition of the *BRS*. There were two versions of this programme. The first was published in 1989 (CPB, 1989) and a revised version emerged from the CPB's 41st Reconvened Congress in November 1992. The section on 'The World Situation' was amended 'in the light of the enormous changes which had occurred in the former socialist countries of Eastern Europe'.

The 1989 programme was the first to openly criticise the socialist countries. This is significant in understanding Stalin's influence upon the programme, because some scholars continued to describe the socialist states as Stalinist even after Khrushchev's 1956 speech. The programme suggested that the Soviet Union had made 'mistakes' that led to 'crimes'. Central planning had led to 'a bureaucratic and administrative-command system'. These mistakes would be rectified by 'the restructuring of the economy and society... in conditions of fuller socialist democracy and openness'. Inefficiency would be reduced by 'socialist market mechanisms' and there would be 'a greater degree of pluralism and democratic accountability in the political sphere'. The programme supported the 'full development of perestroika and glasnost' that Gorbachev was leading in the USSR. According to the 1992 version, the 'final collapse of actually existing socialism' was caused by 'the bureaucratic command system' that had developed in Eastern Europe and the former USSR (CPB, 1989).

The means of achieving socialism changed significantly from the 1951 programme. The focus was now on an 'Alternative Economic and Political Strategy (AEPS)', which was 'not in itself a socialist programme' but rather 'a programme of action directed against state-monopoly capitalism' (which was created when the monopolies became integrated with the state). Decisive monopolies had become transnational corporations (TNCs), linked with their respective capitalist states. The AEPS was a 'bridging strategy' or intermediate stage on the way to socialist revolution. The leading force in 'the democratic anti-monopoly alliance' would be the working class but the CPB would also 'embrace people not only from different sections within the working class but from other classes and strata in society', including elements within the capitalist class and the intermediate strata (CPB, 1989).

The seventh edition of the *BRS*, published in 2001, provided more criticism of the faults of the socialist countries, described by some as Stalinist. 'From the late 1920s onwards, decisions were made which led to serious violations of socialist and democratic principles'. These included the 'excessive centralization of political power', 'state repression', 'bureaucratic commands', and the 'eroding' of 'working class power and popular democracy'. Marxism-Leninism 'was used dogmatically to justify the status quo' and society was 'run by the party leadership, issuing orders from the top down' (CPB, 2001).

The *BRS* position became more complex with its analysis of the reasons why the Soviet Union 'collapsed'. This process began in 'the mid-1970's', some twenty years after Stalin died, when the 'bureaucratic command system' of 'actually existing socialism' proved unable to 'develop society's forces of production more effectively than capitalism'. It was 'the contradiction in Soviet society between its authoritarian form and its socialist content' that 'laid the basis for the collapse of the socialist system in the USSR and in those countries modelled upon it in central and eastern Europe' (CPB, 2001).

The 2001 programme suggested that efforts were made to ‘renovate production relations and bring democratic control into political life’ based on a ‘more flexible planning system and the use of market mechanisms’. But this attempt at perestroika (reconstruction) ‘failed to win the fullest co-operation of bureaucratic cadres in the Party’. Similarly, the policy of glasnost (openness), which ‘exposed long standing distortions of socialism’, failed because ‘the dogmatism of Marxism-Leninism had stunted political understanding and creative socialist thought’ leaving the door open to ‘illusions about private ownership and the so-called free market’. The USSR ‘collapsed’, therefore, not because central planning was abandoned and market mechanisms replaced the socialist economy, but because of bureaucracy and dogmatism. According to this analysis the USSR both succeeded and failed because of these ‘Stalinist’ methods (CPB, 2001).

Unlike previous editions the 2001 programme did not end with a rallying cry or quotes from the *Communist Manifesto*. The overall tone was sombre and sober and a reflection of the reality that ‘the collapse of the Soviet Union and eastern European socialism was a severe setback from which Communists have had to draw many lessons’ (CPB, 2001).

The eighth edition of the *BRS*, published in 2011, included a modified analysis of the ‘downfall’ of the Soviet Union and Eastern bloc. The time frame in which these ‘severe violations of socialist democracy and law’ occurred was shifted from the ‘late 1920s’ (in the 2001 edition) to the ‘late 1930s’ in this edition. From the mid-1970s the ‘Soviet bureaucratic-command system’ and ‘centralized control’ led to ‘stagnation and political collapse’. The processes of ‘perestroika’ or ‘glasnost’, which were supported by the 2001 programme, were not mentioned in this edition, which indicated a subtle shift back towards Stalinism (CPB, 2011).

In 2020 the CPB published the latest edition of the *BRS*, following the Conservative victory in the 2019 general election. Despite being the ninth version of the programme, it inherited most of Stalin’s suggestions, including a long term perspective, criticism of right wing Labour leaders and policies, the distinction between ‘capitalist’ and ‘socialist nationalization’, support for peace and disarmament, a more transparent and democratic form of central government, the defence of trade union rights, the fight for increased wages and improved social services, equal pay for work of equal value, balanced and mutually beneficial trade relations with former colonies, the need to rebuff the resistance by the ruling capitalist class to economic and political change, and independence from American imperialism (in addition to the European Union and European Single Market) (CPB, 2020, pp. 23, 28-29, 43, 56-57).

In some of these respects the 2020 programme remained more faithful to Stalin than previous editions. For example, whilst advocating a ‘multi-party democracy where freedoms are guaranteed’, it no longer promised a competitive electoral system, one where a socialist government could be voted out of power. Although the path of People’s Democracy was not advocated, the section on ‘Building a Socialist Society’ in Britain drew upon the Soviet Union and People’s Democracies for inspiration. These countries ‘demonstrated how centralised economic planning can play a vital role in promoting scientific education and rapid economic growth’. Cooperative ownership helped secure a thriving agricultural sector in Hungary and solved housing crisis shortages in the GDR and Bulgaria. Self-management in Yugoslavia showed how workers could be drawn into democratic decision making at workplace level. The GDR provided collective, social and workplace facilities on an extensive scale. In the USSR, people’s courts in large workplace facilities brought the criminal justice system closer to the people. In Cuba, Committees for the Defence of the Revolution were at the heart of the socialist system and drew together local communities and people’s mass movements in a wide range of social, environmental and political campaigns.

The 2020 programme mentioned these policies of People's Democracy as successful examples to replicate in Britain (CPB, 2020, pp. 67-68).

Whereas previous programmes blamed the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc upon factors innate to their respective systems, the 2020 programme blamed forces alien to them: 'The struggle to survive and to build socialism in the face of powerful external as well as internal enemies...led to distortions in society that might otherwise have been avoided' (CPB, 2020, p. 25).

In line with Stalin's suggestion, the 2020 programme warned that socialist government policies would 'almost certainly meet the most determined resistance from monopoly capital and its forces within and outside the state apparatus'. Therefore, a purely peaceful road could not be guaranteed. Force would potentially be necessary in order to sustain power. 'The extent to which this process involves physical or military violence will depend upon the revolutionary movement having the best strategy to minimise the capacity of the capitalist class'. In any case, 'the democratically elected left government will use all the official and popular forces at its disposal to crush each and every attempt at military subversion, rebellion or invasion'. In a reversal of the 1958 programme, and in accordance with Stalin, the 2020 programme no longer promised that Britain would return its stolen wealth to its ex-colonies and dependent nations (CPB, 2020, pp. 65-66). Its criticisms of the socialist countries notwithstanding, the 2020 programme inherited most of Stalin's proposals in one form or another.

Conclusion

This article has argued that Joseph Stalin had a significant influence upon *The British Road to Socialism*, the core programme of both the Communist Party of Great Britain and the Communist Party of Britain. Whereas the studies mentioned in the introduction have highlighted the importance of this influence, this article sought to delve deeper into the what, how and why of Stalin's interventions.

Stalin's impact upon the *BRS* is significant, firstly, in uncovering more information about the man himself. The Russian state archive sources indicate that Stalin was very interested in British politics and British communist strategies. The fact that he was willing to devote specific attention to the affairs of the CPGB- even though it was never a mass party- suggests that Stalin had faith in the abilities of this party, viewing it as a powerful force in the European communist movement in spite of its small size. Stalin's remarks also reveal that he did not advocate the same blanket policies for every communist party. Stalin was sensitive to the fact that each country had unique conditions and peculiar features and he tailored his policies for Britain in accordance with its specific conditions and features. This indicates that Stalin's views on foreign politics were far from crude or dogmatic.

Stalin's impact upon the *BRS* is significant, secondly, because it helps to clarify- with concrete evidence- the longstanding relationship of Britain's two largest communist parties with 'Stalinism', a phenomenon with a distinctly pejorative connotation. An accurate understanding of this relationship is essential because the 'Stalinist' label has had a huge bearing upon the public and intellectual perception of these parties. To put it bluntly, few communists these days endorse Stalinism, and few people want to join a Stalinist party. This label has done these parties no favours. On the contrary, it has been a major factor in helping to alienate their existing cadres and deterring prospective members. The huge stigma surrounding the term 'Stalinism' is a major reason why scholars continue to debate its application to British communist organisations. A central issue, in this regard, is that the term Stalinism has too often been levelled at the CPGB and CPB with little or no accompanying evidence. The CPGB has been routinely described as Stalinist simply due to its support for

Stalin's Russia, and the CPB continues to be labelled as Stalinist by the mainstream media simply due to its historical links with the CPGB. Although scholars occasionally highlight Stalin's role in conceiving the *BRS* as further evidence to justify the 'Stalinist' label, the details of his interventions are rarely explored. This article has sought to flesh out these details, with the aim of providing a more precise picture of the relation between Stalinism and the leading organisations of British communism.

From 1924 to 1950 the CPGB could not be described as a straightforwardly Stalinist Party. Although the Party adhered to the Comintern, by enforcing its 'Class against Class', 'Popular Front', and 'Imperialist War' lines, Stalin himself did not dictate all of the Comintern's policies. Although the Party praised the achievements of both the soviet state and Stalin, the latter did not directly involve himself in the CPGB's policies during this period. The most striking manifestation of this stance is that Stalin did not even invite the CPGB to join the Cominform in 1947, despite the fact that several other European communist parties were members. All of these factors indicate that the CPGB was by no means fully 'Stalinised', despite its loyalty to Moscow.

The years 1950-51 were a major turning point. Stalin intervened directly for the first time in the Party's policies, strategy, and programme, which came to be the *BRS*. In the course of his correspondence with Pollitt, Stalin instigated the construction of the *BRS*, transformed it from a short-term election platform into a long-term programme, and clarified several of its policies. The 1951 *BRS* could indeed be described as the *British Road to Stalinism*, since all of Stalin's suggestions were implemented in it. If the CPGB's programme was not entirely Stalinist prior to 1950, it certainly was by 1951.

By identifying Stalin's influence upon the 1951 *BRS*, this article was able to trace his influence upon subsequent editions, with the aim of using the programme as a proxy for the relationship between the Party and Stalinism. It became apparent that the 'Stalin question' was a major factor in shaping future programmes and the ultimate destiny of the Party. Unsurprisingly, the first revisions were made in the 1958 edition, published after the rise of Khrushchev and his infamous denunciation of Stalin in 1956. By making these changes, the Party hoped to distance itself from Stalinism, and to avoid the drastic falls in membership that came with this association from the mid 1950s onwards. In hindsight, a careful examination of these revisions shows that they were less severe than one might expect, at least as far as domestic British political strategy was concerned. It was in fact the 1977 edition that made the biggest revisions to Stalinism, with the most significant being the defence of a competitive multi-party system. The importance of these programmatic changes was evidenced by the fact that they coincided with the Party's first major split with the pro-Stalin, anti-revisionist elements splintering off to form the New Communist Party in the same year.

In 1988 the CPB was formed in order to re-establish the CPGB's founding principles. Whilst criticising the Stalinist methods of the socialist states, it maintained the very programme that Stalin was instrumental in creating. In fact, the 2020 programme in several respects signifies a *return* to Stalin, with several of his previously removed policies coming back in. Because of this, the description of the CPB as a Stalinist Party retains some genuine justification, even though many of those using this label provide little accompanying evidence for doing so. In order for the Party to rid itself of Stalin's ghost, a transformation of the programme's content and name will be required. Of course, the CPB probably knows this better than anyone. Its older members know very well that Stalin was a major figure in the inception of its programme. As such, the fact that the CPB has not made transformative changes indicates that the Party is not ashamed of its Stalinist heritage, despite some rumblings to the contrary. Indeed, the CPB still thinks that Stalin was fundamentally right. History, of course, will be the ultimate judge of that.

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¹ See also Dewar, 1976; Challinor, 1977; McIlroy, 2003; 2006; 2013; McIlroy, and Campbell, 2002a; 2002b; 2003; 2004; 2005; Eaden and Renton, 2002; Beckett, 1995; Mathews, 1991; Pelling, 1958; IRIS, 1958.

² See also Thorpe, 1998b; 2000; Worley, 1999; 2000; 2001; Morgan, 1989; 1993; 1998; Callaghan, 1993; Branson, 1985; 1997; Fishman, 2001.

³ See also Deery, 1999, p. 18; McIlroy and Campbell, 2005, p. 129; Newsinger, 2006, p. 567; Morgan, 1993, pp. 169-70; Callaghan, 1993, pp. 241-242; 2004, p. 390; Thompson, 1992, p. 89; 2001, p. 129.

⁴ In the title of the 2001 edition of the *BRS*, the word 'British' was replaced with 'Britain's'.

⁵ The sources referenced in this section are unpaginated; and can be accessed here as a single file: <https://revolutionarydemocracy.org/> See Stalin (1950-1951).